



CAPRICORN

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Additional resources:

- Apprentice review template
- Video tutorial

Apprentice monthly review

Employing an apprentice can be a critical decision for workshop owners, with arguments for and against adding another mouth to feed.

Employing an apprentice should be treated as a well considered recruitment strategy. Many workshop owners dream about developing their apprentice into a technician with the skill set that will best suit the workshop. Others simply want a cheaper source of labour.

Once the decision is made, workshop owners or managers need to address the undeniable fact that junior staff need more direction and assistance than trained employees and despite the best intentions, some will be extremely competent while others may be less competent.

Putting on apprentices is best regarded as a form of investing. For example, an investment of \$1,000 in wages per week may be expected to return \$6,000 in sales. Investing in apprentices though is a longer term investment strategy. Expecting a return on an apprentice in their first week on the tools is just not practical.

In theory, the more time and training invested in an apprentice, the better and quicker their skills will develop and therefore the earlier the workshop will reap a return on that investment.

Apprentices will usually have recently left school where learning is structured. Starting a full time job can be a daunting task and without doubt their focus and job performance might resemble a rollercoaster.

So to get the best out of an apprentice they need to be kept on track and clearly focused. A great way to do this is by performing a monthly apprentice review. Many workshops may do this regularly on an informal basis but by making it formal it will make the review process feel more important in the eyes of the apprentice.

A monthly review can be a very simple meeting that should take no longer than 10 minutes, once a month.

The review is designed to develop a sense of accountability for both parties:

- The business owner or manager is accountable for investing time to train and nurture the apprentice
- The apprentice acknowledges and accepts accountability for the training they have received.

Many things can be discussed during an apprentice monthly review. Be prepared with an agenda.

Some agenda ideas may be:

- Review last month's learning focus –a learning focus needs to be set each month and performance reviewed the following month. Don't be afraid to repeat the learning focus if necessary.
- Current challenges or issues – this might be technical or anything else that is worrying the apprentice.
- Study progress – some apprentices are great on the tools but struggle with studies. Discussing study progress every month helps to emphasise the importance of theory in combination with good tool skills.
- Workshop responsibilities –apprentices must be allocated workshop responsibilities and tasks. Pat them on the back if they are doing a good job and point out any responsibilities being neglected.
- Labour productivity – be ready for that point in the future when the apprentice will start to work independently on jobs. They need to learn very early that their labour output is important and that it is being monitored. Again pat them on the back if it's good and discuss what they need to work on if it's poor.
- Monthly learning focus – set a new learning focus each month. It could be brakes, serving routine, correctly completing job cards or answering the phone.

TaT Biz has prepared a simple agenda template that workshops can use for apprentice reviews.

Nurturing an apprentice can be challenging at the best of times but adopting an apprentice monthly review process can help both parties achieve the best result for each other.

The place to start is www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn.

Just go for it!