

# let's talk... Skills

Spring 2009

east midlands **tourism**



Welcome to 'Let's Talk Skills', an introduction on how upskilling your staff can help boost both your business and our region's visitor economy.

**All tourism related businesses in the East Midlands have access to an extensive network of skills providers, ready to offer advice and support to ensure businesses can obtain the right balance of skills to help achieve their commercial goals.**

Investment in training can help give businesses a competitive edge, especially at a time of low consumer confidence. A recent study by VisitBritain (The Economic Downturn and Domestic Tourism) showed that more people are abandoning overseas holidays in favour of staying in good quality UK destinations.

**"By providing first class customer service, businesses can maximise their appeal and encourage customer loyalty."**



This presents an opportunity for tourism businesses to capture the affluent market of discerning leisure travellers who usually holiday overseas. By providing a top quality visitor experience and providing first class customer service, businesses can maximise their appeal and encourage customer loyalty.

**"By equipping staff with the appropriate skills they are likely to perform much better."**

"The tourism market will be more competitive than ever over the next few years as people look increasingly for value for money without compromising on their expectation of quality.

East Midlands Tourism wants to offer high quality skills-related support to tourism employers in the region to help give them a competitive advantage" said Chas Bishop, Chair of East Midlands Tourism Council.

**"Good marketing and forward planning will help draw in the influx of overseas visitors."**

The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games, presents another incentive for businesses to raise their game as the eyes of the world will be on the UK and how we as a nation facilitate the greatest show on earth.

By equipping staff with the appropriate skills they are likely to perform much better and meet the 2012 challenge head on. Good marketing and forward planning will help draw in the influx of overseas visitors before, during and after the games.

## Inside...

Easy Access to the East Midlands Skills Network

Center Parcs serves up excellent skills training for staff

Rockingham Extends Warm Visitor Welcome

Customer Service Going for Gold

Training our Taxi Drivers

For more information on how to access our training visit [www.eastmidlandstourism.co.uk](http://www.eastmidlandstourism.co.uk)



## Food for thought...

In the 21st Century, our natural resource is our people - and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential. Our recommendations start with an ambitious vision. The UK must become a world leader in skills. Skills are the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation.

(Prosperity for all in the global economy  
World Class Skills: Final Report Leitch  
Review of Skills 2006)

## Skills update from business around the region...

### Up skill your kitchen & up your profits!

The Rutland Railway Museum, in Oakham has been one of the first to benefit from a new Focus on Food Profit course run by Rutland County Council and People 1st.

The Rutland Railway Museum's café is open for breakfast and lunch and offers visitors a choice of sandwiches, snacks and hot meals as well as hot and cold drinks.

Paul Simmons, Trustee of Rutland Railway Museum believes they will be making a number of changes as a result of attending the course, which included practical coaching on issues such as recipe costing, food stock control, food ordering, managing waste and menu control.

“The course also covered financial planning advice and an overview on gross and net profit.”

The course also covered financial planning advice and an overview on gross and net profit and how to calculate profit margins.

The course, which was delivered by People 1st, has been designed as a direct response to the needs of small businesses, where research revealed 6 out of ten were unsure of their gross profits and wastage each week.

Paul commented: “We found that the course encouraged us to look at the daily operations in the café from a new perspective and have new ideas about attracting customers and increasing profit by addressing areas such as menu planning and portion control.



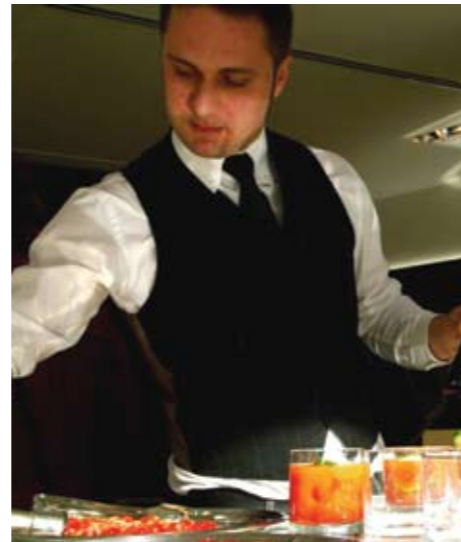
The speakers were very well informed and offered some really good practical advice that we have already begun putting into practice.”

The ‘Focus on Food Profits’ course is a three hour programme designed to help small businesses increase their profits from food, and open their eyes to areas where they are potentially losing revenue. It is targeted towards owners, managers, chefs and those responsible for training, purchasing, selling and quality control within restaurants, cafes and all food businesses.

For more information on Focus on Food Profits please contact your local DMP. See back page for details.

### Skills bring finesse to hotel group

The Finesse Hotel Group, which last year opened the Cathedral Quarter hotel in Derby, prides itself on delivering a personal service to guests in each of its four boutique hotels throughout the East Midlands.



