



Employer Case Studies 2004

Attitudes to Learning

MAIN REPORT

Customer Research Strategy – Report 3

Sponsored by
Welsh Assembly
Government



EMPLOYER CASE STUDIES 2004 Attitudes to Learning

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NOP Research Group is the UK arm of NOP World, the ninth largest research agency in the world.

In the UK, NOP employs around 600 staff and it is split into specialist divisions. The team working on the Employer Case Studies is in the division that specialises in Social Research and there are 20 researchers dedicated to this field. The team has relevant experience of both large-scale social research surveys and of carrying out customer satisfaction research.

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Produced by ELWa on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). From 1 April 2006 ELWa will become part of WAG.

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD By Sheila Drury



To date, ELWa's Customer Research Strategy has focused on understanding the views and satisfaction levels of individuals who are already in learning funded by ELWa.

The findings are contributing to an improved understanding of learner needs and experiences, which will enable ELWa with its partners to improve the range and quality of learning provision continually. In this element of the strategy, we are developing further this evidence-based policy by exploring the relevance of training in business and the relationship between learning and business development. We are currently working to improve our services to businesses and I see this report as an important element in identifying how improvements can be made.

This report is based on 28 case studies with employers of different sizes and diverse sectors across Wales. In-depth interviews were undertaken with various managers within each organisation in order to identify factors that motivate businesses to invest in learning. Each case study explores the decision-making process that businesses undergo when considering whether to fund or arrange training for staff. By understanding this process, we can ensure that obstacles to training are removed and that delivery and content of training truly meet the needs of businesses. By doing so, ELWa is ensuring that employees and employers have the skills they need to succeed, which will underpin Wales' economic development, helping to secure stable levels of growth and employment. Five distinct typologies have emerged from analysis of the case studies, and these range from best practice employers – those that were engaged in learning and appreciated the value of learning for management, the

workforce and for business success – to those employers that were relatively inactive in terms of training and unambitious in relation to business development.

The typologies are an important basis for providing possible actions in response to the factors that limit training activities within businesses. However, such factors need to be subject to further investigation if they are to be used effectively in programme development to raise awareness and participation in training by businesses. To demonstrate our commitment to the business agenda, we will be exploring further the themes that these case studies have raised through a regular panel of 2,000 employers across Wales. This will enable us to track changes in attitudes and obtain feedback on different ways of broadening and deepening employers' participation in training.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the employers, managers and employees who took valuable time out of their working day to contribute their helpful and constructive opinions so that we might improve future learning opportunities for businesses across Wales.

Sheila Drury – Chairman
January 2005

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section covers:

- the background and objectives to the research;
- the linkage with the Customer Research Strategy;
- the research methodology;
- the survey coverage; and
- analysis of results.

1.1 Background and Objectives

ELWa is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body with responsibility for funding, planning and promoting learning throughout Wales for people aged over 16, with the exception of Higher Education. One of ELWa's key priorities is to ensure that the training opportunities provided support the needs of businesses and their workforces. In this way ELWa can have a positive impact upon businesses in Wales and the economy as a whole.

ELWa therefore commissioned a survey to understand the relevance of learning and training in business and the relationship between learning and business development. The research explored:

TRIGGERS (Factors motivating businesses to invest in learning)

ACCESS (A typology of the decision-making chain for different types of businesses in order to understand how ELWa could ensure that obstacles/barriers are removed and that delivery and content of learning best meets the needs of businesses)

REINFORCEMENT (How to ensure a successful experience that will optimise the possibility of investing in learning again and the factors that are most important in driving satisfaction and meeting expectations)

WIDENING HORIZONS (How ELWa could increase and sustain maximum awareness within businesses of the wider opportunities that learning offers and a desire to exploit these).

The information the survey provides will be used to help ELWa encourage more employers to:

- become involved in learning and training;
- offer learning more widely across the workforce;
- appreciate the potential value of learning both for themselves as managers and for their businesses; and
- enjoy successful learning experiences;

This research forms part of ELWa's Customer Research Strategy, which is part of the overall drive within ELWa to encourage evidence-based policy and demand-led planning and bring the 'customer' centre stage.

The Customer Research Strategy encompasses three main strands of activity:

- Understanding what motivates customers to learn in order to widen and deepen participation in learning
- Understanding what customers think of the education and learning services they receive
- Tracking and understanding participation within the customer groups (individuals, businesses and communities)

Other work that has already taken place or is scheduled to take place under the Customer Research Strategy is outlined in table 1.1.

1.2 Research Methodology

This research took the form of 28 mini case-studies. The methodology used for each case study depended on the size of the organisation, as follows:

Micro and small organisations (Less than 10 staff):

- Face-to-face interviews with owner/managers responsible for training and strategic business decisions.

Medium and large organisations (10+ staff):

- Face-to-face Interviews with senior managers or directors responsible for training policy and strategy and strategic business decisions.



Table 1.1 Summary of Customer Research Strategy Projects

Research Exercise	Aims
National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003	A telephone survey of 6,000 learners in FE, WBL and accredited ACE enabled ELWVa to obtain measures of learner satisfaction in ELWVa-funded provision across Wales, and established benchmarks which, when tracked over time, will show trends in learner satisfaction.
National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales 2004	An extension of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey, this survey examined the views of school sixth formers and satisfaction with their learning experience. 12 focus groups were undertaken across 8 schools in Wales and self-completion questionnaires sent to all participating schools to understand what motivates sixth formers to learn and their satisfaction with the learning process.
Individual Panel	A panel of 2000 individuals across Wales designed to measure learning activity and track attitudes to learning. The data will be used to segment the population by attitudes to learning and this segmentation will inform the way in which learning is promoted to different groups.
Employer Panel	A panel of 2000 employers across Wales to track over time views of learning and training within their business. This will be designed to quantify and track some of the themes emerging from these case studies. In particular it will look at levels of training activity and obtain feedback on different ways of broadening and deepening this activity.

- In-depth interviews with line managers in the same business/ organisation. Line managers were employed in a range of functions including finance, marketing, operations and engineering.
- Distribution of self-completion questionnaires to employees within the same organisations.

The case studies were designed to be representative of organisations across Wales in terms of company size, sector and region. In order to ensure a representative sample, interlocking quotas were set on company size and

sector. It was intended to complete 30 interviews. However, due to difficulties recruiting large services organisations and micro/small manufacturing companies, 28 interviews were achieved in total.

To reflect the higher proportion of micro and small businesses within Wales, we used the following definitions of company size:

- Micro (1-4 employees);
- Small (5-9 employees);
- Medium (10-99 employees);
- Large (100+ employees).

We aimed to achieve 15 interviews with micro and small companies (with less than 10 employees) and 15 interviews with medium and large companies (with 10+ employees).

The interviews achieved are listed on table 1.3 below, beside the quotas aimed for. Due to difficulties recruiting small manufacturing companies to participate in the research, we achieved more interviews with Service companies overall, although all these interviews fell into the Micro, Small and Medium categories.

In addition, the sample was spread across the four ELWa regions to ensure a broad regional spread. Table 1.2 shows the interviews achieved in each of the regions.

Table 1.2 Regional Interviews Achieved

Region	No. of case studies	
	Quota	Achieved
South East	10	12
South West	10	6
Mid Wales	5	3
North Wales	5	7

1.2.1 Learner/Non-learner definition

A key objective of the research was to talk to employers at different stages in terms of levels of learning activity in order to explore their motivations for including or introducing learning to the work place, and the decision-making processes leading to learning activity.

To ensure we spoke to a variety of employers in terms of the range and amount of training they offer, employers were categorised at the recruitment stage as either 'Learner' or 'Non-learner' organisations based on the training they currently provided. In order to be classified as a 'Learner' organisation, employers had to fulfil all of the following criteria:

- Offer regular off-the-job training to employees, some of which had been pre-planned (not just ad-hoc);
- Offer training which went beyond statutory, induction and IT skills training;
- Have done some form of management training in the past two years, for example, team working, appraisal or time management.

Any organisation that did not fulfil the above criteria was defined as 'Non-learner'. To ensure an even split, the sample was made up of approximately equal number of Learner and Non-learner organisations within each sector.

Table 1.3 Size and Sector Interviews Achieved

	Manufacturing		Services		Public Sector/ Non-profit		Total	
	Quota	Achieved	Quota	Achieved	Quota	Achieved	Quota	Achieved
Micro (1-4 employees)	3	1	3	5	0	0	6	6
Small (5-9 employees)	3	3	3	3	3	4	9	10
Medium (10-99 employees)	3	3	3	3	3	1	9	7
Large (100+ employees)	2	2	2	0	2	3	6	5
Total	11	9	11	11	8	8	30	28



1.3 Survey Coverage

1.3.1 Interview topic guides

The interview topic guides were developed by ELW_a and NOP. The topic guide acted as an aide memoire for the interviewer to ensure that key topics were covered for each interview. Separate topic guides were developed for Learner and Non-learner organisations. Both topic guides covered the topics listed in the top box of table 1.4. In addition, the Learner organisation topic guide covered the types of training provided, the quality of public and privately funded provision and the advice obtained about training provision. The Non-learner organisation topic guide focused on the circumstances in which employers would offer more training, which organisations they thought should provide it and how it should be funded. A summary of the topics covered in each interview is provided below.

The topic guide for Line Managers was shorter and focused on the types of training undertaken within their particular function, which employees benefited and the associated decision-making process.

1.3.2 Self-completion questionnaire

In addition, companies with more than 10 employees were invited to distribute self-completion questionnaires to their employees. The purpose of the questionnaire is to explore in greater depth the employee's learning experience within that organisation.

The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- What learning they have participated in;
- Whether the learning was on-the-job, a formal training session or both;
- How useful they feel this has been (most useful/least useful and why);
- Their overall satisfaction with all learning/training undertaken whilst with the current employer;
- What skills, if any, they would like to improve;
- How would they like to improve their skills (formal training – if so what are their preferred options – off or on-the-job training);
- Do they expect to receive this from their employer;
- What would encourage them to undertake more learning;
- If they have a training need, how does it get identified;
- To what extent do they feel it is their responsibility to make their training needs known.

The companies were responsible for distributing the questionnaires internally and pre-paid envelopes were provided with every questionnaire to allow employees to return their questionnaire directly to NOP and to ensure confidentiality of response.

Out of a total of 12 medium and large organisations that participated in the research, 7 businesses agreed to distribute questionnaires and returned completed questionnaires. A total of 299 questionnaires were returned across these organisations. Although this response was lower than anticipated, it was a large enough response to allow analysis of the results, which are included in the report where appropriate.

Table 1.4 Topics covered for interviews with managers

All Organisations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of the business at that site; • If part of a bigger organisation and whether this has implications for learning decisions; • Where the focus of the business is in terms of customers, supply chain, etc (i.e. if the business has a regional or international focus); • How they approach the running of their business; • The types of learning that are arranged or funded at that site (both formal and informal on-the-job training); • The types of training most valued by the organisation; • The types of staff participating in training and if not, why not; • The amount spent on training in the last 12 months; • The decision-making process when deciding what training to offer; • The perceived benefits of training; • The sacrifices they feel are involved in undertaking learning; • What ambitions/goals they have for their business (both long term and short term); • Are there any aspects of their business which need improving; • How will they try to secure these improvements. 	
Learner Organisations	Non-learner Organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of training that is privately and publicly funded (by the public sector); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what circumstances could they see themselves undertaking learning (what it would take to make them take up learning)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of training provision (both publicly and privately funded); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of training they would like to see offered and how it should be funded;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of advice or guidance that is sought when deciding what training provision to access; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would they take up training if it was available free of charge;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerations when deciding to access public funding (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types/quality of provision is out there and how do they find out about it.



1.4 Analysis of results

All the interviews were tape recorded (with respondent's permission) and written up as individual case studies for each employer. Verbatim quotes from the in-depth interviews are included in the report, in italics, to illustrate the key points raised.

When the case studies were analysed, it was possible to group the employers into typologies according to:

- size of organisation;
- the level of ambition in terms of company growth; and
- attitude towards learning.

This is explained in detail in the following chapter. It was decided to use these definitions instead of using the Learner/ Non-learner definition as many of the organisations that had been defined as 'Non-learner' at the recruitment stage were found to be more like 'Learner' organisations when the interviews were carried out. The above categories were seen as a more accurate way of classifying the case studies.

In addition, the self-completion responses were analysed at a total level and data tabulations were produced. The respondent profile is outlined in detail.

1.4.1 Self-completion questionnaire – Respondent Profile

Overall, 74% of respondents worked full-time and 25% worked part-time. The majority of respondents had worked for the organisation for between 2 – 5 years (26%) or over 10 years (28%) and over three-quarters (77%) were female as table 1.5 shows.

About two-thirds of respondents did not manage any staff (62%). 12% managed 1 or 2 members of staff and 8% managed 3 – 5 staff. 14% of staff managed more than 5 members of staff. The age classification of respondents is shown below (table 1.6).

