Researching Employers' Responses To The Recession

Contributed by ORC International
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In 2009 the Institute of the Motor Industry conducted an employer survey to gain an understanding of the current status of the automotive industry with regard to training, productivity and learning.

A workforce that receives regular training and development is more productive; but the recession is affecting training budgets across all industries. IMI were keen to uncover the impact it was having on their industry.

The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the automotive retail industry.

As such, it is responsible for reducing skills gaps and shortages, and improving business productivity and learning supply, including apprenticeship training, within the automotive industry.

In 2009, ORC International was commissioned by the IMI to conduct its annual survey of employers from across different motor industries in the UK, to understand where there are gaps and needs with regard to skills, recruitment and training.

For the first time, questions were built into the survey to gain employersâ€™ views on the recession and how it was impacting their business.

Over 1,000 employers were initially surveyed through telephone interviews, an ideal approach for employers who would not necessarily have the capability to complete an online survey.

The telephone interviews were followed up with a series of in-depth interviews to gain a fuller understanding of the emergent issues from the survey.

The survey identified that the economic downturn is at the forefront of employersâ€™ thoughts.

Nearly two-thirds of employers agreed that investing in training would put them in a strong position to survive the recession, emphasising the importance of being able to develop their existing workforce during these times of economic uncertainty.

The economic downturn was recognised as a factor restricting workforce development in some cases: 11% of employers identified that they were unable to invest in training owing to lack of budget; 10% stated that training was restricted because they were unable to spare the staff; and an additional 10% identified the recession directly as the reason for not being able to invest in training.

It is positive therefore that the majority of employers did not specifically mention the recession.

In addition to the recession impacting on the ability to provide training for some businesses, 33% of employers identified it as their greatest challenge over the next twelve months; an additional 14% stated that their greatest challenge was staying in business.

This research demonstrates commitment, in theory, to the Governmentâ€™s drive for employers to invest in skills to help them bounce back when the up-turn comes.

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