In order to deliver first class customer service, staff training is high on the agenda. As such, the Finesse Hotel Group provides a number of bespoke training initiatives that are designed to nurture and develop the workforce.

Alongside the basic health, safety and food hygiene training sessions, a customer service programme is followed to develop best practice within the organisation and to improve each visitor's unique experience. Once the training and development needs of the staff have been identified, additional courses are taken to supplement their on-the-job and basic skills training.

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Additionally, specialist training for managers and department heads takes them through the employment journey to raise awareness of the legal obligations and best practice as a company. The training focuses on interviews, employment contracts, gaining references, overseas workers, discrimination, working time regulations, law & policy, disciplinary actions, grievances, redundancy and dismissals.

Train the trainer sessions are used to improve employee's communication, presentation and listening skills whilst work based learning such as NVQs help to promote personal development amongst staff.

### Warm welcome to visitors at Rockingham

Visitors to Rockingham Castle this year can expect a warm welcome, thanks to investment in a variety of employee training initiatives.

Staff at the attraction have completed the ‘Welcome Host’ customer service course, with the aim of improving the quality of their overall visitor experience.

“Developing skills within the tourism industry benefits all involved.”

Andrew Norman, Operations Manager, said: “At Rockingham the welcome is everything, get that right and the odds are in favour of the rest of the visit being a success. It is my objective that every visitor should leave Rockingham with their expectations exceeded.”



Castle staff have also completed training in fire awareness and health & safety and all employees are encouraged to take part in official qualifications such as NVQs.

In addition, staff are given specific internal training relating to their individual roles, for example, gardeners are trained to use their chemicals and tools safely and the entire staff – from car park attendants to tour guides are coached in being able to present visitors with a good knowledge of the Castle.

Andrew added that developing skills within the tourism industry benefits all involved.

“It gives the staff greater confidence when speaking with visitors of all ages. I also take the view that it demonstrates to staff that they are valued and that we are investing in their future.”

### Center Parcs serves up excellent training for staff

Center Parcs staff are benefiting from a new training academy, set up through West Nottinghamshire College in Mansfield, and Train to Gain funding.



More than 200 employees from the four Center Parcs holiday villages across the UK will now be able to train for NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in Leisure, Retail, Customer Services, Business

and Hospitality. Graham Howe, Employer Engagement Director for West Nottinghamshire College, said: “We are very proud to be making even stronger links with Center Parcs with the delivery of this training through Train to Gain.”

Center Parcs HR Manager Judi Leavor said: “Training keeps our staff motivated and is the key to retaining good people. It's very exciting to be able to roll out the academy programme to all of our holiday villages.”

John Topliss (picture left) from Mansfield completed an NVQ Level 2 in Professional Cookery and has signed up for an NVQ Level 2 in Drink Service.

“Training keeps our staff motivated and is the key to retaining good people.”

He said: “I didn't leave school with the strongest reading and writing skills, but my tutor and colleagues have really supported me and helped me get through it.”

For more information please visit [www.wnc.ac.uk](http://www.wnc.ac.uk) or call 01623 627191.

### Springboard seeks East Midlands ambassadors

Springboard UK is a charitable trust that works to help young, unemployed and disadvantaged people enter the hospitality industry.

Springboard is currently seeking to recruit and train new ambassadors in the region. Springboard Ambassadors champion and promote careers in hospitality, leisure, tourism and travel, to a range of potential new recruits providing a realistic insight into job opportunities and career progression within the hospitality industry.

Courses are run all over the country, anyone interested in becoming an ambassador and helping to attract new talent into tourism and hospitality should visit [www.springboard.net](http://www.springboard.net) for details.



### Customer service going for gold in Leicestershire

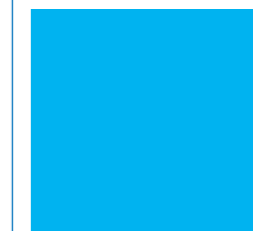
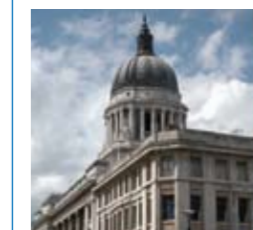
Skills and excellent customer service have been very much top-of-mind in Leicestershire where the Special Olympics will be held from 25-31 July this year.

Leicester Shire Promotions and Leicestershire Voluntary Action are running a pilot scheme to trial their new Customer Gold training initiative with the team of voluntary workers who will be helping to facilitate the event. The volunteers will be the first point of contact for the public throughout the games and as such the welcome they extend to visitors is of paramount importance to the overall impression of the event.

Martin Peters, CEO Leicester Shire Promotions Ltd commented: “We are keen to provide top quality training to equip all of our volunteers with transferable skills and an accredited qualification. Our aim is to demonstrate customer service at its best and make a positive impression on our visitors, the training will be designed to make a real difference to the way we receive our visitors in the region.”

