

Business to Business has as its mission to be a leading provider of business consultancy, quality training and development services and research within Europe. However, our services are delivered in partnership with our purchasers and as a result of this we have adopted the mission statement of:

Helping You Achieve Success

Our emphasis is on providing a complete but specialist service based on our intimate knowledge and understanding of the challenges that face business, consequently delivering effective solutions are natural to us.

Aims:

1. To deliver results through integrity, innovation, learning and teamwork
2. To achieve and maintain sustainable development through planned growth
3. To develop skills, knowledge and understanding so that businesses and their teams can function to full potential
4. To commit resources to meeting the emerging needs of the business community
5. To implement the value of quality in every possible activity
6. To provide employee development in a form, location and timing appropriate to employer's needs
7. To be recognised by our clients as providing outstanding services by being a responsive and effective provider

Objectives:

1. Continue to operate with a profit and a good return to our shareholders
2. Achieve income targets for government funded contracts that are operating through direct and indirect contracts
3. Drive diversification of our income by developing opportunities to grow full cost income
4. Continue to build infrastructure and capacity including ongoing development of our Associate team
5. Improve employer awareness of the services that we deliver
6. Explore partnership working with other FE providers

Key Performance Indicators will include:

- Income from employers
- Success rates on programmes
- Employer and employee satisfaction levels
- Awareness levels of employers
- Number of employers engaged

Market Analysis:

National Picture

Lord Leitch in his report based on his research of UK Skills, dated 2006, recommended that the UK should aim to be a world leader on skills by 2020. In an attempt to achieve that goal a number of funding initiatives have been put into being, the major one being "Train To Gain". The Further Education and Training Act also enabled key aspects of the further education reforms described in that report to be

implemented. B2B, as an FE provider, has assisted a number of employers to raise skills by the provision of a range of training and development opportunities.

On 21st October 2008 the Skills Secretary John Denham announced new flexibilities to support SMEs as part of the Government's response to the economic downturn. The Government's approach has been re-shaped and funding is available from 2nd January 2009 to deliver a new package of support to help SMEs get through the tougher economic climate by building the skills and expertise of their workers. Through the National Skills Service initiative, Train to Gain, a number of priorities have been identified:

- New employers
- Hard to Reach employers
- Small, Medium Enterprises (SME's)

The recent Budget settlement provided a further endorsement of the importance of the further education sector. Since 1997, investment in further education has increased by 53% in real terms and since 2001 an additional 2.4 million adults in the workforce have achieved qualifications at level 2 or higher. The Government has recognised that cutting spending in a recession would harm economic recovery and would prove more costly in the long term. Continuing to upskill the workforce remains a high priority and, because of this, additional resources are being made available. However, the growth in public spending will inevitably be slower than in the past and it is essential that every pound is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. A proportion of this allocated fund will be used to support the Response to Redundancy initiative and therefore will not directly be available through Train to Gain. The effect of this has been a number of reductions in LSC Contract values and withdrawal of the Regional Response Contracts. A number of providers have as a direct consequence of this, only have contracts to see learners through the current programme.

Regional Picture

More locally, the Regional Development Agency has set other priorities and these have taken into account the economic downturn and the Sector Qualification Strategies and their Compact Agreements. Regionally this information has helped us in targeting our markets and focusing training opportunities on the sectors that we specialise in. In brief these are:

Support Services in Health Care – Housekeeping / Cooking – ASSET, People 1st & Skills for Health have identified these areas as being under developed in the South West. These “Hard To Reach” learners frequently have LLN skills requirements and they would form part of our target group.

Customer Service – Estate Agencies & Letting Agencies – ASSET. As a result the economic down turn many employees are either being made redundant or having to develop other skills to cover for those who have been made redundant. Consequently, skills gaps are occurring and these are requiring “quick fixes” to help the remaining business survive.

