

Licensed to Skill: Alliance of Sector Skills Councils

Solihull, 2nd-3rd February 2010

Executive Summary of Seminar 2: *Helping SMEs/micro businesses*

The purpose of this workshop was to discuss four key themes relating to skills training and graduate employability. Within the four groups which were formed during the workshop the A-BSC asked delegates to discuss the skills needs of their organisation or sector, their preferred option of course delivery, the skills of an ideal new graduate and any possible obstacles to gaining skills training. Following the group discussions the A-BSC asked delegates to complete a 'skills questionnaire'.

From the group discussions which took place four key points of interest emerged:

- generic skills are favoured rather than technical skills, especially communication skills;
- training must be flexible and, if possible, tailor-made for the individual company;
- training should consider emerging technologies such as Facebook and Twitter etc;
- training programmes must be relevant and meaningful to the business, with a strong emphasis on improving bottom-line productivity.

Mirroring the information gathered during the workshop, the delegates who completed 'skills questionnaires' also referenced general skills as the most highly desired, with delegates highlighting skills such as networking, presentation skills and writing for publication as essential for their organisation or sector. When asked what their preferred method of course delivery is, what their ideal course length is and what training providers or training formats they currently use, the majority of delegates specified that they would make these decisions on an ad hoc basis depending on the circumstances surrounding the individual case of training needed.

Throughout the workshop and in the subsequent questionnaires, delegates repeatedly stressed that regardless of an employee's level of education and training, an amenable personality and professional character are just as important to the success of a company as qualifications.