Table 1.6 Age Classification

Base: All respondents	299
	%
16 – 24	17
25 – 34	24
35 – 44	25
45 – 54	22
55+	9
Not stated	2

Note: Percentages do not add up due to rounding

Table 1.5 Length of time working for the company by gender/work mode

	Total	Gender		Work mode	
		Male	Female	Full-time	Part-time
Base: All respondents	299	60	229	221	74
	%	%	%	%	%
Less than 1 year	16	12	17	21	16
Between 1 – 2 years	16	27	13	22	7
More than 2 years, less than 5 years	26	27	26	26	28
More than 5 years, less than 10 years	13	12	14	8	16
Over 10 years	28	23	28	14	20
Not stated	1	0	1	8	12

A third of respondents (33%) had left full-time education aged 21 or older. The other respondents had left full-time education at the following ages:

	%
• Aged 16 or under	26
• Aged 17	12
• Aged 18	17
• Aged 19	5
• Aged 20	2

We asked respondents to specify the highest level of examination or qualification they held. 31% had a degree or a higher degree (e.g. PhD, MSc). The majority of other respondents held qualifications such as GCSEs, Diploma in Higher Education, HNC or HNDs or A levels. 30% of respondents did not state their highest examination or qualification.

Most respondents (61%) said they were very likely to stay with their current employer for the next 12 months and a further 24% said they were fairly likely to stay. 9% said they were not very likely or not at all likely to stay. The majority of respondents did not state the reason why they might leave. Of those who did (9% of respondents), the reasons ranged from poor pay (12%), lack of training (15%) and end of contract (15%).

1.5 Problems and lessons learnt

This section covers any problems encountered with the survey methodology. The sample was ordered on the basis of company size and sector with a ratio of approximately 6:1 records for every interview required per region. In total, only 28 case studies were undertaken due to difficulties recruiting micro manufacturing, medium public sector/non-profit and large services organisations. To compensate, more

interviews were carried out with micro services companies and small and large public sector/non-profit organisations. Although the distribution of interviews achieved differed slightly to the quotas, the case studies are still broadly representative in terms of company size, sector and region.

In addition, it was hoped that out of 13 medium and large organisations, they would participate in the employee questionnaire element of the study, in the end only 10 businesses agreed to distribute questionnaires and only 7 had staff who returned completed questionnaires. In some organisations, this was because they undertook their own staff surveys and did not want to overload or confuse their employees with too many questionnaires. Some businesses were reluctant to participate, as they had not had any input into the questionnaire content. In addition, to organise the distribution of questionnaires was a lot for businesses to take on, particularly as they had limited control over the number of questionnaires that would be returned.

As the employee self-completion survey was reliant on employees motivating themselves to complete the survey, an element of bias may have occurred if respondents with strong views or who were more senior were more likely to complete the survey. However, the results suggest this has not been the case, as the survey was completed by a range of employees, with a broad spread of ages, length of service and seniority (based on the number of staff managed).

In several director interviews, the withdrawal of ELWa funding was raised as an issue and those businesses were struggling to carry out the same amount of training on a smaller budget. This may have discouraged some companies from either participating in the research at all or from taking part in the employee questionnaire element.

2.0 TYPOLOGY OF ORGANISATIONS



This section covers:

- the different typologies that emerged from the research;
- how the typologies map against each other; and
- the types of organisations in each typology and their typical characteristics.

2.1 Summary

There were five distinct typologies that emerged from the analysis of the case studies:

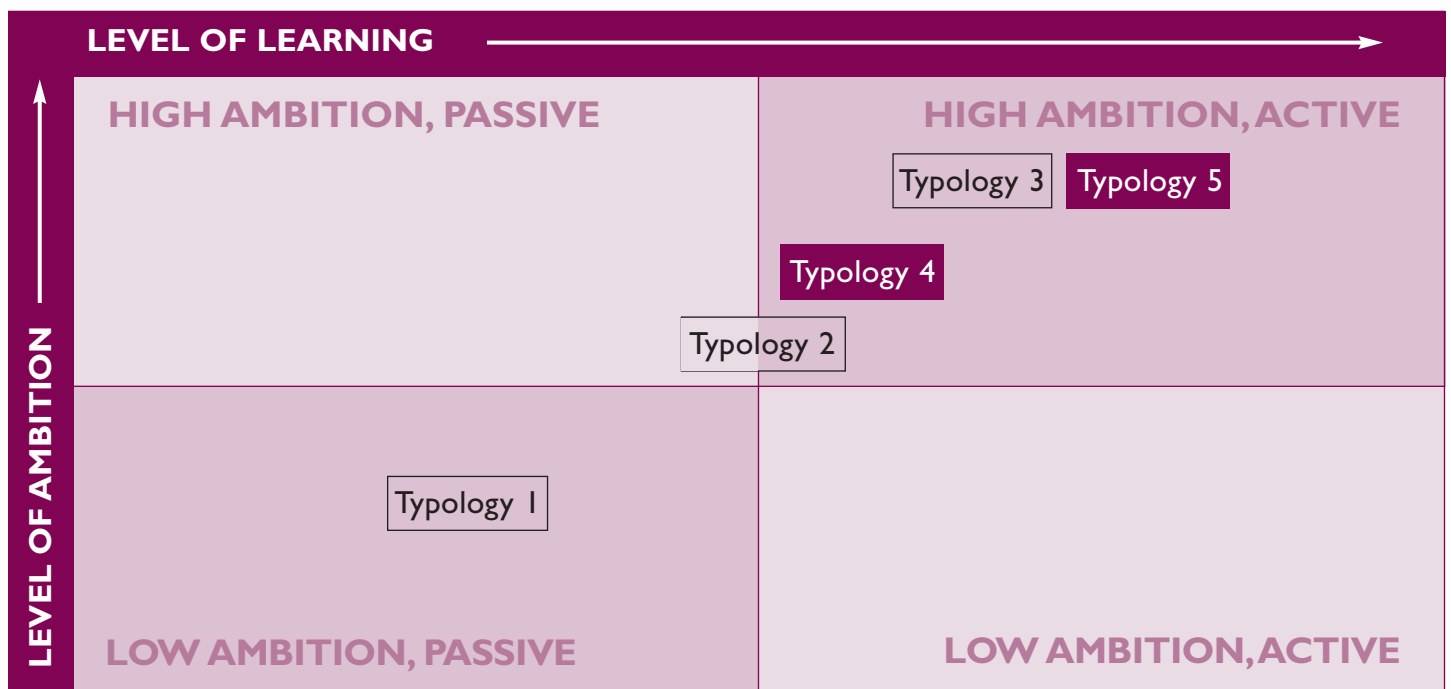
- **Typology 1 (Doing the minimum amount of training to get by)**
Small, Low/medium ambition, Passive attitude to training, 7 organisations;
- **Typology 2 (Committed to idea of training but unsystematic approach)**
Small, Medium ambition, Moderately active attitude to training, 5 organisations;
- **Typology 3 (Flexible approach to training; key to developing the business)**
Small, High ambition, Active attitude to training, 5 organisations;

- **Typology 4 (Structured approach to training; key to maintaining service delivery)**
Medium/Large, Medium ambition, Moderately active attitude to training, 5 organisations;
- **Typology 5 (Structured approach to training; an integral element of business growth)**
Medium/Large, High ambition, Active attitude to training, 6 organisations.

Whilst it was difficult to categorise some employers, a clear correlation emerged between an intention to grow the business and a positive and pro-active attitude to training. Whilst there were some companies with a moderate level of ambition who were fairly passive in terms of training, all the companies with high ambition were very active learning organisations whilst none of those with low ambition were engaging in any non-essential training.

The grid which follows shows the relationship between the level of ambition and attitude towards training for each of the typologies. Typologies for micro/small companies are in clear boxes whilst the typologies featuring medium/larger companies are shaded.

Chart 2.1 Mapping of Case Studies typologies



2.2 Typology 1 – Doing the minimum amount of training to get by

There were 7 organisations that fell into this typology. They were all small in size (less than 10 employees), single-site and a mix of private and public sector. The majority of customers were either local or tourists visiting the area. Although some of the organisations in this group had increased their turnover or budget within the last 12 months, they had no plans to grow the business.

“It’s just a case of plodding along really, and as long as by the end of the year we’ve been successful, we’re happy.”

Manager, Public Sector, Small (5-9 employees)

“I just want to make some money to live on and to give my kids a better life. I want to be profitable. I haven’t got any other goals more than that.”

Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees)

These organisations’ business plans tended to focus on “carrying on as we are now” and improving the service they provided to service users or customers.

“Our mission statement is to help more people... and to get more people coming in here.”

Director, Non-Profit, Small (5-9 employees)

None of the companies were recognised as Investors in People and there were no plans to achieve accreditation in the future. One of the companies had not even heard of it.

This group’s attitude towards learning was passive, with employers generally just providing enough learning to secure the day-to-day functioning of the business. Training was therefore often limited to trainees or focused on getting the mandatory qualifications needed to do the job. The main benefit of learning for these employers was to fulfil their statutory and

operational obligations. In some cases, the only reason they were undertaking learning was due to a lack of qualified staff in their industry forcing them to take on trainees.

“The only way I can get the staff is to take on apprentices to fill my vacancies because there aren’t any technicians out there for me, to walk into the job.”

Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees)

Many of the companies cited reasons why learning isn’t taking place as much as they would like, ranging from either not having enough time, not being able to afford it or unwillingness of the staff to take part.

“I’ve given up booking them on courses because they really do not want to know.”

Manager, Services, Small (5-9 employees)

“If the government gave me free training I would go on every course going and the staff. But I can’t afford to pay for it.”

Director, Services, Micro (1-4 employees)

The majority of training was funded through the public sector as they had limited funding available themselves. Very little training was paid for wholly by the organisation.

Although some employers identified skills that could be improved, there was no structure in place in any organisation for identifying skills gaps or for formal performance reviews. As the companies were small, they felt they could monitor skills gaps informally on-the-job and assess the effectiveness of developing staff in the same way. Some of the companies did not believe there were any skills that needed to be improved.

“At the moment nothing has changed in the industry so I can’t see any advantage of going on a course at the moment.”

Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees)



There was a lack of awareness about the types of training provision available, which some companies felt was partly a feature of running a small business; they were so busy running the business, they don't have time to look into provision. Many companies would welcome help or advice on training provision available to them.

2.3 Typology 2 – Committed to the idea of training but unsystematic approach

There were 5 organisations that fell into this typology; they were a mix of private and public sector, with less than 10 employees and a good local customer-base. What set them apart from the organisations in Typology 1 was the higher emphasis they placed on learning and the volume and variety of training taking place.

“We prioritise training... it's high on the agenda... and we support staff as far as possible.”
Director, Non-Profit, Small (5-9 employees)

“It's lifelong learning - you can never know enough.” Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees)

The turnover or budget had increased over the last 12 months for almost all these companies and they had moderate plans to grow the business, such as moving to a better site, introducing a new menu or recruiting more staff. None of the organisations were recognised as Investors in People, although all were aware of the scheme and one organisation was considering looking into achieving accreditation. None of the other organisations were considering introducing liP: they did not feel it was relevant to them as small businesses.

All of the organisations participated in a range of learning that went beyond statutory requirements. Some of the training was statutory, for example Health and Safety training, but all these companies participated

in non-statutory learning designed to improve skills, enhance knowledge and develop their employees' careers.

Some of the employers formally assessed skills and had annual performance reviews, whilst others reviewed staff on a more informal basis. One company had a scheme where staff were awarded 'points' for mistakes, so that skills gaps could be identified and dealt with in a less formal way. The scheme covered all levels of staff and the manager himself had been awarded the most 'points' during the previous month.

As these employers were small businesses with limited budgets, a lot of the training was funded via the public sector and they relied on organisations such as ELWa to provide them with information about training providers.

2.4 Typology 3 – Flexible approach to training; key to developing the business

All of the 5 organisations in this typology had a very positive attitude towards learning and stood out because they viewed training as pivotal to developing their businesses. These employers were a mix of non-profit, public and private organisations, either with a small number of sites or part of a nationwide franchise. They all fell into the Micro (1-4 employees) or Small (5-9 employees) size categories. All had increased their budget or turnover within the last 12 months and had plans to expand or grow the business.

“I've been enjoying growth of between 5 and 10% for the last seven years, and this year so far I'm up 13% on last year.”
Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees)

Within these companies, learning was seen as essential in order to develop staff and improve the business. In one company,

the staff were described as the most valuable asset; and there was a clear link between developing staff through training and improving the business. There was also a belief that staff who participated in learning felt valued and are more likely to be happy and work efficiently.

“Training is a must-have. I’m always looking for ways to develop my people further... If you don’t train your staff, they don’t feel valued and they don’t work efficiently.”

Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees)

“Training gives people confidence... You see what you are capable of.”

Director, Non-Profit, Small (5-9 employees)

The larger companies in this typology (with more than 5 staff) had appraisal and skill assessment processes in place. Skills improvement was seen as a continual process and essential in order to develop the business. Importance was attached to developing managerial skills and soft skills not just the more obvious job-specific skills. There was a high awareness of the provision relevant to their industry within the local area and strong opinions on the types of learning that worked well for them.