Customer Service – Retail industry – Skillsmart. With the growth of local retail parks and shopping malls the demand for a qualified workforce will continue. It has been estimated that a quarter of the workforce are without a Level 2 qualification, consequently, over 21,000 adults in SW are eligible for Train to Gain first Level 2s. We would endeavour to work with the various agencies to address part of this issue.

Health & Social Care – Skills for Care & Development. The South West's demand for health and social care provision is due to rise sharply. The social care sector is characterised by a diversity of employers, job roles and methods of working, consequently employers and employees tend to be of a “Hard to Reach” nature. 80% of our current qualification delivery is within this sector. Our accreditations tend to make us a “one stop shop” for social care organisations because we can also offer training services to those employees who hold support roles. We offer training and assessment services for those employees who work weekends and over night, many of these have never been included in training provision previously. It is predicted that from 2006 to 2020 the number of staff working with older people will need to rise by over

25% and the sector will continue to be dependent on migrant workers to fill vacancies. As a result of the diversity of the workforce there will be need for the development of LLN.

ICT – IT users and Telecoms – Eskills. There tends to be quite a fluid workforce and a clear need for good IAG and progression pathways to aid staff retention. With so many qualifications available there has been poor guidance on what was preferred, however now with the concordat stating that ITQ is the preferred qualification for IT users and is eligible for LSC funding as a full Level 2. As and when the bite sized units, that are being trialled, come on stream we will also be in a position to deliver them.

Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) – given the current economic climate organisations have to optimise performance and quality. We are accredited to deliver these awards from level two to four. Training and development in this area will have a direct impact on the productivity and competitiveness of any business

Competition

Further Education Colleges and other Training Providers operate within the Lifelong Learning Sector, however few offer the suite of services that B2B does. This gives B2B a competitive edge in a tight market. However, as a direct result of losing our funded learning provision B2B is actively looking at working with some of its competitors.

As a result of a number of Training Providers losing their contracts the competition is reducing and the market becoming more competitive. Consequently, it is now even more important to demonstrate the quality of provision and difference.

We believe that by concentrating on the Southern East and South West of England and by offering a limited but qualitative range of services, and aiming our service specifically at areas that we know we have strengths in, we are able to meet the needs of employers and their workforce in a way not being achieved by any of our competitors. Our market research has demonstrated that many organisations that deliver health and social care will need a lot of support to achieve government set targets for having a qualified workforce. Consequently, this sector is being heavily targeted service development.

B2B achievements

In our relatively short history we have achieved a number of successes:

October 2008 Full Ofsted Inspection with report Grades Two and Three awarded. Strengths noted by the inspectorate included:

- Good success rates
- Good development of professional workplace skills
- Particularly effective and thorough induction
- Good working relationships with employers

October 2008 Full Matrix Accreditation for Three Years, some of the quotes from the report include: “B2B demonstrated exemplary processes and procedures in expertly exploring learner’s needs at the outset

“The development of personnel at all levels within the organisation, meets and goes beyond business needs that offers a service based on best practice and remains learner-focussed at all times”

April 2009 LSC Financial Management & Control Evaluation (FMCE) assessed as “Good.” The B2B Business Plan identifies an objective of increasing financial turnover by 10% per annum; this has been achieved over the last three years. Despite uncertainties regarding Train to Gain, this is planned to continue through diversification and prudent marketing of full cost provision, particularly VRQ programmes.

As a result of continuous audits from our Award Bodies on our internal quality assurance processes we now have Direct Claims Status for all the NVQs that we are accredited to deliver.

In the period from August 2008 to July 2009 211 learners gained nationally recognised qualifications through our services, the awards ranged from level two to level five.

Employers:

Current Employer Profile:

Business to Business currently works with 36 employers across three regions; the South West, the South East and the East Midlands. Delivering a range of services that include:

Business counselling that includes benchmarking against national standards and policy and practice development.

Training and development activities including vocational and professional qualifications; skills for life; short courses; tailored training and coaching.

