

Supporting a global luxury brand with hands-on engineering apprenticeships



Background

Harrods is well known around the world as one of the great luxury emporiums, with its focal store based in Knightsbridge London, UK.

For more than a decade it has been making investment in the evolution of the store, with every aspect being re-imagined to optimise the customer experience and enable the company to retain its position as the masters of luxury and the experts of exceptional.

Its company mission and mindset is 'Anything is Possible'. To embody this, Harrods strives to foster a culture of continuous, inclusive and impactful learning and development. Since 2017, to support the delivery of this, it has employed Learning and Development Teams to create a diverse learning ecosystem that puts learners first and presents numerous ways in which to develop skills at Harrods.

Challenges

Working in partnership with around 20 partners, Harrods is adept at delivering learning opportunities for creating and advancing careers.

Through its ambition to deliver continuous learning, more than 70 per cent of its apprentices are internal candidates. In addition to this, the company recognised the need to build a career talent pipeline from an early career level as a way to get people in who were fairly early in their career and then retain them by investing in them. Harrods runs an early career apprentice programme called the Retail Academy, as well as an Apprentice Retail Management programme.

With the ability to review and reflect on talent, Harrods identified that skills were required within an engineering discipline. To satisfy this, the company reached out to Train'd Up to support its apprenticeship ambitions for its first engineering cohort.

Train'd Up understood the importance of aligning the apprenticeship programme to Harrods' high standards and long-term talent strategy. As engineering roles in such a prestigious environment require not only technical competence but also adaptability and professionalism, the goal was to design a programme that would meet all requirements.

Approach

Harrods has more than 100 apprentices who are managed by its Talent Development team, who review all requests, monitor progress and work with training providers, and identify new apprenticeship opportunities. It was their ambition to offer new and exciting apprenticeship opportunities and talent initiatives that led to Harrods working with Train'd Up.

In 2022, Harrods launched its cohort of three Level 3 Maintenance and Operations Engineering Technician (MOET) apprentices at its Knightsbridge store.

The aspiring engineers are all working in the engineering department and the course provides them with a well-rounded view of engineering covering the safe and effective operation of equipment. Apprentices also learn fault diagnosis, planned and preventative maintenance, testing, repair, all whilst adhering to strict health and safety regulations.

Each apprentice is given trials in different departments with the aim of providing them with the opportunity to specialise in different areas such as plumbing and electrics, once they complete their course. This will support Harrods in retaining them as permanent employees.

The apprentices are supported by their managers and Talent Development Team, as well as assessors from Train'd Up who regularly meet with the apprentices and managers. To ensure that the apprentices are kept on track, Train'd Up does more than just deliver training; it aims to become an extension of the team. This is supported by regular reviews, bi-weekly and monthly calls, open and flexible communication, as well as progress reports being shared.

As part of the Train'd Up approach, these scheduled meetings and ad-hoc catch ups are important for the development of the apprentice as well as building a network of clear communication between everyone involved, so that if any queries come up, there is no hesitation in asking for support and any issues can be addressed and remedied quickly. This highly collaborative approach is key to ensuring apprentices thrive in a demanding environment like Harrods.

Results

Working with Train'd Up, Harrods is fully supported to develop its early careers pipeline in engineering. All three of the apprentices are doing well and are growing in their ambitions on where they would like to specialise at the end of their apprenticeship.

Through the online training aspect, delivered by Train'd Up, apprentices are also provided with a further opportunity to build their network and improve their communication skills.

Harrods provides apprentices with a room at its head office for the online training to take place, which provides them with support and access to meet with more of the Harrods team and other learners within the organisation. As well as providing an extra in-person opportunity for the Talent Development Team to check in with the learners.

Training provider comment

Chris Morris, Lead Business Development Manager, commented on the partnership: **“Seeing the apprentices progress and gain confidence is incredibly rewarding.** And Harrods’ commitment to providing space and resources for learning has amplified the success of the programme. **This partnership clearly demonstrates how tailored support and shared goals can close critical skills gaps.”**

Client Feedback

Robyn Dunsford, Talent Development Advisor at Harrods | Talent, commented: “We enjoy partnering with Train’d Up due to the company’s niche expertise, friendly approach and responsiveness. We appreciate the highly personalised service, regular updates, meetings and opportunities to review progress.

“Through the engineering apprenticeship, Train’d Up has been able to provide a solution that aligns with our business strategy and our goals to address the skills gap and provide what we need to progress in the future.

“The relationship we have with Train’d Up isn’t just transactional; **we enjoy working with them.**”

Robyn Dunsford has been with Harrods for four years and with the Talent Development team for just more than half of that time. Having completed a Level 5 CIPD apprenticeship herself, she feels she has an inner understanding of apprenticeships knowing how tough they can be but also how rewarding.

The Harrods logo is written in a black, elegant, cursive script font.

If you would like to know more about working with Train’d Up to develop your workforce, get **in touch.** 