

Travis Perkins'
bold move
to tackle an
industry-wide
challenge



Case study

Travis Perkins case study

If you've ever called to get a plumber out in an emergency and waited three days, you're already aware of the massive skills shortage in the UK's building sector.

That's why, in 2018, Travis Perkins worked with Insights to make Insights Discovery a large part of their [successful apprenticeship programme](#).

Fast forward a few years, and while Travis Perkins' internal apprentice programme is humming along nicely, the UK's 4th largest employment sector is facing a bleak future.

Existing skills shortages that proceeded 2020 have gotten worse. Today the sector struggles with a retiring workforce (exacerbated by the pandemic), a lack of diversity and inclusion, a large portion of skilled workers returning home to Europe in the wake of Brexit, and a dearth of domestic awareness about the sector among those looking to enter the workforce or reskill.



Mission

Travis Perkins became the UK's biggest supplier of building materials by understanding its customers and environment.

In March of 2020, when the many branches were locked down due to Covid-19, the leadership team took time to assess the impact of the skills shortage on their business as well as the wider sector. Over zoom calls and virtual team coffees, an idea emerged.

Having already designed a successful internal apprenticeship programme for skilled tradespeople, Travis Perkins had an effective programme that could remain internal and be leveraged as a competitive advantage for as long as the industry remained viable in its current form.

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Or, they could transition the existing apprenticeship programme from being an employee provider (trains its own people) to a hybrid employee/full provider (trains others' people), leveraging their home-grown solution to benefit the entire sector and building a bright future for as many people and businesses as possible.

It was an exciting prospect. Working in tandem with industry partners, they could build the recruitment arm of the programme, raise awareness about long-term opportunities in the sector and substantially increase intake numbers into the industry.

A challenge ahead

To be successful, this approach would require buy-in from the rest of the industry, and there were hurdles to overcome.

The building sector is made up of many small and mid-sized businesses and merchants. There's lots of competition at every level. Most owner-operators would rather compete than collaborate, an attitude that had been exacerbating the issue for years.

Nor was it clear sailing, internally. Even though Travis Perkins is a market leader, the idea of putting their IP out there gave the organisation pause.

It was a bold idea to collaborate with competitors. Even if the idea of 'co-opetition' had been picking up steam since Adam M. Brandenburger's 1996 book of the same name, that momentum had not spilled over into the building trade.

A decision was made

In 2021, Travis Perkins transitioned from an employee provider to a hybrid employee/full provider and invited competitors to collaborate in an industry-wide attract, train and retain apprenticeship programme that had three objectives:

1. Proactively address the nationwide skills shortage
2. Increase DEI&B in the sector
3. Attract those entering the workforce or reskilling to the sector with 'real chance opportunities'



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In January 2022, Travis Perkins opened their door to a new generation of hopeful apprentices who set their sights on a role with any one of Travis Perkins' partners.

Impact

Travis Perkins, under their LEAP brand, are now delivering apprenticeships to people working in over twenty different organisations. The biggest step in this way forward was when the Builders Merchant Federation selected LEAP to deliver apprenticeships to their member organisations.

Even in a short time, the impact has been measurable with regard to the three original objectives of the programme:

Proactively address the nation-wide skills shortage

The programme began in January of 2022, and already, 25% of all apprentices enrolled enter the programme through companies other than Travis Perkins.

Of 600 apprentices who entered the programme through the UK government's Kickstart programme, less than 10% of those recruits had any knowledge of the building sector beforehand. Yet almost a year on, 65% of them have decided to stay in the programme and work in the field.

Diversity, Inclusion, Equality & Belonging

Current demographics in the overall sector are 88% male and 12% female, and the average age is over 40. Although the majority of apprentices are still in training, their demographics tell a different story.

40% of all new recruits are female and that statistic is trending upwards. Furthermore, the majority of new recruits are under the age of 25. This new cohort is proving themselves competent with 85% of all

apprentices achieving a merit or distinction in their specialty.

Attract those entering the workforce or reskilling in the sector with 'real chance' opportunities

There's strength in numbers

In combining their need to recruit for similar roles, organisations that once competed for talent, but may only have been sourcing a few roles each, have come together to approach schools and colleges with hundreds of roles combined. Enough to show that investing in a career in building is investing in one's future.

Momentum is building too

According to www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk, which derives its standings through thousands of reviews from users, the Travis Perkins apprenticeship programme ranks third in the country for construction, property and real estate apprenticeships.

Furthermore, the UK's Department of Education ranked the apprenticeship #33 in their top 100 list, beating out bigger competitors like Amazon, Pepsico, and KPMG. And to be clear, this is only year one.



"We're massive fans of Insights. It is, I think, the reason our programmes have been successful over time. Insights [Discovery] has been a really pivotal part of that because it's so effective."

Andy Rayner, Director of LEAP Apprenticeships and Early Careers

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Insights services

Andy Rayner, Director of LEAP Apprenticeships and Early Careers at Travis Perkins, is also an accredited Insights Client Partner.

This means that Andy can deliver Insights programmes in-house, and he uses his accreditation to introduce Insights Discovery to apprentices early in the programme.

The Insights Discovery Personal Profiles impart self-awareness to all new apprentices, with the goal of teaching them how to adapt and communicate with others from the start.

Depending on the apprentice level and stream, different chapters of the Insights Discovery Personal Profile are included.

For example, in addition to the overview, key strengths and weaknesses and the team-related portions of the profile, apprentices in the management stream benefit from the addition of the management chapters.

This helps them develop a deeper understanding of

their management preferences and how to adapt those preferences to motivate and manage different colour energies on their team.

For those in the sales training stream, Travis Perkins relies on Insights Sales Solution. Drawing on the depth of the Insights Discovery Personal Profile, this programme helps salespeople learn how to leverage their authentic style and preferences to influence prospects, customers and team members.

Once apprentices are familiar with the profiles and understand how to leverage their awareness, they return to their profiles throughout their apprenticeship to better understand themselves and others in increasingly complex work-related situations.

Andy refers to The Insights Discovery Profile as the “red thread” that weaves different aspects of the programme together and is central to the programme’s success.

More information?

Learn more about Insights Discovery at www.insights.com

Insights Discovery adds to the wider programme in two ways:

1. Increasing completion rates in the programme

The Insights Discovery Personal Profile creates empathy and understanding of others, empowering apprentices to communicate effectively and adapt their styles when dealing with teammates, consumers and managers.

Those who are self-aware are more likely to succeed in their work and produce better outcomes for their employers. They also make better leaders, able to inspire and motivate their team.

2. Supporting Diversity, Inclusion, Equality & Belonging

When 39% of apprentices are female in a sector that’s currently 88% male, there’s work to be done.

Insights Discovery gives apprentices the tools they need to better navigate the realities of their working environment and create the supportive relationships they need to transform the sector and be open and courageous when it comes to DEI&B.