

the employer CHALLENGE

A Human Resources Newsletter from Employer to Employer



Quality of Life
CHALLENGE

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Training investment keeps wind in marine sector's sails

Giving employees a reason to stick with you beyond their need for a pay cheque is critical in a tight labour market. For boat builders in the Capital Region, investment in training keeps staff on board.



*Second-year apprentice Candace Walmsley installs a new sail track on a refurbished mast section with the help of Campbell Black, owner of Blackline Marine.
Photo by Blackline Marine*

Boat builders and repair shops on southern Vancouver Island came together in the mid-'90s to address their recruitment and retention issues. Their highly specialized, technical industry desperately needed skilled workers.

Today, marine businesses sponsor employees to train as apprentices and attend Quadrant Marine Institute in Sidney. The four-year program combines on-the-job skill-building, work-based assessments and after-hours classroom time.

It's a solution that has helped keep Blackline Marine afloat, says owner Campbell Black. "It's been the most significant factor for my company's success. Training is not simply a 'must do,' it's a business strategy. If you're not training, you're out of the game."

Campbell helped rally boatyard owners to take charge of their industry's need for trained workers, convinced that employees needed to see a career path. Eight business owners formed an industry association to train their employees. In 1998, it became Quadrant Marine Institute and was recognized as a private post-secondary trades training facility. Currently, about 45 apprentice-employees are working toward certification.

Having a group of employers in the same field take a united approach to resolving training challenges is just one of the best practices identified in the field of workplace learning, says Claire Rettie, executive director of the Victoria READ Society. The non-profit literacy and learning organization is finishing up a year-long study of workplace learning strategies in Greater Victoria.



Employer Quote

"Training is not simply a 'must do,' it's a business strategy. If you're not training, you're out of the game."

- Campbell Black,
Owner, Blackline Marine



Employer Resources

Employers can find more workplace learning tips, tools and resources on the READ Society's website at www.readsociety.bc.ca.

The READ Society's full report on workplace learning strategies will be released in February.

Read about another innovative group of employers who are collaborating and partnering with Camosun College to develop a free training program for employees in this [past issue of the employer CHALLENGE](#)

Collaboration with Business for Social Transformation - a resource for multisectoral collaborations who are working to improve their communities' capacity to bring about social change
[Click here to view this resource](#)

Guide to employing individuals in recovery from addictions:
[Addiction, Recovery and the Workplace: an employer information guide.](#)

For more **HR options** and local business examples, read the [HR](#)

"Internationally, it's been proven that investing in employees' learning is a key recruitment and retention strategy," says Rettie, adding that READ's work has been focused on uncovering affordable ways to help employers improve their workers' reading, writing and math. "These basic skills are often called the 'Velcro' to which all other learning sticks."

For Campbell Black, learning isn't just about pumping out skilled workers – it's about engaging employees and creating meaningful relationships. "You want people to stay with your company for a reason. I'm offering something that's meaningful, thoughtful and respectful and recognizes and affects this person's whole life."

Candace Walmsley is two years into her apprenticeship and employment with Blackline. "It's a real community here and we have a lot of fun. I'm learning every day." Walmsley will become a specialist in rigging, but her training will also expose her to other aspects of boat construction such as electrical, metal and composite work. "The opportunity I have here is good," she says.

While number crunchers could figure out Black's return on investment, he says he doesn't need financial figures to know his method is working. "Anything you can do to build recognition and respect is a valuable business tool."

[Options for Action booklet.](#)

The [WorkBC Employers' Toolkit](#) -
Four booklets with tools and resources to help employers attract, retain and, engage their employees



Events

Workforce Housing Coffee Meeting Invitation

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE invites employers to a coffee meeting to explore issues and opportunities related to housing for the workforce in BC's Capital Region.

When: January 13, 2009
7:30am-9:00am

Contact info@golchallenge.ca or 250-383-6166 for details.



Contact us

Learn more about the [Quality of Life CHALLENGE](#)

info@golchallenge.ca
250-383-6166

Should we profile your business in the employer CHALLENGE newsletter? Do you know of an employer we should profile?
[Tell us about it!](#)

Recognizing Exemplary Employers

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE, together with the Labour Market Dialogues project, has recently made presentations to the following businesses to recognize their exemplary human resources practices:

- [Spectrum Job Search Centre](#)
(click [here](#) to read the employer CHALLENGE article on this employer)
- [Value Village](#)
(click [here](#) to read the employer CHALLENGE article on this employer)

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