Figure 1: Business by organisation size

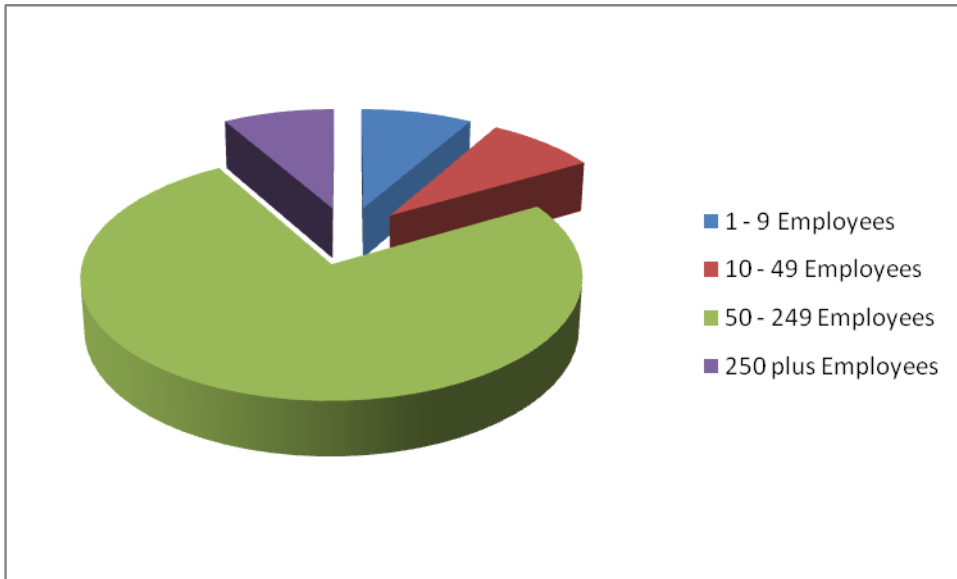


Figure 2: Business by sector

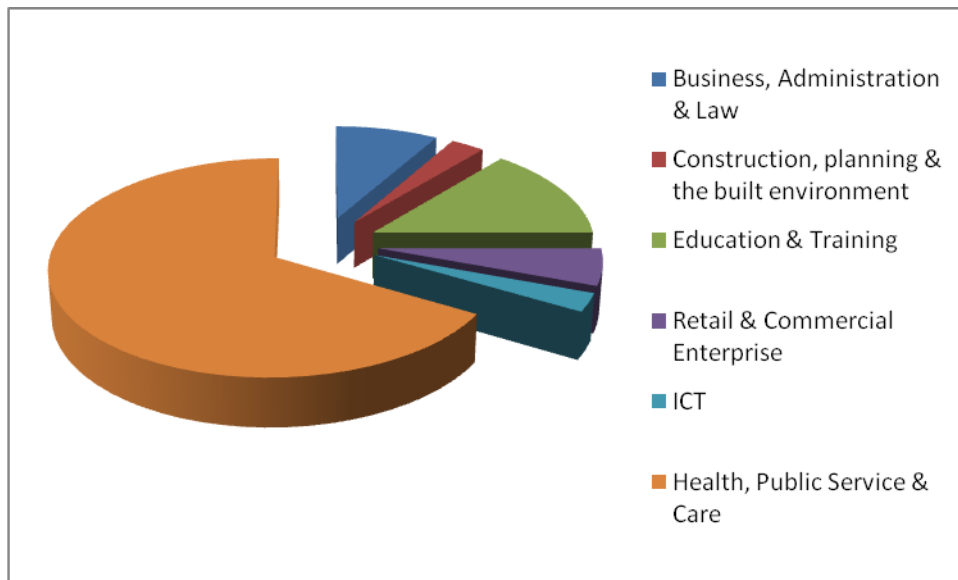
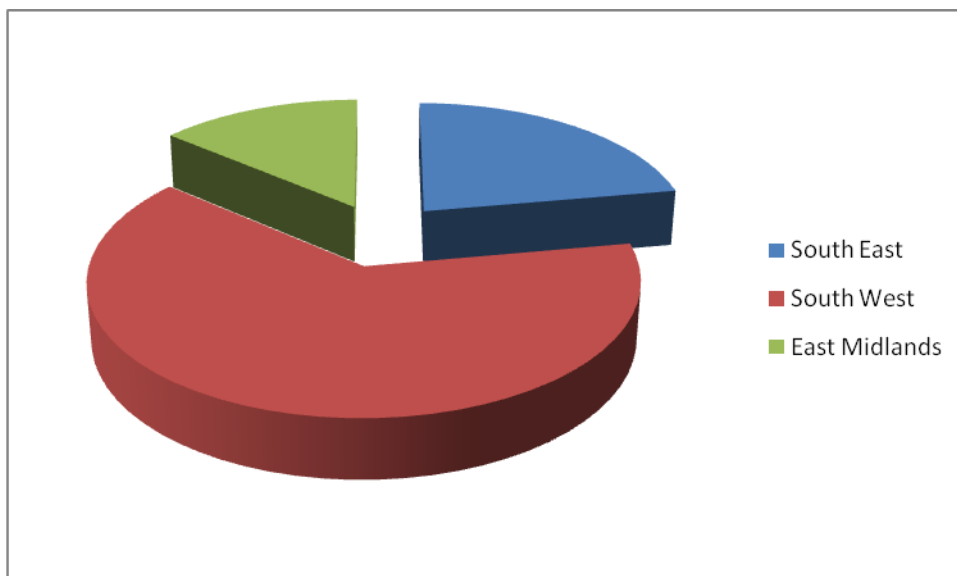