All companies were very aware of the provision available to them, the training that is required by law and the funding available to them. They were in regular contact with organisations such as ELWa, local FE colleges, training providers and sector-specific groups and organisations for help and advice. The only factor that occasionally limited their training activity was cost.

Despite being so active in terms of learning, only one of the organisations in this typology was recognised as an Investor in People. One of the organisations would like to look into it in the future, whilst the other employers do not plan to introduce it.

2.5 Typology 4 – Structured approach to training; key to maintaining service delivery

This typology includes a range of private, public and non-profit sector organisations with at least 10 members of staff. There were 5 organisations in this typology. Three of the employers were large public sector organisations with at least 4,000 employees based across several sites. Many found it difficult to discuss learning being undertaken at the site where they were based separately from learning delivered across all sites.

This reflects the fact that they were senior managers who were generally responsible for learning at all sites. In many organisations the respondent was a central training manager or development and training director who was responsible for training strategy across all sites within the organisation.

All the organisations had business plans and although they did not have plans to expand, they had targets that they were striving to meet. Their customer focus was either local, national or for some companies, international and all either had liP accreditation or were working towards it.

All organisations carried out a range of training courses, both mandatory and voluntary, and there was a high level of awareness of training provision available. All ran inductions for new starters and management training schemes. Much of the training was focused at professional level and management development.

“Everyone has had training of some kind. It’s part of the culture. It’s a learning cycle rather than just ad hoc training.” Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees)

Surprisingly, three of the organisations in this typology did not carry out annual performance reviews for all their staff. However, all recognised the importance of assessing career development, identifying skills gaps and were planning to roll out appraisal schemes in the future.



The organisations admit that a certain proportion of staff (ranging from 20-50%) were not participating in learning of any kind, which was due to staff reluctance to undertake formal training courses or learning needs having not been identified. For many, the budget constraints were a real issue, as was the problem of finding cover for staff away on courses.

2.6 Typology 5 – Structured approach to training; an integral element of business growth

Six organisations fell into this typology. They were all medium or large (at least 10) private sector companies that had increased their turnover within the last 12 months. Training was an integral part of the business. They felt that the benefits of learning permeate every aspect of their business and training was perceived as essential in order to meet their challenging business goals.

“We have developed a lot of training processes and the management team here are very supportive of developing its people.”
Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees)

“We do try and promote training as much as we can. We want people to succeed; we want them to feel good about themselves, to give them the confidence to do the job properly...”
Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees)

All companies were undertaking a range of training that went beyond standard statutory requirements in addition to investing a lot in management training. Some of the training programmes were strategic to the business in that they were geared to improvements in efficiency, productivity and problem solving, for example. All staff received performance reviews and there were processes in place to assess skills gaps and the effectiveness of training. The companies aimed for a high level of skills for all their employees, encouraging their staff to be the best, not just ‘good enough’. They also aimed to achieve a

certain level of multi-skilling, which increased their operational flexibility and meant that, in the majority of cases, all staff were regularly undertaking learning. This approach was inclusive and none of the companies were of the opinion that certain types of staff were reluctant to participate in training. They may have had this problem but appeared to have found ways around it.

“100% of the workforce have received either formal or informal training over the past 12 months. Even the cleaner has had to learn how to use the computer. She’s got her own login and she checks the emails.”
Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees)

“I like to build up a portfolio of people I trust who will work very closely to deliver exactly what this organisation needs. And they have to be flexible.”
Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees)

These employers invested a lot of time and thought into finding the training provision that is ‘right’ for their company and ensuring they benefit from funding to which they are entitled. Where they could not find suitable ready-made training, they were prepared to put effort and innovation into creating their own training programmes.

Almost all the organisations in this typology have Investor in People accreditation. One organisation is working towards it and one company is not considering it at the moment. For those companies that have held IIP accreditation for a while, they have mixed views.

“... the quality of the person they’d assigned to do the reassessment wasn’t good enough so we dropped it. We don’t think she would’ve added value to our company.”
Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees)

“a good basic tool” but a “very static model.”
Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees)

3.0 CURRENT TRAINING ACTIVITY

This section covers:

- the learning activity taking place in organisations in detail;
- the employee perspective on the types of training undertaken; and
- the different types of learning being arranged for each of the typologies.

The table below shows the different types of training offered to staff across the typologies.

Whilst all types of organisations undertake mandatory and job-specific training, only businesses in Typologies 3 – 5 offer formal voluntary, induction or generic skills training. In Typology 4, the induction and generic skills training is usually not offered across the board due to budgetary or staff cover constraints.

Table 3.1 Training activity by typology

Training Type	Typology 1	Typology 2	Typology 3	Typology 4	Typology 5
Mandatory	●	●	●	●	●
Voluntary	○	○	●	●	●
Job-specific	●	●	●	●	●
Induction	○	○	●	●	●
Generic/soft skills	○	○	●	●	●

○ informal only ● some formal

Table 3.2 Types of training undertaken (self-completion responses)

Type of training	During last 12 months	More than 12 months ago	Not undertaken/ not stated
Base: All respondents (299)	%	%	%
Health and Safety	39	33	28
General IT skills	32	25	43
Communication	24	17	59
Induction training	23	52	25
Team working	20	19	61
Leadership/motivational	14	12	73
Problem solving	13	9	78
Management	11	11	78
Customer service	11	17	73
Welsh language	3	4	93
Numeracy	2	2	96
Literacy	1	1	97
Foreign language	1	1	98
Other	82	18	0

Note: Table shows row percentages. Some percentages do not add up due to rounding



3.2 Employee perspective

Table 3.2 outlines the different types of training that had been undertaken based on the responses to the self-completion questionnaire. In analysing this question, it is worth bearing in mind that it is based on a relatively small sample size (299 respondents) and employees from only 7 organisations; however their responses do provide useful results for the types of training undertaken.

The table shows that mandatory training (such as Health and Safety) or training that is essential in order to be able to carry out the job (such as general IT training) are most likely to have been undertaken. Only a handful of respondents had completed numeracy or literacy training, possibly because many employers require a certain standard of education when they are recruiting and assume staff already have these skills.

In addition, 65% of respondents had undertaken job-specific learning or training with their current employer. The types of job-specific training were very fragmented and tended to be very specific to each sector as table 3.2 shows.

Table 3.3 Types of training undertaken (self-completion responses)

Type of training	
Base: All undertaking job-specific training with current employer (194)	%
Health and Safety	12
Computer/IT skills	11
Management skills	10
Social care	9
Clinical skills	9
In-service training	9
First Aid	6
Other	43

We asked respondents how their training was delivered; either in formal training sessions, on-the-job or both. Looking at courses undertaken by at least 10% of respondents (table 3.4), mandatory training such as Health and Safety, Inductions or essential skills such as IT training are more likely to be delivered in formal training sessions, whereas ‘soft skills’ such as problem solving or team working tend to be delivered on-the-job or both formally and informally.

Table 3.4 How the training was delivered

Type of training	Base (All answering)	Delivered on-the-job	Delivered in Formal session	Both
		%	%	%
Health and Safety	212	18	65	17
General IT skills	164	20	54	26
Communication	119	29	50	21
Induction training	216	31	49	19
Team working	127	37	35	28
Leadership/motivational	79	23	54	23
Problem solving	73	51	29	21
Management	68	10	63	26
Customer service	82	32	49	20

Note: Table shows row percentages. Some percentages do not add up due to rounding

3.3 Mandatory training

For many micro and small employers (particularly those in Typology 1 and Typology 2) mandatory training was the only type of learning they undertook driven by the necessity to meet statutory requirements, insurance agreements or to fulfil operational obligations. This was usually due to factors such as funding or the difficulty of finding cover, which will be discussed in detail in the Decision Making chapter.

“It would be wonderful if we could send the girls and ourselves on other sorts of courses but at the moment it has to be what’s mandatory.”
Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees),
Typology 2

Organisations working in Catering were required by law to attend Food Hygiene training and licences were not granted unless all staff have passed the course. Similarly, organisations working in Social Care were governed by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) and were mandated to have a First Aider present at all times. All members of staff must also have passed Health and Safety and Child Protection courses. These courses were often provided or arranged through public sector organisations and were usually carried out on an ad-hoc basis when the need arose.

Many organisations were bound to regulations set by professional institutes such as the Institute of Chartered Surveyors (ICS) or the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, which required staff to become involved in a programme of continuing professional development throughout their careers. An example of this is solicitors in a small law firm in Typology 1 who were required to follow a continuous development scheme in order to keep up to date.

In a large public sector organisation in Typology 4, the professional staff had to attend specific training courses throughout their career to ensure their skills were fully up to date. As this type of training is mandatory, professional staff in this organisation tended to participate in more learning than non-professional or support staff.

In some cases, institutes strongly encourage organisations to offer training programmes to their staff. The Social Care Framework was introduced recently which strongly encourages employers involved in Social Care to take related NVQs, but for many public sector organisations budgetary restraints were a real problem.

Many of the mandatory qualifications were often funded or part-funded through the public sector, encouraging employers to offer them to their employees.

3.4 Job-specific training

3.4.1 Formal or off-the-job training

Many organisations required their staff to have a standard level of qualification and arranged for trainees to undertake National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Higher National Diplomas (HND) courses in the relevant occupation. The qualifications were considered necessary in order to become a fully-qualified member of staff and usually benefited both the individual and the company itself.

“He wanted a trade – we needed the qualifications.” Director, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 3

In some cases, organisations had no choice but to employ unqualified trainees due to the lack of qualified staff in their industry.



“The only way I can get the staff is to take on apprentices to fill my vacancies because there aren’t any technicians out there for me, to walk into the job.”

Director, Manufacturing, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

In many organisations the job-specific training was covered through qualifications such as NVQs and HNDs and continuing professional development programmes for professionals. For example, a small professional practice in Typology 1 had a trainee who is studying for a professional assistant’s NVQ. The owner explained that this training benefits both the company and the employee.

“You get an efficient assistant, it makes your day far easier than with someone who’s not very confident.”

Manager, Public Sector, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

In organisations that employ professionals, the job-specific training was provided through professional institutes. Often the courses were provided at a national (UK) level, which does mean staff have to travel out of Wales to attend.

“External courses tend to be focused around qualified professional staff by necessity, as they tend to be run on a national basis.”

Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

A number of companies attended training run by their equipment manufacturers to ensure staff were aware of how to operate new machinery. This training was usually provided as part of the equipment contract and the manufacturer would often re-visit each time a new member of staff joins.

For some organisations in Typology 1 or 2, equipment manufacturers ran the majority of the training being undertaken.

“We get on-site training (by the manufacturer) – as much as we want.”

Director, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 3

Some of the more progressive employers attached great importance to training as a means of keeping up to date with trends in their industry; for example, staff at a florist shop attended a weekly floristry course to keep up with fashionable flowers and new ideas – they felt it kept the business modern. Employers also organised for staff to attend job-specific training courses if they were introducing new services that staff need to be trained up on.

“I send people away on training courses specifically designed for our industry, e.g. I’ve just been on a (name of course) course – a new service that we’re going to offer. I’ve also been on a course on how to market the service.”

Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

All organisations spent more money on job-specific training compared to generic skills training. Only the larger organisations placed a higher emphasis on training that delivered ‘soft skills’ that were not directly linked to job role.

3.4.2 Informal or on-the-job training

Informal or on-the-job training usually took place on a daily basis in most organisations. The owner of a butcher’s shop in Typology 1 explained.

“They probably learn something every single day.” The skills staff were learning ranged from “how to cut meat, how to prepare the food, keep the food safe and how to complete record sheets.”

Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

In organisations where funding was limited, staff often took it in turns to attend formal training courses and then shared any learning with the rest of the staff.

“The staff can pass information on to each other as well, especially if they’ve been on something creative and they can come back and do it with the children.”
Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 2

Informal training was also used by employers to deal with problems that arose or to introduce and develop new procedures.

“This is something that probably happens on a daily basis. Someone will come across a job which is unusual. Then it’s usually a one to one chat about how we can overcome any difficulties.”
Director, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

“If there’s something that’s wrong we’ll have a quiet word with them and give them some informal training on how we’d like them to handle the situation.”
Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

In several manufacturing organisations, staff were often expected to train one another, particularly if an employee was responsible for a specific task but was not aware of what his colleagues did.

“To work here you’ve got to be qualified and trained as a skilled man. So the level of training goes on all the time on an informal basis. One operator will train another and so on. There’s a lot of cross-fertilisation.”
Director, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

A multi-skilled workforce was seen as a major benefit to businesses, particularly if one department was particularly busy or cover was needed.

“The fact we’ve got a more multi-skilled workforce – I don’t think you can put a cost on that. We’ve got more flexibility in different areas of our business – that is a great bonus to us. If you’ve got one area that’s quiet and another that’s really busy – to be able to move one group into another area – it’s obviously going to save us money.”
Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

Some employers felt that formal training courses were not relevant for certain job roles (for example operation staff) and for that reason the majority of the learning was carried out on-the-job.