The training will be organized through People 1st and Voluntary Action Leicester in the coming months and volunteers will be the first delegates to participate in this kind of training.

For further information please contact Maria Chaidetou on 0116 225 4621.



### Taxi driver training

Swapping street maps for study books, East Midland's taxi drivers have been swotting up on their customer service skills.

In Nottingham more than 100 taxi drivers successfully graduated from a new NVQ training course developed to raise the standards of customer service for the city's drivers.

The drivers received their graduation certificates for NVQ Level 2 in Road Passenger Transport at an official ceremony held at Trent Park. The qualification is equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A-C.

Supported by Learning Skills Council funding the taxi driver project aims to provide training for at least 40 percent of the region's 15,000 private hire drivers.

Taxi drivers throughout the East Midlands will be invited to participate in the training programme, whereby places are available on nationally recognised Btec Level 2 courses.

The scheme has been created to help taxi drivers develop their skills and knowledge and gain a nationally recognised qualification. The courses cover subjects such as the Disability Discrimination Act, personal safety, customer services and the provision of tourist information on the city.

Each taxi driver is an unofficial ambassador for the region, the skills and knowledge gained during the course will help them to further improve their levels of customer service and to promote the East Midlands to a growing number of visitors.

Courses are also being rolled out in Leicestershire and Derby.



# Fast facts

about the...

## Hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism sector

The tourism sector is dominated by small businesses with **83% employing between 1-49 individuals**

The sector employs almost **2 million people**

One third of the workforce is **under 25 years old**

**22% of the workforce are from overseas**, this rises to 63% in London

**51% are full time staff**

**Labour turnover** for the whole sector is **30%**

**13% of the workforce** do not have any qualifications

**80% of employers do not know** where to access government funding for skills

\* Source [www.people1st.co.uk](http://www.people1st.co.uk)

## Easy Access to the Skills Network

Training 2009

## Tourism training courses and workshops 2009

East Midlands Tourism funds a number of workshops which are run through the region's five destination management partnerships.

### Think Family Road Show

An inspiring and stimulating day designed to help businesses find new ways of making your business truly welcoming and enticing to families.

### Focus on Food

This programme provides knowledge to ensure your food retail is delivering you maximum profits and is suitable for restaurants, cafes, attractions and pubs serving food.

### Quality Assurance Mock Assessment Day Self Catering and B&B

Designed specifically for guest accommodation providers, this event gives you the chance to find out what a quality assessment includes and the ways you can benefit from having a star rating.

### Welcome Host plus

This training programme helps participants to develop their customer service and communication skills to enhance the quality of service.

### Accessibility workshops

Practical advice on how to cater for a wider range of visitors.

## Business Link

The easiest and fastest way for businesses to fast-track through the maze of training and development courses on offer to their employees is to contact Business Link.

An initial consultation with a Business Link skills broker will determine what help an organisation needs, and where best to find it.

A Business Link skills broker will carry out a skills

audit and facilitate individual needs through a brokerage platform, which matches businesses with their local quality approved service providers.

Brokers will be able to signpost both publicly funded and private training opportunities, as well as offer advice on the availability of grant funding for any courses or training opportunities found through independent research.

To speak to a Business Link advisor call **0845 600 9 006** or for more information on Business Link visit [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

## Train to Gain

For many businesses the first point of contact for the skills network is through the government's Train to Gain initiative.

Linda Pearson, Train to Gain commented: "Only two percent of employers have directly accessed funding to help support training. Train to Gain supports employers of all sizes and in all sectors to improve the skills of their employees as a route to improving their business performance. Our skills brokers offer impartial, one-to-one, advice tailored to individual needs offering free, independent training advice"

"By talking to a skills broker a business can expect to receive advice on accessing the relevant skills providers, receive information on relevant courses and guidance about what public funding can be made available to help finance training."

For more information on Train to Gain visit [www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk) or call **0800 015 5545**

For more information on courses in your area please contact:

### Visit Peak District & Derbyshire

Info@visitpeakdistrict.com  
08458330970  
[www.visitpeakdistrict.com/industry](http://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/industry)

### Leicester Shire Promotions

Elizabeth.Furniss@l-p-l.com  
0116 225 4011 [www.goleicestershire.com](http://www.goleicestershire.com)

### Experience Nottinghamshire

catherine.higham@experiencenottinghamshire.com  
0115 9628322 [www.visitnotts.com/aboutus](http://www.visitnotts.com/aboutus)

### Lincolnshire Tourism

Sarah@lincolnshiretourism.com  
01522 561673 [www.visitlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitlincolnshire.com)

### Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited

Susan.Kay@northamptonshireenterprise.ltd.uk  
01604 609539 [www.letyourselfgrow.co.uk](http://www.letyourselfgrow.co.uk)

### Rutland County Council

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