



WP2 - Best practices and Training Needs Assessment

Template for Best Practice Documentation (Case Study): SMEs in Apprenticeships with focus on role of intermediary organisations

Title	What is the name that best describes the good practice? SIGNALGENERIX LTD – Best Apprenticeship Practice Quality, Program and EU Project Management in the Sector of R&D
Publication date	When (month and year) was the good practice documented/published? 9 th of November 2016
Source of Information	Who (What) is your source of information? Direct contact with the company.
Location (Region / Country)	What is the geographical range where the good practice has been used? Cyprus, Limassol
Context (appr. 500 words)	<p>What is the context (initial situation) and challenge being addressed? Provide a short description.</p> <p>The mentoring company is a high level Research, Innovation and Development organisation based in Limassol, Cyprus, with activities revolving around National and EU funded R&D projects concerning innovative technology products.</p> <p>The mentoring company offered an apprenticeship position in the Program Management and Administration Department due to the extension and multiplication of its tasks and activities not only in the area of R&D but also after the decision at the beginning of the year 2016 to implement a Quality Management System with the aim to be certified under the ISO 9001:2015.</p> <p>Following the above actions, a Quality Management Department was created with the task to monitor the Program and Project Management procedures of the company, something the sole Program Manager of the Company, could not fully follow and implement in his daily schedule. So an apprenticeship position in the form of a Junior Program Manager was created, something the Company followed through, hiring an additional person as an apprentice of the Program Manager who acted as a mentor together with the CEO of the Company.</p> <p>The main challenge that was addressed was the overall increasing activities in the company and the deadlines that were to be completed during the past year. More specific and as an example was the strict procedures, time schedules, the collection of information needed and the appropriate synergies with and between all the departments. The crucial task was the collection and the exchange of the significant information on a defined base in order to be developed the whole and correct bureaucratic documentation related to the operations of the company. The whole process was to meet the requirements and the objective goals of the certain standard for Quality Health and Safety</p>

	<p>Management. Furthermore the implementations actions at the beginning were tough because many operational procedures needed to be changed according to the International Standards and in general the induction of the new rules. Most important in order to achieve the set goals was the coordination of the high level competence, collaboration and responsibility among all the involved staff.</p>
<p>Methodological Approach (appr. 500 words)</p>	<p>What methodology has been used in order to address the initial issue and lead to a successful outcome and finally to the good practice? What was the process? Who are the beneficiaries or the target group of the good practice? Who are the users of the good practice?</p> <p>First of all, the company identified the need to support operations with an additional person in order to be trained, concentrate and keep daily updated on the new project - process and further to give detailed information and instructions on the ongoing working activities of the new task. The main concept and policy was the avoidance of any turmoil or interruption in the fee-earning operations of the company and among the employees.</p> <p>Although it could ask that the person hired had extensive experience, the management preferred to provide training to the new employee, especially for the quality management part. This was followed through because the apprentice would adapt easier to the company's policies and internal operations guidelines, according to the management's wishes.</p> <p>Second, an apprenticeship position was created, and the company looked for the appropriate person with the help of the Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The mentoring company finally hired an apprentice who could easily adapt and fit in the environment due to some past experience with the operations that are considered as the main source of income of the company, the EU Funded R&D Projects and Project Management.</p> <p>Third step was the development of a training plan and training records which correspond to the probation period of employment of the apprentice. The company assigned great importance to the training of the apprentice which followed a schedule with content that included on-the-job and off-the-job training.</p> <p>The training started with a two-week period of orientation of the apprentice by the CEO and Program Management, following an off-the-job induction training schedule that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of employment, regulations and contract. • Overview of the organisation and background history. • Learning the organisation chart. • Quality Policy Statement. • Health and Safety Policy. • Understanding of the job description. • Ethics and Confidentiality Issues. <p>The training continued with on-the-job tasks and activities with the supervision of the Program Manager and the CEO that included:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Management activities. • Day to day administrative and financial activities. • Quality Management procedures of the company operations. • Health and Safety implementation and procedures in the company. <p>Several additional off-the-job training activities took place for the apprentice in order to enhance knowledge of the new system that was followed in the company. These training activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality management and health and safety seminars. • Seminars on the financial guidelines of new funding tools. • Audio-visual presentations. <p>All training steps are documented in the company according to the International Quality Management Standard, containing training programs, training plans, schedules and records such as training attendance and completion certificates.</p> <p>Both the mentoring company and the apprentice can be considered as beneficiaries of the good practice because the final outcome was that a person dedicated to learning new skills was trained in an environment that provided many tools that were necessary. The result was the creation of a newly and highly trained employee to the needs of the company following the pre-drafted job description.</p>
<p>Impact and key success factors (appr. 500 words)</p>	<p>What are the lessons learned and the key success factors identified? What has been the impact compared to the initial situation / challenge addressed?</p> <p>The most important aspect was the willingness of the company to hire an apprentice in order to be trained according to the job description created by the company based on the needs and schedule of the abovementioned activities and departments.</p> <p>Key factors and lessons learned that made this practice to be considered as a success and be documented as a best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mentoring company identified its needs for a new person. It analysed the situation and created a job position that best described the shortcomings of the department that needed to be staffed. This is something that comes not only by the insight of the company's management but from the fact that the company values the opinions and concerns of its departments and employees, who played a major role in identifying the near future needs and reported them in order for the company to take action. • The mentoring company decided to train an apprentice instead of searching for a person with extensive experience because after the completion of the apprentice's training, the new employee would be more able to provide services tailored to the company's needs. This comes from the willingness of all company personnel including management to invest time for the training of a new person that would most likely lack any experience in the requested fields and the overall activities of the company. • The mentoring company decided to provide resources (time, energy,