Figure 3: Business by location.



Meeting the needs of employers:

We offer a comprehensive range of complementary services to support commerce and industry. Our range of services includes:

- Business Consultancy
- Training Programmes and Qualifications
- Training and Development Consultancy
- Writing Funding Bids
- Social Research

Business Consultancy:

Our portfolio includes organisational and business development; personnel management; quality systems development; personnel development; organisational training centre developments.

Training:

We design and deliver high quality training and development programmes to individuals and large groups, these can be either off the shelf packages or bespoke programmes. These are delivered either in the workplace, in the classroom or as a mixture of both.

Training and Development Consultancy

We offer a comprehensive range of complementary services to support colleges, private training providers and training departments within business. The service ranges from performing monitoring audits to setting up training centers to comply with award body criteria to obtaining accreditation for in-house delivered programmes.

Writing Funding Bids

A number of our employers are public and charitable organizations, who seek grants from grant awarding bodies. We are able to offer a specialised service to develop both bids and tenders.

Social Research

We offer research and development services as a direct result of demand from our customer base. Specialists have been recruited to deliver these services, consequently we are able to offer either a full service or customized purchase, and this includes:

Research project design
Research project management
Consumer testing
Data collection and analysis

Research project proposal preparation
Development of new practice models
Scoping and mapping exercises
Qualitative studies and analysis.

Marketing to employers:

Recognising the need for a more proactive approach to raising awareness and engaging employers a Marketing Strategy, Marketing Plan and a Customer Relationship Management System are being developed. This will help us to focus on our markets, our employers and learners.

Employer involvement in shaping provision:

As a direct result of working with some employers they have assisted us to shape and redefine our provision. This has been particularly significant in the following:

- St Albans
A Registered Charity, that is set up to offer care services to people with Learning Disabilities and Mental Health issues. We were providing consultancy services so that this organisation could develop its HR practices and move towards becoming a registered provider of care. On conducting an Organisational Needs Analysis, various business impacts were indentified, these included:
 - Having 75% of the care personnel qualified
 - Increasing occupancy by 5%
 - Service improvement by offering service users training opportunitiesAll were realised.