“There’s very little that we can take them off of the shop floor to train them in. Most of it has to be based on on-the-job training. However, we have rolled out continuous improvement training and that was obviously off the shop floor in a training room.”
Director, Manufacturer, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“We do a lot of on-the-job training. We have a skills matrix that identifies different people for different skills.” Line Manager, Manufacturer, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

Informal training was often preferred by many members of staff, particularly those who did not enjoy formal education or had been out of the formal education system for a number of years. This issue is discussed in more detail in the Decision Making chapter.

Learning for non-professional support staff was also more likely to be on-the-job, as organisations did not have the budget to put in place large internal training programmes and funding for external training courses was often reserved for professional staff.



“For unqualified staff a lot of it will be competency-based organised around in-house on-the-job type training.” Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

3.5 Induction training

Almost all medium/large organisations participating in the research (with 10+ employees) organised inductions for new staff covering areas such as health and safety, company policies and procedures and quality standards.

Some ‘best practice’ organisations implemented a very structured induction programme for all new members of staff, which included portfolios listing all the training that needed to be completed and annual refresher courses. An example of this is a charity in Typology 3 that organises a rolling programme of industry-related courses such as first aid, child protection and promoting and valuing difference, which included an annual refresher course in child protection.

In smaller organisations in Typology 1 and 2, induction training is often on-the-job with either the manager or an existing employee coaching the new member of staff. Many trainees were asked to job-shadow someone who was doing the same job.

“Someone started this morning so we put them with someone who does the work and they can learn from them.”
Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“With the trainee...I did the training around selling, direct selling, taking orders and making them up. No one else could’ve done that with her because I’m the only one who knows how it works.”
Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

3.6 Generic training

It was difficult to separate out some of the job-specific training from that delivering generic skills, for example customer service skills in a shop were job-specific and were generally taught on the job. The generic skills, which stood out as requiring off the job input, were management skills and IT skills.

3.6.1 IT skills

Whilst larger companies took the development and maintenance of IT skills in their stride, it could sometimes present difficulties for smaller companies who often knew there was scope for improvement, but did not necessarily know what kind of training would deliver the outcome they sought or where to go for that training.

“Everything works well at the moment but I think the secretarial staff could benefit from some training. But if you ask me what, I don’t know.” Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

Smaller employers sometimes expressed disappointment with the IT skills of school leavers. They expected the current generation of school leavers to have a greater degree of comfort with technical tasks than they found to be the case. An example of this is a cafe owner who offers an Internet facility. She had problems getting staff to learn how to work the computerised till and was surprised that young people can’t do this quickly – “you expect them to do computer skills at school”. Similarly, she is surprised that these younger staff couldn’t help customers with problems on the Personal Computers.

3.6.2 Management skills

In terms of management training, there is very little training being carried out in small organisations in Typology 1 or 2. One organisation in Typology 2 participated in a training programme that included leadership

skills, but it was four years ago. Another company had one member of staff on a Business Management NVQ, but this was not yet complete. Apart from this, none of the other 11 organisations in Typology 1 or 2 were conducting any kind of management training.

The level of management training being carried out by organisations in Typology 3 ranged from none in some micro organisations, to medium/large organisations with structured management training in place.

The manager of a small services company was planning to take a more hands-off approach in the future and planned to 'empower' his other staff to take over most of the management of the business.

"Now I want to impart those (soft) skills to (staff) – time management, communications, leadership skills and selling skills and customer care skills." Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

A small charity in Typology 3 had a structured programme of management training including a course that included performing supervision and appraisals, recruiting and selecting staff, a modular training course for staff involved in the assessment of potential carers and NVQ (level 4) in Management for permanent managers.

In larger organisations in Typology 5 and even some of the less ambitious employers in Typology 4, some kind of management training or training for managers was being carried out. Examples of management training in medium/large organisations are as follows:

- A large (100+ employees) public sector organisation in Typology 4 arranged management training through the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) – a national (UK) organisation which runs training courses on problem solving, communication, team working, management, leadership and motivational courses. In addition, the organisation supported vocational training courses, degrees and diplomas.
- A medium sized (10-99 employees) services business in Typology 4 organised an Away Day for 7 senior managers to discuss career development and future company strategy. They were also participating in a 12 week ILM course and the Managing Director was undertaking a Chartered Management Institute (CMI) course, a one day financial course with an accountant and courses on presentation skills and Excel. In addition, the company had organised other specific courses for managers such as accountancy and courses in project management, contract management and general management.
- A medium sized (10-99 employees) manufacturer in Typology 4 was undertaking National Examining Board Supervisory Studies (NEBS) first level management qualifications for their supervisory staff, as part of a continuous business improvement programme. As part of the programme, the company plans to train 10 members of staff as mentors with the most successful candidates progressing to be assessors. Two members of staff were also undertaking a Masters Degree (MSc) in Total Quality.
- A medium sized (10-99 employees) services business in Typology 5 had a structured training programme for Directors which included studying for an ILM qualification and taking half days out every month to discuss business issues with a mentor. They had also completed an NVQ level 5 in Operations Management.
- A large (100+ employees) manufacturing company in Typology 5 spent a lot of money on management training: "All managers are trained in coaching skills, to give good job instructions. We do a lot of work on interpersonal skills; we identify needs and develop specific programmes to address very tightly focused areas of concern."

4.0 DECISION MAKING



This section covers:

- the degree of planning for training and the role of performance reviews and skills assessment;
- which factors organisations consider when deciding what training to offer;
- the importance of each factor for each of the typologies;

- the usefulness and level of satisfaction with training from the employee's point of view;
- the extent to which organisations carry out refresher training or continual development programmes; and
- how well-equipped owners and directors feel they are to do their jobs and make decisions about training.

Table 4.1 Decision making by typology

Factors	Typology 1	Typology 2	Typology 3	Typology 4	Typology 5
Performance reviews	No (for majority of employers)	No (for majority of employers)	Half of employers	Yes (for majority of employers)	Yes (for all employers)
Relevance/ quality of training	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Cost	Acts as a barrier	Important	Less important if training is relevant	Important	Less important if training is relevant
Time off/staff cover	Acts as a barrier	Important	Important	Less important – can usually organise cover	Less important – can organise cover
Geographic location	Very Important	Very important	Important	Important	Important
Staff reluctance	Acts as a barrier	Acts as a barrier	Finding solutions	Acts as a barrier	Finding solutions
Allocating the learning	Very important	Very important	Important	Important	Important
Refresher training	Undertaken on ad-hoc basis	Undertaken on ad-hoc basis	More strategic	More strategic	More strategic

Table 4.1 shows the main factors considered by organisations when deciding whether to offer training and the importance of each factor comparing across the typologies. The table includes whether performance reviews were carried out as this played an important role in planning for training in many of the organisations.

4.2 Performance reviews

The level of use of performance reviews revealed how different organisations approached decision-making in relation to training and workforce development. The majority of organisations in Typology 4

and Typology 5 approached training decision-making in a very structured way. For these organisations, the start point in deciding what training to offer was to identify skills gaps and training needs based upon staff performance reviews and use this information to develop training plans.

“All staff have a portfolio of training they’ve undertaken – accredited or otherwise and as part of the planning of that training they will have annual reviews where their development needs will be picked up...” Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

“We decide what programme of training we need from training needs analysis and what skills we need. We would then draw up programme specification and objectives and invite 3 or 4 established providers in to tell us how they would deliver what we need – essentially, we would go out to tender.” Director, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

In many of these organisations, training was seen as an integral part of the business and closely linked to business goals. For example, in one organisation in Typology 5 skills gaps were highlighted by failure to reach targets, which were then discussed at the quarterly review staff meetings. They also measured training effectiveness by looking at monthly performance figures. The company had very strict criteria for deciding whether to undertake training.

“We only do training that helps the company reach its objectives. If it doesn’t help the company reach its objectives, we don’t do it. It’s a waste of time.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

Another company in Typology 5 stressed the importance of constantly reviewing the direction of the business and assessing what actions are required in order to sustain their development.

“The business is evolving all the time, there’s changes coming in... as a management team you have to sit back and have a look at what we’re doing, the direction we’re going and what we need to sustain it.”

Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

In addition to annual performance reviews, many organisations in Typology 5 assessed staff using skills matrices or asked their staff to complete Continuing Professional Development logs (CPDs). In one large manufacturing company for example, the staff had to be able to demonstrate that they had acquired certain skills to move to the next grade. The skills were monitored using a database, which was also used to identify skills that staff needed to develop. The information fed into the employee’s annual review and the company’s overall training development plan.

In another large manufacturing firm in Typology 5, each job role had a skills matrix. If a training need was identified, a training plan was drawn up. Percentage scores were used to show how the employee was progressing in each of the training areas until they were 100% competent.

There were a small number of organisations in Typology 4 and Typology 5 that either did not conduct performance reviews or only carried them out for certain job roles (for example office staff but not shop floor staff). Some of these employers said they recognised the value of conducting performance reviews and planned to roll out individual assessment for all staff in the future. Other employers said that they had tried to implement them for all staff, but they were not always relevant for certain job roles (such as shop floor staff).

Whilst most employers in these typologies acknowledged the importance of measuring the effectiveness of training, some employers



admitted that it was not always carried out in practice or it was done on an informal or ad hoc basis. Out of a total of 11 organisations in these typologies, only 3 formally assessed the effectiveness of training by asking staff to complete post-training review forms.

In contrast, only one employer in Typology 1 and two employers in Typology 2 carried out performance reviews and skills assessment was usually very informal. Due to this, training decision-making was a reactive rather than proactive process, with employers waiting until a member of staff asked to attend a course or for changes to occur in their industry before considering undertaking training. As the comment from one employer in Typology 1 demonstrates, some organisations did not believe they had any skills gaps and consequently did not think there was a training need.

“At the moment nothing has changed in the industry so I can’t see any advantage of going on a course...” Director, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

In many instances, companies in Typologies 1 – 3 felt that performance reviews were not relevant for them because the organisation was so small.

“We’re small enough. If we thought there was a problem or someone’s doing really well, we’ll tell them. You don’t need official performance reviews with only eight of you.” Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

In Typology 3 only the companies that were part of larger organisations carried out performance reviews or had structures in place to assess the effectiveness of training. As they were part of larger organisations, their approach and attitude towards performance reviews and the importance of assessing skills gaps were very similar to larger organisations in Typologies 4 and 5.

For example, a small charity in Typology 3, which is part of a larger organisation carried out monthly supervisions and weekly team meetings, which in addition to annual performance reviews, identified skills gaps. During appraisals, staff would consult a development chart that identified skills they should develop during the next year. After training had been undertaken, staff compiled a post-course action plan to explain how they would implement the training and a meeting was held two weeks after the training to review action points and how they had benefited from the training.

Another example was a small firm in Typology 3, which was part of a national franchise. All staff had an annual performance review consisting of three meetings – one set the agenda so that everyone was aware of the discussion points; the review itself, where targets were set and a post-review meeting to check the employee was working towards their targets. The reviews were carried out by the Head Office. The company also assessed the effectiveness of training.

“Assess training? You’ve got to! Otherwise there’s no point in sending them on the course. I want to know what they’ve learned and what use it will be to the business and, just as importantly, what knowledge they can impart to everyone else.” Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

4.3 Relevance and quality of training

The relevance and quality of training courses were typically cited as the most important considerations for businesses. If a training course was not considered appropriate or of benefit to the business, it did not take place. This was particularly the case in smaller organisations, for whom factors such as cost and staff cover meant that training only took place if it would be of immediate benefit to the business.

*“The subject is key – it must be relevant.”
Owner, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees),
Typology 1*

“If we go on a course in the future it will be to benefit the business. If the girls go it will be to benefit the children and themselves.” Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 2

*“It’s important to get the right training course. I must have a course that meets my needs.”
Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1*

For many companies, the relevance of training and perceived benefits to the business were a more important consideration than cost. This was particularly the case for organisations in Typology 3 and Typology 5 where useful and actionable training was seen as vital to growing the business.

*“I spend quite a lot of time researching what course, matching the person to the content... the only reason for doing it is to increase the knowledge of the person doing the job.”
Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5*

4.4 Cost

Whilst cost of training was an important factor, many organisations, particularly those in Typologies 3 and 5, were willing to pay for courses if they felt they were getting good value for money and the training could be proved to be of benefit to the business. Cost was therefore often a secondary consideration.

*“Cost is not a big issue if it benefits me and the business.”
Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees),
Typology 3*

*“If a scheme was put forward to us, I’d look at what the business was going to get out of it and how much it was going to cost.”
Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees),
Typology 3*

In smaller organisations in Typology 1 and 2, the cost of training meant that only mandatory training required by law was undertaken.

*“It would be wonderful if we could send the girls and ourselves on other sorts of courses but at the moment it has to be what’s mandatory.”
Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees),
Typology 2*

Most of the organisations participating in the research were interested in free training but only if.