	<p>money, personnel) to train the apprentice. All personnel applauded this decision by the management because it viewed this act as an opportunity to shape the company's future, with the addition of a new person that would learn and grow in the working environment of an organisation that values teamwork and team-building activities above all. Of course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company contacted an intermediary body to help spot the best possible candidate for the position of the apprentice. A job description was created and relayed to the Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry in order to identify possible candidates for the training position. This can be viewed as an act of professionalism due to the fact that the company's activities left no time for the management to filter possible candidates leaving this way as a task only the final decision and choice of the best possible trainee to fill the apprenticeship position. • After the end of the training period, the company managed to create an available employee, tailored to the department needs. Of course, there were challenges especially at the beginning of the probation period but all those were overcome by the dedication of both parties (Mentoring Company and Apprentice alike) to the training program and on-the-job training activities. The main technique was the dedication to tight supervision by all people who played the role of the mentors, giving small room for mistakes on the day to day tasks of the company. <p>The overall improvement of the company's involved department was evident from the beginning of the training and climaxed at the end where the apprentice was finally able to offer his full potential with the newly acquired knowledge and training. All of the deadlines were met in time and the new project of acquiring a Quality Management System Certificate was completed successfully.</p>
<p>Stakeholders and Partners (appr. 500 words)</p>	<p>Who are the institutions, partners, intermediary organisations involved in the good practice, and what is the nature of their involvement? Explain the different roles and benefits from the good practice!</p> <p>Limassol chamber of Commerce and Industry was involved in order to identify the person that would cover the mentoring company's needs. The company, after identifying its needs and deciding to follow the road of providing an apprenticeship position instead of a job position, communicated with the Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry for help in order to find the person that fits best. This involvement, although unrecorded, played a major role to the final decision of the company to hire the person who was finally given the apprenticeship position due to the great help provided by the Chamber to the mentoring company. The Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry identified and provided with the company possible candidates that would fill the apprenticeship position. The mentoring company was then left with the final decision and choice of the person. This benefitted the company due to the position they were in which didn't allow it to commit resources for extensive search and analyse situations and candidates that would lead to the final choice of the apprentice.</p>

