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Aon

Leading the way in insurance apprenticeships

As a leading global professional services firm, Aon plc provides a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions, including insurance and risk management. With 50,000 colleagues in 120 countries, the firm uses proprietary data and analytics to deliver insights that help organisations around the world to reduce volatility and improve commercial performance.

Since 2012, Aon has offered apprenticeships to school leavers in the UK. The scheme has been hugely successful, with several future leaders identified and a positive reception from the vast majority of individuals involved.

Aon recognises the immense value of apprenticeships for its own business, in identifying and establishing a reliable pipeline of talent in a far more organised, measurable way than before. Crucially, Aon wants to dispel the myth that an apprenticeship for school leavers is somehow inferior to a university degree and reassure people that it is a viable, alternative route to professional success. As such, all those on apprenticeship programmes are given permanent contracts on a proper pay scale with real prospects for career progression.

Making the levy 'Go Further'

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017 made a big step towards changing perceptions. It means that the UK Government is now creating more career opportunities for all, to ready the workforce for a changing world and ensure the UK is ready to meet its challenges.

Like many other organisations, the responsibility for implementing and planning apprenticeships sits with Aon's HR department. The government levy is equivalent to 0.5% of its UK payroll – the same for any employer with payrolls over £3 million. Ideally, Aon looks to use as much of the levy spend as possible, simply because it makes better budgetary sense: the levy is a fixed cost, so by maximising every pound of that, it will go a long way to fulfil Aon's strategy for developing talent.

Aon HR's KPIs are linked to the management and development of this talent, and the levy helps ensure that current and future colleagues deliver against their performance objectives in the work environment.

Aon sets out to achieve this using an initiative known as Go Further. As its official apprenticeship programme, Go Further is tasked with developing new graduates, school leavers and supporting existing colleagues to progress.

Go Further
Aon's official
apprenticeship programme



"At Aon, we recognise the value of maximising the Apprenticeship Levy to attract new talent to the industry, and to develop our existing colleagues to enable them to provide an even better service to our clients. We recognise the value of having a professional body like the CII focused on guiding on apprenticeships."

Adrian Johnson,
UK Apprenticeship Lead, Aon.

Go Further has established a benchmark for apprenticeships in the insurance industry. It incorporates critical stages to ensure success. Firstly, it looks to understand the specific developmental needs of Aon's existing workers to meet market and client needs, and maps out the qualifications required to meet them. Next, it plans relevant new learning opportunities to improve and broaden these colleagues' existing skill sets. This process agreed with internal stakeholders is already proving to be a success, and Aon is planning to offer around 15 apprenticeship places by early 2018. Lastly Go Further will look to establish further, brand new learner journeys to meet the evolving needs of future clients.

Ultimately, Aon's objective is to use the Apprenticeship Levy in a professional and appropriate way. To not just spend it because it's there, but to spend it in a way that will benefit colleagues and new starters alike, enabling everyone involved to serve clients even better.

Improving performance through professionalisation

Aon, like all employers, manages its levy fund. There are certainly advantages in using an agreed managed learning supplier to operate certain functions, but there are other tasks that only the employer itself can do. While the levy itself hasn't affected the existing Aon graduate or school leaver programmes per se, Go Further will now complement these two programmes in terms of their overall deliverables.



"Aon is in a great position in terms of its strategy for apprenticeships and its plans for the levy. Overall spend on apprenticeships is going to increase as a direct result of the levy payment. Its introduction has brought a number of benefits to Aon and other like-minded insurance firms. It's given us the opportunity to step back and review how we develop and further professionalise our current and future workforce, to enable them to best meet the needs of our clients now and looking forwards."

Dominic Christian,
CEO, Aon UK

Although it's too early to accurately gauge success and impact in the workforce, its business confidently expects to witness improvements in client satisfaction, as well as employee attraction, engagement and retention as a direct result of its apprenticeship programme. Internally this is important as these factors are established KPIs for the business. Externally, Aon has been recognised via a number of awards for its work in this space, enhancing its reputation and fulfilling its wider commitment to the community.



How does the CII help?

The CII plays a key role in supporting Aon and the wider insurance and the financial planning sector in professionalising its workforce. This helps attract the right talent, and develop it, to provide the public with high standards of integrity and care. An apprenticeship has the advantage of emphasising competency for the role, as well as passing professional exams.

What happens next

Aon will continue to expand its apprenticeship programme through 2018 and beyond, with a view to spending as great a proportion of the levy as possible to derive maximum colleague and client benefit, via an effective use of funds.

From 2018, Aon will be implementing new Go Further programmes in a variety of areas, including Customer Service, Leadership, Sales and Digital.



The CII has supported the 'Trailblazers' programme, which brings together the best suggestions from the profession and works with the government and regulators to create a professional standard. This will attract the best talent and build outstanding service across every area of insurance. "Ultimately, we will build public trust through the power of professional standards"

Sian Fisher, CEO.
The Chartered Institute of Insurance