

Guide to Listening for Employers' Workforce Approaches and Challenges



Apprenticeship intermediaries are designed to serve multiple employers and are, therefore, continually recruiting new hiring partners to join their program. It is highly valuable to listen thoughtfully to employers during early conversations to ascertain the fit apprenticeship might have with their existing approaches and challenges to workforce development and management. This guide is designed to help apprenticeship intermediaries deepen the dialog during preliminary meetings with employers by zeroing in on key topics fully attuned to what to listen for and how to position apprenticeship as a potential solution.

Listening Guide

Companies can attract people to tech careers and/or programmatically upskill employees into new roles by offering an apprenticeship. The investment in hiring and training apprentices has proven to be worthwhile for countless companies globally as there are numerous benefits to be gained, yet running a high-quality apprenticeship program requires a company to be committed to developing people to become qualified for full-time hire or promotion. Understanding a company's commitment to developing people is critical.

From the beginning, it is important to build trust and listen effectively. Strive to understand the employer's current workforce, their approach to recruiting new employees as well as developing employees to identify how apprenticeship might be a solution for some of their workforce challenges. It is important to understand their needs as fully as possible to envision the apprenticeship model that might work best for them since an apprenticeship program can vary significantly depending on a variety of factors such as the labor market, jobs needing to be filled, business size, and diversity targets.

Use the listening guide to understand how apprenticeship might be a fit for an employer in these key areas:

- Their tech workforce
- Their approach to recruiting
- Their approach to employee development

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from his/her angle as well as your own." Henry Ford

Can you share a little about...	Listen to the employer for...	Identify where apprenticeship might be a fit...
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Your Tech Workforce

Structure	... where, organizationally, apprenticeship might reside and if they have career pathways.	Apprentices may fit in their IT, marketing, or customer service divisions.
Job roles	... job roles they struggle to fill, their starting wages.	Apprentices earn a learning wage and are recruited for aptitude rather than experience.
Retention	... high turnover situations or situations where people are stagnant and not developing.	Apprenticeship is proven to increase retention.
Diversity	... the desire and then the need for a more diverse workforce.	Apprenticeship is known to attract more diverse applicants.
Work setting(s)	... whether their work setting would be conducive to apprenticeship.	Typically, in-person with the mentor, but can be remote.
Leadership development	... whether they need to develop future leaders.	Mentoring an apprentice is a fundamental step in developing future leaders.

Your Recruiting Approach

Standard approach	... how existing recruiting approaches are working and any challenges.	Recruiting apprentices requires a shift to selecting for aptitude versus experience.
Talent sources	... college recruiting, contractors, temp-to-hire, acquisitions, key vendors.	Apprenticeship can be adapted to different talent sourcing strategies.
Costs or fees	... understanding their current threshold for recruiting new hires.	Make the case that the money spent on the apprentice's learning wage and training is competitive with traditional recruiting of full-time hires.
Applicants	... understanding the nature of the type of applicants they typically see.	Apprenticeship can appeal to completely different types of people than a full-time job requiring relevant experience attracts.

Your Employee Development Approach

New hire onboarding	... how robust they onboard new employees. What is the training provided within the first year? If they do little, find out why.	Apprenticeship is a planned out and structured way to bring on someone with potential, train them to help them become qualified for full-time hire.
Existing employees upskilling	... how strong their efforts are to regularly upskill employees, including moving them along a career path.	Apprenticeship can be run for internal career growth.
Use of outside incentive funding	Listen for if they have any experience with workforce incentive funding (grants, reimbursements, tax credits).	There may be incentive funding, but the employer needs to be interested and able to access it.

In Summary

Taking the time to listen well to ascertain whether apprenticeship is a viable solution for the employer based on their current workforce situation is vital. Recall that employers have choice to either sponsor themselves or to hire through and apprenticeship intermediary partner and listening well will also help you best advise the employer on which path might be best for them presently. Always follow-up in writing after your conversations to reiterate what you heard and how apprenticeship might or might not be an optimal solution.

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