- it was relevant to their business;
- it was good quality; and
- they could organise staff to cover.

*“If the government gave me free training I would go on every course going and send the staff. But I can’t afford to pay for it. It’s good to keep on learning and learning but there’s not much out there for small businesses just setting up.” Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees),
Typology 1*

A large manufacturing firm that had been able to secure a number of free NVQs was very positive about the advantages of free training. The free NVQs were seen as a huge benefit, as the company was able to promote them to more staff than would have been possible otherwise.

*“As it was free, it was fantastic. It’s showing employees that we are serious about developing them – that helps tremendously, particularly at a time when they haven’t seen anything being spent in terms of pay.”
Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+), Typology 5*



A small nursery school in Typology 2 thought the government should provide courses aimed at meeting statutory obligations free of charge to small businesses such as theirs. Several small companies agreed that extra support should be provided.

“The Local Council should provide the training because they take enough money from us. The Environmental Health Department are quick enough to say ‘do this, do that’ but they don’t provide much practical help.” Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

“They want a healthy economy so they should support us. We’re trying to keep the country going.” Owner, Manufacturing, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 2

“I would argue that there is a lot of mileage in providing some support for us because we are an investment-oriented organisation – we pump a lot of money into this economy. It’s very sensible for the Welsh Assembly Government to be talking to us about what they could do.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

Many of the organisations already attended free training courses and felt that although free training was a bonus, it would not influence their decision to participate in training significantly because the relevance and quality of training were more important considerations. One organisation in Typology 4 felt that free courses may devalue training and that businesses should be prepared to pay if training courses were good quality and what the business wanted.

“It wouldn’t influence really – it’s free already. It might make it more attractive, but it wouldn’t really influence the decision of saying whether someone could go on it. If it’s free, it’s a bonus.” Director, Public Sector, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

“If the courses weren’t good we wouldn’t do them. Even if it was 100% funded, if it wasn’t good, we wouldn’t do it.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

One organisation was not interested in free training at all because he felt it would devalue training and not be available to the right people.

“I think the training would end up with the wrong people – no benefit in making it free of charge – it may seem to devalue the training and I think companies that want to succeed should work to make the training work.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 4

Obtaining funding for training was a major consideration for public sector and charitable organisations. Due to this, a lot of employers spent time trying to secure funding in order to be able to pay for training.

“I’m the project manager and I spend the majority of my time trying to raise money, which is mad in a way... I should be working on expanding the service.” Manager, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“There is a very poor budget for training, so we tend to fund them (courses) through vacancies which means that at the very time you can least afford to free up staff to go on the training, because you are short of staff, but it’s only through that vacancy that you may be able to shift money to fund some of the training.” Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

4.5 Staff cover

The difficulty of not having any staff to cover when training is being undertaken was raised as a problem by several micro and small organisations. The other employees either had to work longer hours to cover for the absent member of staff or a temporary member of staff would be employed, which added to the cost of training. In some industries, such as working with children, there had to be the correct ratio of staff to customers, leaving organisations with no option but to employ another member of staff.

“From a commercial aspect it’s not that easy to give technicians a week off. We don’t get cover we just have to work extra hours. It’s not the money. It’s time.” Director, Manufacturing, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

“It’s got to be when it’s a quiet time, we do need to find cover, obviously you’ve got to pay the girls on the courses and you’ve got to pay someone to cover her.” Owner, Services, Micro (5-9 employees), Typology 2

“Time spent away on courses and cost – they tend to go hand in hand - it’s a pretty high consideration... Some services have to provide cover – teachers have to provide cover. If it’s a caring role, you have to provide cover.” Director, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

One solution to this problem that many small organisations utilised was sending one member of staff on a training course who could afterwards share knowledge with the other staff. A couple of employers mentioned that they preferred shorter intensive training courses with a duration of one or two days rather than longer courses requiring a longer period of cover.

For larger organisations, staff cover was less of an issue, particularly for organisations that encouraged a multi-skilled workforce.

However, when the company was busy it became more difficult to free up staff to be able to train them.

“Where it becomes difficult for us, if we are very busy in production it means we can’t free up people to be able to receive on-the-job training because it’s all hands on deck, concentrating on getting the product out of the door etc. When we go through quiet phases, we’re not actually getting the product manufactured to therefore be able to train. So it’s getting that balance right.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

4.6 Geographical location

The geographic location of training was mentioned by several organisations participating in the research. Many organisations had to send employees on training courses in England, as training in their particular profession or industry was only available on a national (UK level).

“The reason I use head office training is that it’s good, it’s bespoke and very good value for money. The only problem is it’s in London. So I have to release people for two days’ travelling and two nights for the hotel, so it does work out quite expensive.” Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

Some organisations felt that their geographical location meant that there was less opportunity to attend formal training courses due to a lack of good quality provision.

“The hurdle we have is accessing training given our geography... Possibly, we don’t get as much training as we should because of the distance” Director, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3



“We’re miles from anywhere. If we were nearer to Wolverhampton, it would be much easier. It’s difficult to find just the right course pitched at this business... You have to search for what you want.” Line Manager, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“Our biggest bug-bear is that when the courses are organised nationally the nearest venue is Bristol and it’s three hours away... That’s why the local organisation is very good because it brings the national topics to a local market at a very reasonable cost.” Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

“Our opinion of trainers in Wales seems to be very low. It’s localised and inwardly looking and you don’t have the specialised knowledge.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

4.7 Staff reluctance

Several organisations raised the issue of staff reluctance to participate in formal training courses, particularly amongst older or administrative staff. Some organisations felt they did not have a culture of self-learning and continuing development and this was a barrier they had to overcome. Below are some examples of companies that raised this issue:

- A medium sized manufacturing firm in Typology 4: “Some of the guys are Steady Eddies, they may be at the latter end of their career and they’re not interested in training”
- A large manufacturing firm in Typology 5: “One of the challenges we have is that we have an incredibly stable workforce and management. The weakness is that generally people operate with the skills they’ve been using for a long time, and people tend to stop learning new stuff in their 30s. It’s difficult to get them to change, especially culturally.”

- A large public sector organisation in Typology 4: “(A key barrier to learning is) reluctance to learn, or reluctance to admit they don’t know it. We want to get them to recognise opportunities for learning – go back to on-the-job development, but people are learning all the time – if only they would realise it!”
- A medium sized building firm in Typology 5: “The Property Manager says he doesn’t need training but we say that improving his time management by 10% will improve his sales by 30 or 40%. So we’ve had that kind of barrier. They think it’s a personal attack.”

Whilst many companies cited staff reluctance as a reason why some staff were excluded from learning, several organisations in Typologies 3 and 5 worked hard to find solutions. One company had turned around the problem of apathy with an older member of staff by encouraging training for all levels of staff. This was partly due to new regulations, which meant that companies in their industry have to prove all staff were fully trained and competent. As a result, the company encouraged all staff to undertake training and everyone was entitled to a week off per year to undertake training of their choice.

“One member of staff in his 50s, who was probably the oldest, a bit set in his ways – don’t tell me how to do my job etc – and he’s now a born-again insurance person. He’s done his (name of training courses) and is now going for another higher-level exam.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

In another organisation, they had introduced more skills-based informal training as an alternative to formal training courses.

“We’ve traditionally had problems with the type of worker we have here. They don’t want to go off site to college. Some are older guys who haven’t been in the education system for years and they don’t like to receive education per se and the thought of an exam is alien to them. For me to force them into that kind of training doesn’t fit in with the culture. So, I’ve had to arrange training that they’re comfortable with, that gives them skills rather than qualifications.”
 Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

Another company was able to promote NVQs, which suited their employees, as they were more vocational and easier to fit in with commitments outside of work.

“Some employees want to progress, but are frightened to death of going to college because they didn’t come out of school with very high qualifications – and a lot of them have got young families and wouldn’t be able to fit in assignments and dissertations and that kind of thing, it’s just not practical. So the NVQ was a way of us giving them the same type of development.”
 Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

A couple of organisations also raised the issue of a reluctance of line managers or senior staff to allow their staff to participate in training. The director’s believed this was because they had targets to meet and therefore didn’t want to be short staffed and also because they felt threatened by ‘up-skilling’ of those who directly report to them.

“Some team leaders... they may feel sometimes that people below them have been better trained than them and could possibly be a threat to them.”
 Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

Another organisation saw the reluctance of managers to allow their staff to attend training as a real barrier to developing the team further.

“It’s turf guarding and it can be a big barrier to training.”
 Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 4

At the same time, many managers were more likely to accept they had a training need themselves, to maintain the difference in skills level.

4.8 Allocating the learning

For most organisations participating in the research, the decision about which staff should attend training was the final consideration after other factors such as quality and relevance, cost and staff time had been taken into account. For some micro and small organisations, particularly those in Typologies 1 and 2, only trainees undertook training due to cost constraints and because of a perceived lower training need for other members of staff.

“In our situation, we’ve only got one trainee so it’s very easy to decide who gets training.”
 Director, Public Sector, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

In organisations where funding was an issue the managers often had to prioritise which staff participated in training.

“..because resources are finite, we might fund one MSc this year and the line manager would have to prioritise and say (to staff) look, we can’t fund you this year but we’ll fund you next year.”
 Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4



4.9 Refresher training

Most organisations recognised the value of refresher training or continuing development in order to:

- keep up with changes in their industry;
- comply with legislation;
- continue to develop staff;
- improve staff retention; and/or
- improve service and become more cost effective.

“You can’t afford to become complacent because materials and procedures are changing, it’s an ongoing learning process.”

Director, Public Sector, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

In Typologies 1, 2 and 4, refresher training was not strategic, it was carried out on an ad hoc basis when it was deemed necessary. More active learning organisations in Typologies 3 and 5 were more likely to encourage continuing development.

‘(Training) really is a big part of keeping us up to date and providing a good service... it’s part of aiming towards best practice service provision’

Director, Charity, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

4.10 Owner/Director’s own needs and perspectives

There were mixed views about how well owners and directors felt they were equipped to do their own jobs. In some cases, particularly in Typology 1, they felt that they did not have a training need as they were fully trained and there had not been any recent changes in their industry. One owner said he would wait until other members of staff commented on an area of weakness.

“At the moment nothing has changed in the industry so I can’t see any advantage of going on a course at the moment. But if things were to change, if technology changed, then I’d go on a refresher course.”

Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

Other directors recognised that they did have skills that needed to be developed and factors such as lack of time or cost had prevented them from undertaking training.

“I feel reasonably prepared, but there are areas where I have less experience....I don’t feel I have all the skills I need.”

Director, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

Some also felt that as their job was to develop other people, they did not consider their own development needs as much as they should.

“I tend to focus on other people’s development rather than my own, that’s just my natural style I think. But cost is a big factor because I’m costed to the HR department, the HR budget is very limited... We tend to look at free courses to update us. I do get a little bit irritated by that sometimes. However, I do know that if I really do want to push for something the manager here would support me particularly if it would have an impact here...” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

A few of the owners/directors participating in the research admitted they did not feel fully equipped to make decisions about learning and training. The director of a small firm of solicitors in Typology 1 admitted that the secretarial staff needed training but he was unsure what they needed.

“I think the secretarial staff could benefit from some training. But if you ask me what, I don’t know... We’re thinking about training in this area and we’ll be concentrating our minds on it more fully in the next year but we need some hand holding on that.” Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

A few owners/directors felt that their own lack of management skills were acting as a barrier to growing the business.

“We need a lot of input on succession management. We’re growing quickly and we need management structures underneath but we don’t know how to manage them so it’s a barrier to growth.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

4.11 Line Manager’s perspective

In many cases, the line manager had benefited more from training than the director interviewed at the same company. This was often because the director was in a more strategic role and if they were responsible for training within the organisation, they were more likely to focus on other employees’ training needs than their own. In contrast, the line manager tended to be in a more functional role where training was necessary in order for them to perform their day-to-day role. In all interviews, line managers felt their company had supported them through training and they had received enough training to do their job.

The following are examples of line managers’ learning experience whilst working for their current employer:

- A line manager in a medium sized (10-99 employees) manufacturing company in Typology 5 explained how he had benefited from a range of on-the-job training and had received generic training such as health and safety, as well as more sector-specific training

courses. He had also attended a team leader training course, which he had found very useful.

- In a medium sized (10-99 employees) manufacturing company in Typology 4, the manager felt the company had trained him adequately for his role, funding him to take Institute of Management courses as well as an MSc.
- In a large (100+ employees) public sector organisation in Typology 4, the line manager had participated in a PP+ programme (Performance Planning plus), which aimed to standardise good management procedures across the organisation. The organisation had also funded her to undertake an NVQ Level 5, which has updated her management skills and helped her realise “that I can do my job... it’s helped me make sure I’m on target.”
- In a large (100+ employees) manufacturing company in Typology 5, the line manager felt he had been trained well to fulfil his role and the company had supported and encouraged him to learn. “The company definitely has supported me, yes. I’ve done an MSc in manufacturing management and the company sponsored me, so I can’t complain.”

