

partnership

A unique partnership approach to training was what attracted Whyte and Mackay to Workbase Scotland. Whyte and Mackay is a large whisky distilling, blending, bottling and packaging company based in Glasgow with sites in Edinburgh, Invergordon, and Grangemouth.

As well as the partnership approach, Whyte and Mackay were attracted to Workbase Scotland's excellent track record in the Scottish whisky industry (working with the Edrington Group, John Dewar & Son, Glenmorangie, Diageo, and William Grant & Sons.)

adapting to change

Like most dynamic and forward thinking companies, Whyte and Mackay recognised the need to enhance the core skills of their employees to underpin the changing nature of work. Team and technical training had taken place across the company but employees were then also required to pass standard workplace assessments. This, and the creation of a new category of job, 'technical operator', meant the upgrading of interpretation skills, computer skills, problem solving, presentation skills and more complex numerical skills was required.

A detailed proposal was sent to Whyte and Mackay, followed by a series of briefing sessions to the employees emphasising the 'not-for-profit' nature of Workbase Scotland, trade union support and the fact that all involvement in the courses was entirely voluntary and within work time.

From consultation it became clear that the main focus for the course would be writing, verbal, numerical and team skills. In the design of the course we gathered information from Personnel and the specific functions to enable the course to be directly relevant to the participants work experience. A set of outcomes linked to the company's Key Performance Indicators were also agreed.



Whyte and Mackay production line

outcomes

For many employees, this was their first 'formal' learning experience since being at school, so most people felt fear and anxiety at the start of the course. However, by the end of the ten day course there had been a remarkable change in all who'd taken part, in terms of raising skill levels and, more importantly, in changing attitudes and behaviours. The experience is best described by some of those who completed the course:

'Being able to listen and understand others is important in a team. This is something that most people do not realise is a high level skill.'

'The first time you asked me to stand up and speak about myself, I thought I was going to pass out. Now, although I still find it hard, it's not nearly so scary, I can do it.'

'I never understood percentages at school. Now I can help my son with his homework.'

The skills learnt or refreshed have not only had a positive effect within Whyte and Mackay, but are put to use outside the workplace. One course participant said she would apply these skills in the following areas: filling out work sheets accurately; speaking up at meetings; recording measures at work; letter writing; being more assertive with her work colleagues and team leader; foreign currency conversion; kids' homework. Clearly, the range of applications of the skills highlights the immense value of core communication skills.



A key Scottish export

our approach

Workbase Scotland put their success in the workplace down to a number of key factors.

- Partnership with Trade Unions and employers
- An excellent track record in industry
- Working closely in consultation with employer and employee
- Setting outcomes in line with Key Performance Indicators.
- Using materials which are 'real'; relevant to employees jobs / future roles
- Using tutors who adopt a flexible approach – they will tailor the course to group requirements, our courses are not 'off the shelf'
- Developing specialist workplace trainers with high facilitation skills
- We are responsive to the demands of production environments with the complexities of shift patterns and negotiating release of employees with training and production managers

Workbase Scotland continue to work with Whyte and Mackay designing and delivering communication skills courses and working with Whyte and Mackay and its employees on more focused development. Whyte and Mackay has seen the positive and productive change in people's abilities and attitudes. They have also set up open learning centres for employees to give them the opportunity to continue to learn throughout their lives.