- Maisemore
A health & safety company wanted to develop specific personnel in competence based assessment skills, specific for the rail industry. After scoping this we aligned their training needs to the NVQ A1 standards. We have now developed a specific training package for those engaged in this role. The impact on the business has been to increase their profile within the rail industry and an 11% increase in the demand for assessment work.

The Employer Journey:

Business To Business (B2B) Ltd is committed to providing the highest quality of service to all of our customers and aspiring to our goal of becoming the provider of choice for quality training and professional development. We aim to meet the workforce development needs of the communities that we work with by:

- working with employers to identify the training issues they want to address
- designing and delivering practical relevant training programmes to meet these identified needs
- building mutually beneficial relationships with local employers across all industry sectors
- referring employers to other training providers in the local area where we are unable to meet these needs.

What you can expect from us

B2B is committed to providing a high quality, responsive service to all of our customers. We have a designated business development team who are responsible for liaising with employers.

When you contact us you will be put in touch with the most appropriate person to discuss your requirements and you will know the name of the person you are dealing with.

On receipt of your enquiry, we will:

- respond quickly and efficiently to your enquiry and, if applicable, arrange a consultation with one of our team to determine your specific requirements
- provide you with clear, concise information on the training courses and qualifications available to meet your needs – including course content, entry requirements, assessment methods and support services available – so that you can make an informed choice
- provide you with a written proposal detailing the training available, including costs and available access to funding
- provide you with an opportunity to view the facilities and resources of B2B, if applicable.

Once you have confirmed the training you would like undertaken, we will:

- ensure that our trainers/assessors are fully briefed on your training needs and objectives before they start working with you
- send you joining instructions for your course if this is to be delivered offsite
- arrange for an Assessor, if applicable, to meet your employees to discuss and explain their training programme journey so that they have a clear understanding of what they can expect from our service and the outcomes that will be achieved
- deliver training programme inductions for all NVQ learners
- visit NVQ learners every 3-4 weeks at a time that suits your and your staffs' needs
- regularly review NVQ learner progress, providing information, advice and guidance at the start, mid-way through and at the end of their programme
- continually review your requirements and maintain open communication to ensure that you are kept informed of progress, developments or changes relating to the training programme.

On completion of the training, we will:

- review the training with you to ensure that it has met the agreed objectives and take into account any suggestions for improvements
- discuss any further training needs you may have.

Feedback from employers and employees:

- Employer surveys

In an attempt to obtain as much feed back as possible, we have both formal and informal contact with employers during the delivery of programmes. The formal contact is either in the form of a midpoint and end of delivery questionnaires or interviews. This data is analysed and used to feed into our quality improvement programme.

Other surveys have been conducted as part of external audits, comments from employers during the Matrix Audit included:

“We have an excellent working relationship with good two-way communications. They work with us, rather than for us. There is a quality feel to everything they do”.

“I think they're great, B2B have taken the pressure of us with regard to training and we can concentrate on our own business affairs”.

- Employee feedback

We see the employee as being an equal in the feedback chain; consequently we obtain and collate all formal feedback during the delivery of the programmes. This takes the form of quarterly reviews that are held with both the employee and line manger. These are recorded and analysed at centre. There is also an end of programme questionnaire, again the data derived from this is analysed and used to feed into our quality improvement programme.

Matrix and Ofsted reports quoted the following comments from employees:

“I can't say enough about B2B – the attention to detail, the professionalism, but importantly, no one tells you what to do”.

“Doing an NVQ with B2B was a life-changing experience. The assessor made everything visible to me and the process was incredibly stimulating. As a result, with my new qualification I was able to sail into a new job”.

“It's the first time that anyone has taken the time to listen to me and help me get a qualification”

- Employer training

Employers are invited to attend a number of internal meetings and trainings, these have included:

- Skills for Life events
- Work based assessment bet practice events
- Planning for IAG

Retaining business:

Business to Business has been successful in achieving a long term relationships with employers resulting in repeat business levels in excess of 90%.