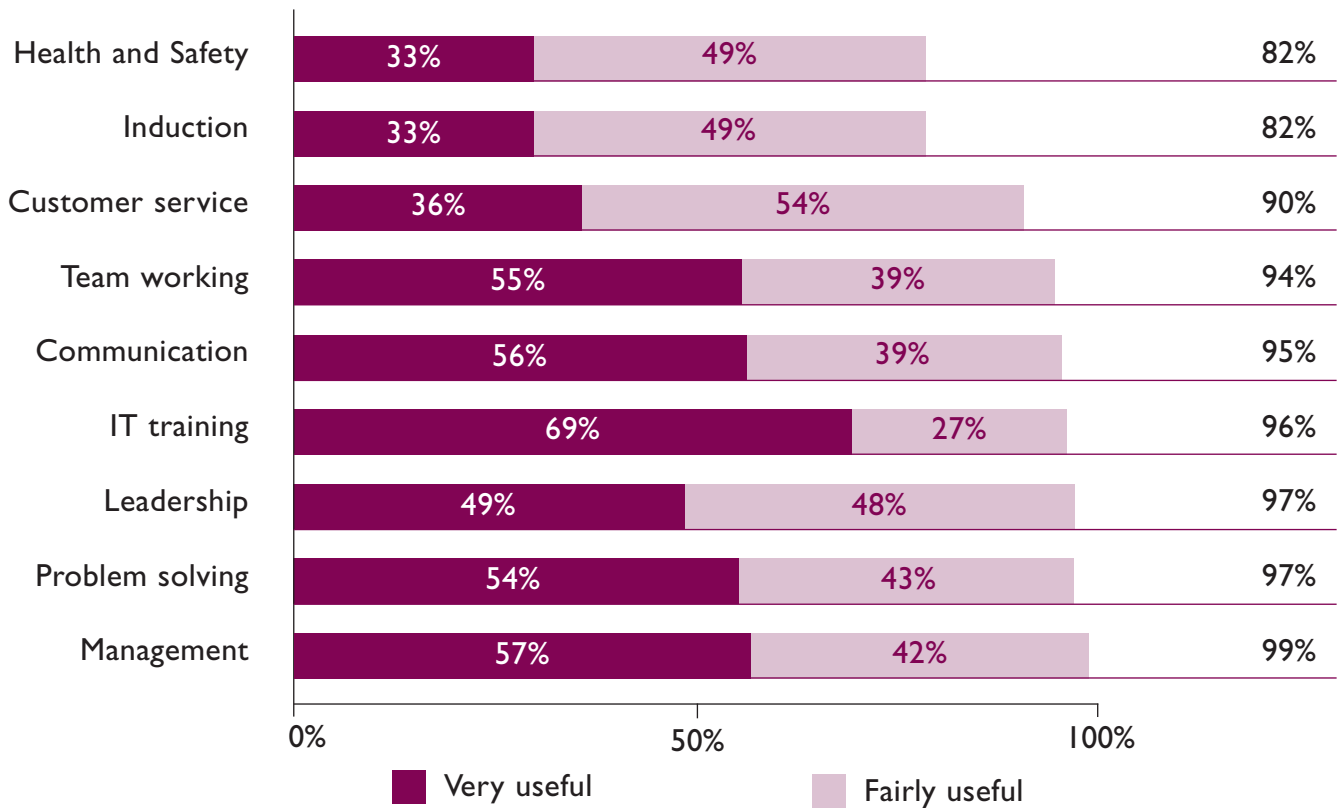
4.12 Employee perspective

On the self-completion questionnaire, employees were asked to rate how useful they had found the training they had undertaken. Chart 4.1 shows how useful the respondents found the main types of training being carried out. The majority of respondents felt the training courses they had attended had been either very or fairly useful, although health and safety and induction training were seen as less useful than other types of training.



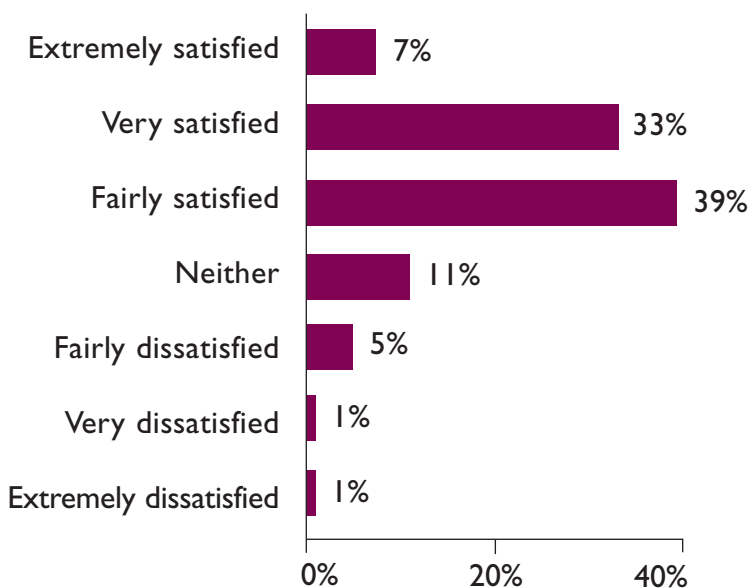
Chart 4.1 Usefulness of training

Very/Fairly useful



Base: All respondents who have participated in training

Chart 4.2 Overall satisfaction with learning/training experience whilst with current employer



Base: All respondents (n=299)

Employees were also asked which learning experience had been most useful with their current employer. The most useful learning experiences were:

- Computer/IT training (11%);
- On-the-job learning/training (10%);
- Useful training that enabled them to do their jobs better or work more efficiently (9%).

The least useful learning experiences were:

- Induction training (11%);
- Training/courses not relevant to my job (7%).

This backed up the employer view that training that was specific to the job role or relevant to the organisation was most valued.

Chart 4.2 shows the overall satisfaction with the learning/training experience with their current employer. The majority of respondents (79%) were extremely, very or fairly satisfied.

Overall, levels of satisfaction are high amongst new starters (51% are extremely/very satisfied) and tended to drop significantly for employees who have worked for their company for more than a year (on average 40% were extremely or very satisfied). Respondents that had undertaken training in the last 12 months were also more likely to be extremely or very satisfied (44%) compared to those that hadn't (30%) suggesting that apathy or lack of awareness of the training available impacts upon satisfaction.

Employees were asked which skills they would like to improve by either a) on-the-job training or b) formal training. The main skills they would like to improve via on-the-job training were:

- General IT skills (30%)
- Team working (24%)
- Communication skills (24%)
- Problem solving (20%)
- Management (19%)
- Leadership/motivational (19%)

The skills they would like to improve via formal training were:

- General IT skills (33%)
- Leadership/motivational (23%)
- Welsh language (22%)
- Management (21%)

32% of respondents said there were job-specific skills they would like to improve. When asked which job-specific skills, 14% said IT skills and 10% said management skills, which many directors also said was a skill that needed improving. 6 out of 10 respondents (60%) wanted to improve their job-specific skills via both on-the-job and formal training, 24% preferred formal training sessions and 14% preferred on-the-job only.

The employee view on the preferred provider of formal training was roughly equally split between those that preferred courses to be run by their employer (45%) and those that preferred another organisation (42%).

Part-time staff were more likely to prefer courses run by their employer (53% compared to 42% for full-time staff). Female staff and those aged 25 – 34 were also more likely to prefer courses run by their employer (48% and 52% respectively).

Almost half of respondents preferred courses to be run off site (48%) compared to 40% who preferred courses run at work. As expected, part-time staff were more likely to prefer courses on site (51%). The proportion of respondents preferring off site training declines through the age groups with 60% of the 45+ age group preferring training at work.

Employees were asked what would encourage them to undertake more learning or training at work. The responses are shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Factors encouraging staff to undertake more learning/training

Base: All respondents (299)	%
If learning/training would lead to a recognised qualification	67
If my employer offered relevant learning/training	65
If my employer provided time off work for learning/training	62
If my employer paid for my training	60
If there was someone to cover my workload whilst I was learning/training	45
If I had more information about the type of learning/training on offer	43
If I was under less pressure at work	42
If learning/training was delivered in a way that suited my learning style	42
If I could do the learning/training in stages rather than all in one go	33



Table 4.3 Level of agreement with learning/training attitude statements

Attitude statement	Agree Strongly	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Base: All respondents (299)	%	%	%	%	%
It is my responsibility to communicate my learning/training needs to my line manager	34	58	92	4	4
My employer should provide learning/training opportunities to help me to do my job well	38	52	90	5	5
It is my responsibility to identify my learning/training needs	24	62	86	10	4
I am encouraged to undertake learning/training by my employer	15	60	76	19	5
I receive sufficient training to do my job well	10	57	66	26	8
My line manager reviews my learning/training needs with me on a regular basis	15	50	65	23	5
My line manager understands how I like to learn	6	39	45	38	16
I feel pressurised to undertake learning/training by my employer	1	3	4	91	5

The majority of respondents said their learning/training needs were identified during appraisals (67%) or through informal chats with their line manager (58%). However, almost 6 out of 10 respondents identified their training needs themselves (58%). A small minority (8%) said their learning/training needs were not identified. Almost all respondents (91%) said they would approach their line manager to discuss learning/training needs at work.

Employees were asked their level of agreement with a number of statements relating to learning and training. Their responses are shown in table 4.2.

Whereas most employees agreed that it was their responsibility to communicate their

learning/training needs to their line manager (92%), a smaller percentage thought it was their responsibility to identify their training needs (86%). Whilst 9 out of 10 respondents (90%) agreed that employers should provide them with opportunities to help do their job well, in practice only three-quarters (76%) felt they were encouraged to undertake learning/training by their employer.

Overall, a quarter of respondents did not agree that they received sufficient training to do their jobs well and only 10% strongly agreed that they did. Significantly, almost 4 out of 10 respondents (38%) did not agree that their line manager understood how they like to learn.

5.0 TRAINING PROVISION

This section covers:

- the training provision available to organisations (both public or privately funded);
- features of good and bad training; and
- perceived gaps in provision.

5.1 Summary

Awareness and knowledge of training provision available increased through the typologies. Organisations in Typology 1 were most likely to have a limited knowledge of what was available whilst those in Typologies 3 to 5 were most likely to work in partnership with several providers to ensure their training was as valuable as possible.

Typology 4/5 Typology 3 Typology 2 Typology 1	↑ Knowledge and awareness of training provision increase through Typologies
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Training that is tailored towards their particular business was mentioned most often as a feature of good training. Employers also stressed the importance of good trainers who adapted to the needs of the group, using good quality, recommended providers and convenient locations.

Many organisations felt that although there were a lot of training providers, they lacked the specialist knowledge about their industry or the expertise to impart 'soft skills' such as communication skills, team building or behavioural training to their organisation.

5.2 Selection of training provision

Many of the organisations in Typology 1 and Typology 2 admitted that they were not aware of the training provision available to them, where to look for information or how to source funding.

"I wouldn't have a clue." Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

"I've heard of some provision but never followed it up because there hasn't been any need." Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

Knowledge of training providers tended to extend only as far as the company currently used for NVQs or training providers for mandatory training, such as food hygiene or first aid courses. Some organisations were aware of industry-specific training provision, which they had gleaned from trade press and flyers but they tended to have a passive approach to sourcing training, preferring to wait for companies to contact them rather than search for information. Due to the general lack of awareness about training provision, there was little distinction between public and privately funded provision and many respondents could not even name the providers they had used in the past.

The organisations in Typology 2 tended to be more likely to be proactive in their approach to sourcing training provision and be aware of the provision available to them. For example, a small nursery school was a member of the Pre-school Playgroup Association (PPA), which sends them information about their courses and qualifications. The majority of the courses they attended were provided free of charge by Sure Start, a government funded programme.

Another example was a restaurant in Typology 2, which was aware of the Objective 1 European Social Fund. The owner also had close contacts with two local Further Education colleges which he had used for NVQ training and regularly contacted the colleges and the British Institute of Innkeeping for advice.



The organisations in Typologies 3-5 were much more likely to have a good knowledge of the training provision available and work in partnership with training providers to ensure the provision would be tailored to their organisation.

“The local authority offers good general courses... When we buy in training it’s very specific... we give them a very specific brief so that they address the key issues... We have more control.” Director, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

Many organisations had preferred suppliers that they had used in the past and knew would deliver good quality and relevant training. Word of mouth was useful to find out about good quality provision from similar organisations or other sites. The selection of training provision was much more structured in larger organisations with managers typically agreeing their objectives and meeting a number of providers before choosing the most suitable company.

“Every year we’ll meet a number of training providers. I might come across a brochure I like the look of, or because someone makes contact with me and I like the sound of what they’re saying, or I think it’s an area we need to explore. I like to build up a portfolio of people I trust, who will work very closely to deliver exactly what this organisation needs. And they have to be flexible.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

Whilst some organisations felt that local FE colleges provided the best training for them and that private training was overpriced and poor quality in comparison, other companies preferred private provision because they could ensure they fully understood any industry-specific quirks or jargon and knew exactly what the company was trying to achieve. This variation in opinion seems to depend on the industry within which the employer operates.