	<p>Two consulting companies were involved that provided training on the newly adopted quality and health and safety system by the mentoring company. The consulting firms also helped with the development of several necessary tools that were, according to standard requirements, necessary for the documentation and recording of the apprentice's progress. The apprentice received training in the form of seminars, workshops and audio-visual presentations by the consultants.</p> <p>Also involved were organisations that are active in Research Funding Tools like the Research Promotion Foundation and Cyprus University of Technology. These organisations organised seminar in which the apprentice was present in order to learn about new funding opportunities and how to follow application and financial guidelines. This training was necessary for the apprentice's on-the-job training due to the company's operations and activities in Research, Innovation and Development Projects.</p> <p>Finally, the apprentice organised and attended several meetings with companies that provided services for the implementation of the quality and health and safety system. This task was very important because it provided the apprentice the opportunity to build the capacity to take on new challenges and initiatives to advance company operations.</p>
<p>Conditions (appr. 500 words)</p>	<p>What are the conditions (institutional, economic) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated? Please mention funding and subsidies that were provided!</p> <p>Even though the company's activities were multiplying and the schedule of all personnel was tight, resources (monetary and staff) were made available for the training of the apprentice.</p> <p>In order for the good practice to be successfully replicated, the mentoring organisation must provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding and strategic apprenticeship plan with clear aims and methodology according to the training scheme. • Personnel to analyse the present situation of the company and its needs in different sectors and future activities. • Analysis of the near future activities that the apprentice will be involved in. • A time schedule for the apprenticeship tasks. • A job description for the apprentice appointing mentor/s and a supervisor. • A training plan describing the all of the aspects of the training of the apprentice, on and off-the-job. The training plan must provide the opportunity to document and record all of the future training. • Incentives for the apprentice such as salary or other benefits. • Dedicated personnel that will train, mentor and supervise the new person of the organisation. <p>The company considered the resources used as an investment and the personnel viewed the apprentice as a future team member providing all the</p>

	<p>needed assistance.</p> <p>There were not provided any funding and subsidies for the implementation of this best practice apprenticeship program. The company allocated all the resources from its own resources.</p>
Materials / Tools	<p>What materials and tools were developed?</p> <p>During the mentoring period and in the framework of the system that was developed and is being followed, various manuals were created so the implementing personnel (whoever this may be, present and future) can refer to them, to complete any kind of task of the operational procedures, minor or major.</p> <p>Also, all of the documentation and recording tools were created in order to document the training plan and schedule and record all of the training process and progress of the apprentice.</p>
Replicability and/or up-scaling (appr. 500 words)	<p>What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?</p> <p>The involvement of the Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry or other intermediary bodies can be considered as a good practice, especially for companies that lack the time to administrate the arrangement of apprenticeships.</p> <p>Now with this ongoing project, this practice can begin its implementation and help the companies in identifying needs and arranging apprenticeships. Using this task of the EAPPREN project, the best practice is documented and can be forwarded too other interested parties.</p> <p>The company can provide all available templates for the documentation and recording of all steps of the apprenticeship.</p>
Conclusion (appr. 500 words)	<p>Conclude specifying/explaining the impact and usefulness of the good practice.</p> <p>Key factors that made this practice to be considered as a best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company identified its needs for a new person. • The company created a job description based on the above-mentioned needs. • The company decided to train an apprentice. • The company decided to provide resources from its own. • The company contacted an intermediary body to help spot the best possible candidate for the position of the apprentice. • The company assigned a mentor and supervisor for the apprentice • The company created a training plan for the apprentice. • The company documented and recorded all training activities of the apprentice. <p>We believe that if the same structure of actions is followed by other companies, it could be very helpful and maybe guarantee the success of every</p>

	<p>new apprenticeship scheme that is arranged in the future.</p> <p>The described best practice considered a well-structured apprenticeship program. All of the organisations should understand that without the initiative and the willingness of the mentoring company, little would happen in the direction of addressing the company needs and challenges.</p> <p>Furthermore, the impact and usefulness of the good practice will contribute to the higher level of well-known working responsibilities of the apprentice and this will result to increase the company's productivity. Additionally, last but not least and of high importance, the implementation of the best practice will operate in a catalytic and preventive way to the avoidance of any possible obstacles or problems in the near future.</p>
Other remarks:	<p>The mentoring company had provided a number of apprenticeship programmes in the past and get a high level of experience in order to identify and implement the best practice. In the previous apprenticeship schemes many mistakes took place and overall procedures were not documented or recorded according to the requirements of a Quality System.</p>