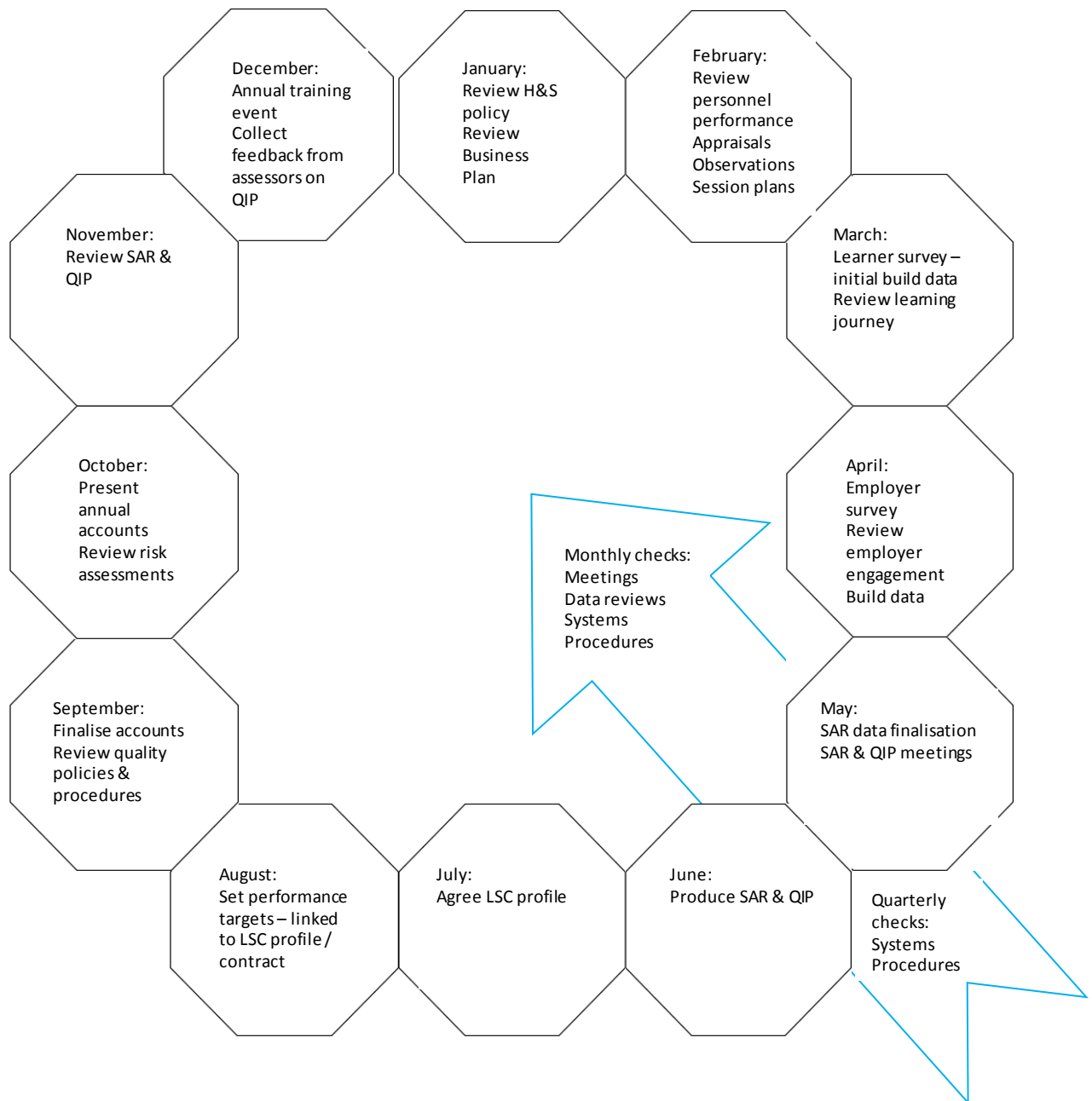
- We have had the pleasure of engaging with of residential school, having performed an Organisational Needs Analysis; it soon became clear that the organisation had the capability but not the capacity to run its own NVQ Qualification programmes. This was fully discussed with the Board of Governors and an action plan was developed so that initially B2B provided the NVQ programmes with them then gradually being handed over to a newly created centre within the school. The accredited centre has just been established, on time and a gradual withdrawal of B2B services is on target. However, B2B has now started delivering training and development with a different group of staff.
- B2B is also working with another organisation where we were initially engaged to conduct a specific training programme, as a one off. We now have continuous business with the organisation by delivering NVQ qualifications at Levels 3, 4 and 5 annually.