“It is difficult sometimes sourcing the training that you want. This is why we’ve tended to use quite expensive suppliers for training... but at least they deliver an excellent package.” Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

The organisations in Typology 4 and Typology 5 used a range of sources of advice including local colleges, professional institutes and information from organisations such as ELWa and the Welsh Development Agency (WDA).

“The courses provided by the WDA have been very good. They’ve identified providers and consultants and that’s been very beneficial to us. We’ve had a number of cost saving initiatives coming out of it.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

A number of organisations mentioned that they had worked closely with ELWa in the past and they had relied on them as a source of funding and advice, but funding had dried up within the last couple of years. Many respondents were unhappy and disappointed that this support was no longer available to them, particularly as they had a good working relationship with ELWa previously.

“It worked fantastically, great scheme... Just when they have something working perfectly fine they change it.” Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

“ELWa are conspicuous by their absence. We hope they can resolve their internal difficulties and get back to doing what they were set up for in the first place.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

“In the past, I’ve had a contract with ELWa, with matched funding on training but I haven’t used it for the last couple of years – money’s tight with ELWa and because I’ve got very good staff retention, the sort of external training I need is few and far between.” Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“To be fair, ELWa were really quite generous... we were receiving up to 50% funding in lots of areas which obviously makes a big difference. But just lately, that funding doesn't seem to be there any more but we still have to carry out the training.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“The key contact I had was made redundant and I wasn't even told officially by ELWa. I had that relationship with him for two years and it was a very good relationship. In the last 12 months I have tried to approach them for funding, which I've been able to get in previous years, but they've been following their own internal processes and I've lost out on opportunities for funding – mainly because I have not had a contact. ELWa as an organisation hasn't kept me informed as to what's going on. In the last 18 months, it's almost as if they don't even exist. I've been very disappointed, it's almost as if we've been left high and dry.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

One public sector organisation in Typology 3 used to fund 50% of training courses through ELWa. Over a period of time, the funding was no longer available. The organisation now has to source training themselves paid for by grants or private funds. They had recently won a Tallow Chandlers award for excellence and a City and Guilds Medal for Excellence and contacted ELWa to highlight their success. The director was disappointed that ELWa had not got in touch with them about the story. Since this research uncovered this issue, ELWa has been back in contact with this organisation and will be highlighting this achievement through press activity where relevant.

5.3 Features of good and bad training

For all organisations, the most important features of good training were:

- targeted training that was specific to their business;
- positive, approachable and patient trainers;
- the opportunity to ask questions;
- adapting to the needs of the group;
- small groups;
- a recommended provider;
- on-the-job training (for shop floor and catering job roles); and
- good location.

“I know that training supplied by the franchisor is excellent. It's specific and tried and tested.” Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“The quality of the trainer... makes or breaks how good the training is. It's a real skill to train people” Director, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

Some colleges had better feedback than others, which usually depended upon the quality of the lecturers.

“We get better feedback from some colleges – it depends on the lecturers and the specific courses. Some lecturers are better than others.” Line Manager, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“Personally speaking, it's been very mixed. It depends on who the course leader is or who the speakers are. Some are good and some are terrible. It's the luck of the draw.” Director, Services, Small (4-9 employees), Typology 1

Employers tended to be suspicious about unknown training providers, companies that advertised through mailshots or glossy magazines through the post or courses that were unusually cheap. These were felt to be 'hit and miss' and they would like to see proper endorsements or recommendations.



“They were absolutely awful... you get what you pay for.” Owner, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“I recently went to a course on motivation – a free place – I’m just glad I didn’t spend the £150. I walked out after an hour. It was appalling.” Manager, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“Some of the companies you see advertise courses for £250 – it would be a little hard for me to find that for a lot of people... I would think can we really afford that and whether we’d get that much benefit out of doing it” Owner, Manufacturing, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 2

5.4 Gaps in Provision

Several organisations raised the issue of a lack of targeted training and knowledge about their particular industry. Training either needed to be more specific to their industry or more practical and related to particular job roles.

“Maybe there’s a particular skill out there that we’re trying, to develop our technologies or business, but maybe there is no provider that can offer that type of training or qualification. It might be a totally new area for us and it might also be a new area for academia” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“With soft skills, I don’t trust the providers. I impart my own skills. Quality of soft skills is the barrier because I just don’t know what the quality is going to be like. You’ve got so many cowboys in the industry.” Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“There’s lots of providers out there, but it’s getting the right one that can do behavioural training that’s needed.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

Several smaller organisations, particularly those in Typology 2 that were keen to offer more training but unsure how to go about it, admitted that lack of awareness was their greatest barrier to learning.

“They need to tell people more about it” Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 2

“We’re only aware of what people send us through the post or if we are telephoned” Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 2

A small number of organisations said they were not happy with the quality of NVQ training. This was either because it was too basic, or they lacked confidence in the trainers and felt the courses did not deliver the skills the company requires.

“It’s generally delivered by has-beens to a very narrow format in a narrow way; or it’s pile it high sell it cheap sort of stuff.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“I suspect the only reason they’re still in business is because they get funding (from a public body) but the people who fund them need to take a good look at them to see if they’re doing the job properly. Some providers are excellent and some are dreadful.” Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions and recommendations

ELWa's aim is to get more employers to:

- become involved in learning;
- offer learning more widely across the workforce;
- appreciate the potential value of learning both for themselves (as managers) and for their businesses; and
- enjoy successful learning experiences.

The key survey objectives were therefore to explore:

TRIGGERS (Factors motivating businesses to invest in learning)

ACCESS (A typology of the decision-making chain for different types of businesses in order to understand how ELWa could ensure that obstacles/barriers are removed and that delivery and content of learning best meets the needs of businesses)

REINFORCEMENT (How to ensure a successful experience that will optimise the possibility of investing in learning again and the factors that are most important in driving satisfaction and meeting expectations)

WIDENING HORIZONS (How ELWa could increase and sustain maximum awareness within businesses of the wider opportunities that learning offers and a desire to exploit these).

This chapter looks at these objectives in detail and identifies how ELWa can achieve the above goals.

6.1 Triggers

One of the key objectives of this research was to identify the factors that motivate businesses to invest in learning. Almost all the businesses taking part in the research recognised the benefits of learning and many organisations (particularly those in Typology 3 and 5) saw learning as crucial to growing the business.

In Typology 1 – 2, companies recognised that learning was beneficial but it was focused more on being able to keep the business afloat, having well trained staff and keeping up-to-speed with what was going on in their industry.

The key 'triggers' that motivate businesses to invest in training are outlined in table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Triggers motivating businesses to invest in training

Typologies 1 – 2	Typologies 3 – 5
Having efficient and well trained staff;	Key to delivering 'best practice' service delivery;
Improving knowledge and skill set of owners/directors;	Improving and maintaining staff morale and staff retention;
Improving staff morale;	Improving efficiency and effectiveness;
Helping to develop the business and improve customer service;	Having a multi-skilled workforce;
To help keep the business afloat.	Key to growing the business.



6.1.1 'Triggers' for motivating Typologies 1 – 2 to invest more in training

The key 'triggers' for motivating businesses in Typologies 1 – 2 are outlined below with quotations from owners/directors to back up points:

1) Having efficient & well trained staff

"You get an efficient chair-side assistant, it makes your day far easier than with someone who's not very confident."

Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

2) Improving knowledge & skills set of owners/directors

"I see it as an investment... the amount of days spent training is minuscule in relation to the amount of days spent working. I'd have been restricted in my knowledge without the training so in the long run I get more business."

Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

"I benefited most from the training. I learnt lots of things. I thought it was brilliant. It makes you more aware." Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

3) Improving staff morale

"People grow if you invest in them – it improves everyone's skills – and you have a happier environment." Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

4) Helping to develop the business and improve customer service

"We're more aware so the place looks better and if the shop is cleaner, people will buy more off you." Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees), Typology 1

"Parents who come to view the nursery, it's good to say that we are first aiders and we are properly trained." Owner, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 2

5) To help keep the business afloat

"Training has little benefit to us in terms of turnover, it just helps us to give a better service. But it certainly stops you losing turnover."

Director, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 1

6.1.2 'Triggers' for motivating Typologies 3 – 5 to invest in more training

The 'triggers' influencing Typologies 3 – 5 were more strategic:

1) Key to delivering 'best practice' service delivery

"It really is a big part of keeping us up to date and providing a good service... it's part of aiming towards best practice service provision."

Director, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

"The mistakes they make by not training properly could be very expensive to the business not only in money, but also in damage to our reputation." Manager, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

"We're seen as professional, the staff know what they're talking about – so we think it's very good. The company has grown a lot in the past two years – we think a lot of that has been related to the training... We see training as part and parcel of running the business. We've got to have staff who know what they're doing."

Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

2) Improving and maintaining staff morale and staff retention

“If you don’t train your staff, they don’t feel valued. They don’t work efficiently... I look upon the staff as the main asset.” Manager, Services, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

“I think the staff are more motivated (after being trained) which should reflect in better performance and a better quality process. Somewhere down the line it should reduce costs and retain the workforce.”

Director, Manufacturing, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 4

“Hopefully by building up the right atmosphere in the company, they are not going to want to leave, because they are being promoted and motivated and moved on.” Director, Services, Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 5

3) Improving efficiency & effectiveness

“(The benefits of training are) greater effectiveness, efficiency, better skills base, better recruitment and retention, networking.” Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

“The turnover has increased... increased productivity, increased efficiency... quality has improved and it’s mainly through the training that’s been provided.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

4) Having a multi-skilled workforce

“The more multi-skilled the better...without flexibility you let people down, for example on one day there were 29 staff off sick with the flu, but because there were multi-skilled staff we could pull others from different jobs... this was down to training.” Line Manager, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

“The fact we’ve got a more multi-skilled workforce – I don’t think you can put a cost on that. We’ve got more flexibility in different areas of our business – that is a great bonus to us. If you’ve got one area that’s quiet and another that’s really busy – to be able to move one group into another area – it’s obviously going to save us money.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

5) Key to growing the business

“It’s all to do with the bottom line – delivering quality products on time today, and also delivering strategic and profitable growth for tomorrow. Training has to address both those. That’s what we’re trying to do with the framework of categories.” Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

6.2 Access

A further objective was to understand the decision-making chain for different types of businesses to ensure that barriers to learning are removed and that delivery and content of training best meets the needs of businesses.

The Decision Making chapter looked in detail at the key factors that companies considered when deciding what learning/training to offer.

These factors were:

- relevance of learning/training;
- quality of learning/training provider;
- cost;
- time off/staff cover;
- geographic location; and
- allocating the training.

Whilst all these factors were important to all types of business, smaller, non-profit and public sector organisation in Typologies 1, 2 and 4 were more likely to be affected by funding issues and to struggle with organising time off for training and staff cover.



The relevance of training was important to all organisations, but larger private sector businesses were more likely to prefer customised training that was specific to their company and to place a higher emphasis on networking and recommendations for training providers to ensure they had the best type of training for them. Cost and quality was often a trade off, with organisations in Typologies 3 and 5 being prepared to pay more for what they considered to be better quality provision.

“They were absolutely awful... you get what you pay for.” Owner, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

The presence of performance reviews had a strong impact on decision-making. In smaller organisations in Typologies 1 and 2 where

performance reviews were less likely to take place (or only for certain types of staff), decision making tended to be much more ad hoc and carried out according to need. In contrast, in many medium and large organisations in Typologies 3 – 5, skills gap analysis and feedback from performance reviews played a huge part in shaping training plans and the strategic direction of the company.

An examination of the less active learning organisations shows that there are a variety of factors which stand in the way of learning activity. The tables below summarise the factors that limit training activity (management and job-specific) and highlight possible actions that could be taken to deal with these obstacles.

Table 6.2 Messages to promote participation in management training

Factors which limit training activity	Comment from ELW ^a and partners	Messages
Perception that they know everything they need to know	This may be true but it may also be a case of setting sights/standards too low or not realising the value of regularly updating one’s skills.	ELW ^a and partners to issue a request to businesses in Wales to review current business plans and targets for growth against current skills; and/or: highlight that improving skills can make their life easier and less stressful.
Feeling that they could benefit from some management training but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No time 	They are not making time, it is low on the list of priorities.	Improving skills will save time and money in the long run.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training takes priority 	Short term thinking, fire fighting mode.	Staff will benefit if managers improve their own managerial skills.
Don’t know how to access (and haven’t looked)	They are out of the loop, not part of a business network.	Seek out networking opportunities to raise awareness of learning/ training channels.

Table 6.3 Messages to promote participation in job-specific training

Factors which limit training activity	Comment from ELWa and partners	Messages
<p>Prefer to bring in ready trained staff</p> <p>Staff are trained up when they join then don't need any more</p> <p>Can get most training needed from equipment manufacturers/franchise company</p>	<p>Fine but what about refresher training, to keep up to date with sector developments.</p> <p>Worth looking at some training which may lead to qualifications or career development – something a bit less ad hoc.</p> <p>Cost is a factor – courses used are perceived as free.</p>	<p>Emphasise the possible performance and motivational improvements resulting from refresher training.</p> <p>Promote the value of taking a progressive approach. Work with equipment manufacturers/franchise companies to see if any of their courses can act as building blocks towards qualifications. Make employers aware of any funding available.</p>
<p>Whole of budget spent on mandatory training</p>	<p>Suggests not considering wider business needs.</p>	<p>Make employers aware of any funding available.</p>
<p>Wait for staff to say if they need training</p>	<p>Seems unrealistic. There must be some skill needs which are best identified by managers with longer term business objectives in mind. Many staff would not necessarily see themselves as training material and would therefore need much more active encouragement.</p>	<p>Actively promote management training relating to skills needs analysis and staff review/appraisals.</p>
<p>Something needed but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff reluctant to learn 	<p>Presumably true in some cases but in others some sweeping assumptions are being made and staff's reluctance or fear could be overcome with more encouragement/persuasion plus awareness that training need not involve formal classroom type set-ups.</p>	<p>Make businesses and employees aware of the range of learning styles and media available. Understand employee's motivation to learn.</p> <p>Promote wider benefits of learning to employees.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't know of any suitable training and haven't looked 	<p>Waiting for something to come to them.</p>	<p>Actively promote learning opportunities.</p>



For organisations in Typologies 2 and 4, the limiting factors were less varied and complex, mainly taking the form of cost considerations and difficulty getting cover for certain staff. This is limiting the range of training activity carried out and the extent to which learning is available across the workforce.

In several organisations, directors felt there was a culture of staff apathy or reluctance to participate in learning, particularly amongst older staff or staff who did not enjoy formal education. However, the findings from the employee questionnaire show that a quarter of respondents disagreed that they received enough training to do their job well and almost 4 out of 10 disagreed that their line manager understood how they like to learn. These results suggest that what employers interpreted as a reluctance to learn may have been a lack of understanding about how some employees prefer to learn.

The preferred content and delivery of training varied by business and learning type and staff preference. The employee questionnaire responses showed that most respondents preferred to improve generic skills such as team working, communication and problem solving via on-the-job training. However, the preferred delivery of management and leadership/motivational skills were less clear-cut with an almost equal proportion preferring formal training sessions to on-the-job learning. Therefore, advice needs to be offered to employers to help them understand their employee's learning needs and preferences, either via staff surveys or appraisals and reviews. Learning content and delivery needs to be tailored to suit each organisation and individual employee.

6.3 Reinforcement

In order to understand which factors are important in driving satisfaction and meeting expectations, good and bad training experiences need to be examined. In terms of good training experiences, businesses were looking for:

- targeted training that was specific to their business;
- positive, approachable and patient trainers;
- a recommended provider;
- on-the-job training if deemed more appropriate;
- cost-effective;
- adapting to the needs of the group; and
- good location.

The most important consideration for businesses was whether the training was useful and relevant. If training was not seen as relevant to their organisation or industry then it did not take place. Relevant or job-specific training usually took precedence over soft skills training, particularly in smaller, less active organisations where cost was more of an influence.

The quality of the trainer was highlighted as important by several organisations using both private training providers and public sector colleges.

“The quality of the trainer... makes or breaks how good the training is. It's a real skill to train people.” Director, Non-profit, Small (5-9 employees), Typology 3

Businesses preferred to use providers who had been recommended to them rather than providers who advertise through mailshots or glossy magazines; these were seen as more of a risk. Many companies believed you 'get what you pay for' in terms of provision and were prepared to pay more for better quality provision.

Looking at the responses to the employee questionnaire, almost 8 out of 10 employees were satisfied with the learning experience at their current employer, but only 7% were extremely satisfied and the largest proportion (39%) were only fairly satisfied. The factors that drive this satisfaction need to be understood.

The findings suggest that many respondents were not satisfied because they did not receive enough training. Notably, satisfaction levels were much higher amongst those who had undertaken training in the last 12 months and new starters. This may be because new starters were likely to receive more training.

Overall, most employees thought their training had been useful, although health and safety and induction training was seen as less useful than other types of training. The most useful learning experiences tended to be those that were job-related or which helped employees work better or more efficiently.

Employees were also asked what would encourage them to undertake more learning or training at work. The main motivators were:

- if it led to a recognised qualification (67%);
- if their employer offered relevant learning/training (65%);
- if their employer provided time off work (62%); or
- if their employer paid for their training (60%).

These factors were far more important to employees than other factors. Although employers recognised the importance of relevant training, gaining qualifications is perhaps more important than businesses realise.

6.4 Widening horizons

From these case studies, organisations that were classified as Typologies 3 and 5 emerged as best-practice learning organisations. Of the remaining businesses, Typology 1 was relatively inactive in terms of training and unambitious in relation to business development, whilst Typology 2 and 4 were more active but did not take as expansive and inclusive an approach to training as their counterparts in Typologies 3 and 5.

In order to achieve its goals, ELWa faces the task of moving employers to the levels that the best practice organisations have reached.

This will entail different approaches depending on the organisation's starting point.

In smaller, less active organisations in Typology 1, making them aware of free training provision in their specific line of business would be beneficial, particularly if funding was limiting the amount of training they provide. In many instances, the businesses were not aware of the training provision available and learning is not high up on their list of priorities. Learning opportunities therefore need to be actively promoted to raise the awareness and benefits of learning amongst these businesses.

As many companies in Typologies 1 and 2 rely on free training offered by equipment manufacturers, it is worth looking into working together with these companies to ensure the training is wide-ranging and employees have the opportunity to work towards qualifications.

Arguably, the organisations in Typologies 2 and 4 are at a key point in their development as they are committed to the idea of learning. However, they need active support particularly with funding, if they are to move on to the next level as the comments from organisations below illustrate.

*"It would be wonderful we could send the girls and ourselves on other sorts of courses but at the moment it has to be what's mandatory."
Owner, Services, Micro (1-4 employees),
Typology 2*

*"The business and training plan are very fluid and a bit of a wish list of where we'd like to get to. The reality is that the day-to-day survival takes over."
Director, Manufacturing,
Medium (10-99 employees), Typology 4*



“Most of the staff actually just value the fact that they do have the time to go (on courses). The biggest problem is that we don’t have the budget.” Line Manager, Public Sector, Large (100+ employees), Typology 4

Evidence suggests that if these companies received support to help them overcome their training-related constraints, they have a positive attitude towards learning and would be happy to offer a wider range of training opportunities.

In ‘best practice’ organisations in Typologies 3 and 5, ELW needs to work in partnership with organisations to make them aware of relevant, good quality and customised provision. In some larger organisations, for example the following manufacturer in Typology 5, directors felt they could benefit from working with organisations such as ELW in a more strategic way, to help them develop a more balanced workforce or encourage more staff to participate in learning.

“One issue is that we’ve got a very mature management, and with a flat structure it’s very difficult to bring people through. If ELW could work with us on sponsoring 3 or 4 graduate trainees, we could find a way to develop them. It would make a huge difference to the organisation. It could enable us to do some succession planning and release line managers from day-to-day responsibilities, and it could help us to remain competitive.”
 Director, Manufacturing, Large (100+ employees), Typology 5

In order to increase the number of companies offering management training, more emphasis needs to be placed on the skills that will be acquired that will save time and cut costs in the long run. Encouraging networking would be useful to understand how other businesses have dealt with similar issues.

If a quantitative follow-up of any description is to follow on from this study we recommend the following attitudes to learning/training to be used for an attitudinal segmentation of employers:

- Not much changes in our business so apart from training up new staff there is not much need
- I feel I know what I’m doing, can’t think of any ways in which training can help at the moment
- I tend to think more about what training my staff need than what I need
- I have a good idea of the specialist training available in my field
- I’m not too sure where to go for generic training such as IT skills, communication skills, etc
- There are things we would like to do with the business that we cannot do because we don’t have the skills
- I feel I am keeping up to date with developments in my industry/profession
- Everyone in the business could benefit from regular training
- There is no need for some staff to have regular training because their tasks do not change and they would not benefit from refresher training
- Training could help me manage some aspects of the business better (owner managers)
- I would find it useful to know how other businesses manage issues like the ones we face (would welcome another perspective)
- Training, particularly training leading to qualifications would help increase some of our staff’s confidence
- Some staff do not see themselves as training material and there is not much we can do about that
- We use training to make sure we meet our statutory obligations
- We use training to make sure we keep our heads above water
- We use training to make sure we are better than the competition.

APPENDIX A

The Customer Research Strategy

ELWa's 2002 – 03 Corporate Plan included a requirement to establish 'An integrated programme to understand the needs of our customers in order to ensure that all future product development is based upon their needs' (Corporate Plan – 2002 – 03 ref. P13).

Following a wide internal consultation process the Customer Research Strategy was developed to provide an understanding of learner needs, motivation and satisfaction.

This activity would allow ELWa to:

- understand what motivates customers to learn, so enabling us to widen and deepen participation in learning;
- understand what customers think of the education and learning services they receive, particularly those which we fund; and

- track and understand participation within the different customer groups.

The proposed three-year research programme was outlined to the Council in May 2003 and includes the following elements:

- a blanket learner satisfaction survey carried out in Summer 2003, including 20-minute telephone interviews with over 6,200 learners;
- the development of a methodology to collect similar information from Sixth Form students across Wales
- the establishment of an individuals panel and an employers panel in order to track changes in attitudes to and participation in learning; and
- the production of a range of themed reports throughout the programme lifetime.

The following table provides detail of each individual research element:

Activity	Fieldwork
National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003	6200 FE, WBL and ACE learners were interviewed by telephone in Summer 2003. The survey aimed to provide an understanding of learners' views and satisfaction with their learning experiences.
National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales 2004	5,000 sixth formers filled in self-completion questionnaires, and 12 focus groups held February 2004.
Employers Panel	2,000 employers will be interviewed at regular intervals by telephone in order to track and analyse attitudes to learning. The first wave of fieldwork is planned for March 2005.
Individuals Panel	2,000 individuals from across Wales were interviewed face-to-face during Dec 03/Jan 04. These individuals will form a panel that will be interviewed annually to improve understanding in relation to attitudes to learning, and to track changes in attitudes and perceptions.
Work Based Learners Leavers Survey (Pilot)	As part of ELWa's requirements under its Management Schedules, a pilot project has been designed to interview a sample of WBL programme learners approximately 6 months after leaving the programme. 600 20-minute telephone interviews were carried out in May 2004.

APPENDIX B Letter to employers inviting them to participate in research

The Managing Director
Company Name

9th January 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

ELWa – Employer Research into Training

Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body with responsibility for funding, planning and promoting learning throughout Wales for people aged over 16.

ELWa funds learning activities through a range of organisations including Further Education Institutions, Schools Sixth Forms, Private and Voluntary Training Providers, and Sector Skills Councils. The public funding we distribute supports the following learning activities:

- Further Education Courses
- Adult Continuing Education Courses
- School Sixth Form Studies
- Vocational Education Courses
- Work Based Learning Programmes including Foundation Modern Apprenticeships, Modern Apprenticeships and Skill Build Programmes

One of ELWa's key priorities is to ensure that the training opportunities provided support the needs of businesses and their workforces. Only in this way can we have a positive impact upon businesses in Wales and the economy as a whole. Therefore, we are planning to undertake some research into the kinds of learning and training undertaken by employers, and how the related decision-making processes work within their businesses. As part of this research, we want to talk to employers, and their employees, about learning and training within their organisation.

Your organisation has been selected at random to take part in this research programme, and we very much hope that you will volunteer to participate.

We have appointed NOP, an independent research agency, to undertake the study. They will be in touch with you over the next week or so to discuss our plans further and to arrange a time to visit if you are in agreement.

In terms of the format for the research, the NOP interviewer will wish to spend an hour talking to either the owner of the business or a director involved in strategic business decisions about learning and training and the value of this to the organisation.

In addition, providing your organisation employs 10 people or more:

- We would also like to interview one line manager within the business about learning and training. This will be a shorter interview lasting 30 to 40 minutes.
- The interviewer will leave self-completion questionnaires for distribution amongst your staff. This questionnaire asks about experiences of learning and training and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Staff will be invited to return their completed forms directly to NOP using a Freepost envelope. Copies of the questionnaire are available on request.

NOP abides by Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act – these guarantee absolute confidentiality and anonymity of response. Your responses will be reported in such a way as to maintain the anonymity of your organisation. Similarly, the views of your staff will be kept confidential. One of the benefits of participating is that we will provide you with an overview of responses to the self-completion questionnaire by your staff (these will be presented in such a way that no individual will be identifiable by their response).

Should you have any queries about the research programme, please contact Viv Young at NOP on 0207 890 9840, or Elizabeth Lyon at ELWa on 01745 538544 or e-mail elizabeth.lyon@elwa.org.uk.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your help. We look forward to hearing your views.

Yours sincerely

Olivia Schofield
Head of Intelligence and Marketing