Continual improvement:

We feel that B2B is still a young organisation and we are maintaining our passion for what we do. An integral part of that enthusiasm is seeking ways to improve, so that the outcome improves our learner and employer experience.

Our experience of operating in the Lifelong Learning Sector has demonstrated that having a good reputation is not enough, quality kite marks are important. Consequently, we have set out to achieve a number of milestones; DCS with our Award Bodies; Matrix Accreditation; Ofsted Inspection and we now have our sights set on Training Quality Standard (TQS), initially Part A and then Part B in Health & Social Care.

As part of our commitment to quality and quality improvement, we have developed our “Q”uality Cycle. This has been useful in establishing various activities being conducted at different times of the year. This has also been useful in generating data for our annual Self Assessment Report.



Having gone through this cycle now, we are in a strong position to move forward naturally to action plan the achievement of the next quality kite mark, TQS.

As an organisation we work on the principle that “we are only as good as our weakest link”, consequently we put a great deal of emphasis on the continuing professional development of our team. To make sure everyone operates from a position of strength we conduct regular appraisals and training for all, irrespective of whether the individual is employed or free-lance. This commitment was recognised and commented on by the Ofsted Inspectorate – “The Company has an effective appraisal system that identifies each assessor’s strengths and areas for improvement. Appraisal meetings and half-yearly review meetings are detailed and well recorded. Improvements in assessors’ performance are effectively monitored. Communications with assessors, especially those who work some distance from B2B’s head office, are well structured and effective. The Company pays assessors to attend quarterly standardisation meetings and regular team meetings”.

An organisational value is recognising and responding carefully to the needs of our employers, in an attempt to grow our responsiveness business managers are invited to internal trainings and specific business meetings. An example of this occurred very recently when we had a training event that was aimed at raising skills in embedding literacy, language and numeracy into vocational programmes. Seven employers attended this; in their evaluation they indicated that they had found it useful as they all expected staff to be very able in literacy and numeracy skills.

Organisation:

Business to Business is lead by two Directors who will determine the need for personnel. The Directors manage the strategic and operational direction of the organisation. The main body responsible for the delivery of services are free lance personnel. This helps to achieve a flexible approach to service delivery.

Associates (staff) have a proven track record in their field whether as NVQ experts or consultants and are carefully selected and monitored to ensure that their practice is consistent with the organisation's quality standards. All staff undergo full product training and will spend company time developing and enhancing their own personal skills. All Continuing Professional Development is managed and recorded so that updating and competence can be clearly demonstrated.

Organisational quality is monitored in a number of ways to ensure current levels of delivery and customer service remain high. We will alt al time seek improvement achieved through:

1. Policy and practice documents that will enable all personnel to use standard approaches.
2. Training personnel on quality and quality improvement
3. Reviewing and updating policy and practice annually
4. Data management
5. Performance management of all personnel
6. Conducting annual evidence based audits on learning provision
7. Quality improvements will be planned and monitored

Process and systems:

Business to Business has documented processes detailing all elements of the employer journey. These are currently being complied into a Standard Operating Procedures manual for distribution to all staff.

It is recognised that data capture processes could be improved but better leveraging the available technology and this will be a focus going forward. Data such as source of enquiry; client's needs service enquired and enquirer status is recorded to enable the development of truly bespoke services and the building of long term relationships with employers.

