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## Apprenticeship Scheme

Launched in 2003 by Michael Howard - a champion of lifelong learning - Howard Civil Engineering (HCE) delivers construction services focusing on groundwork, substructure and infrastructure contracts, reinforced concrete and surfacing work.

In a sector hit hard by the recession and renowned for its significant skills' gap, HCE has posted a 70 per cent growth in the last 12 months (£15m turnover) and increased its 120-strong team by 35% which includes taking on five new apprentices. The business is committed to recruiting up to three apprentices a year for the next three years.

HCE's Apprenticeship programme started in 2003 – reinforcing HCE's commitment to developing talent and innovating. Since then the business has developed several dozen apprentices over 11 years. In the last 12 months alone 20 employees have undergone training.

Critical to the company sustaining its exemplary health and safety record and securing and delivering more multi-million pound contracts with partners such as Balfour Beatty and Bam Construction – is recruiting and nurturing the next generation of engineers, ground workers, surveyors and accountants.

Recruiting through the Construction Industry Training Board and Leeds College of Building, HCE's programme is managed by Andy Rafton, HCE's Health, Safety, Quality and Environment Manager who is responsible for all the apprentices. He says: "I came to HCE after being a

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mechanic for 10 years and haven't looked back. I've progressed from a labourer to a senior manager responsible for health and safety across the business. I've seen both the benefits the Apprenticeship programme has brought to the business and to the apprentices."

The scheme extends to every area of the business and at all levels leading to NVQs, HNDs and even degrees. Apprentices are matched with senior colleagues who mentor them and transfer skills and valuable learning to them as they progress their career goals.

HCE's commitment to CPD starts at the top with MD Michael Howard recently completing the Goldman Sachs high growth small business programme at the University of Leeds to hone his own management and leadership skills.

All HCE apprentices stay on with the company after completing their two year training – with some achieving additional qualifications such as HNDs or degrees. Their training then continues through HCE's CPD programme which can lead to management positions. Employees are likewise given time off to study for their respective exams.

A wealth of powerful case studies include one apprentice who gained a first in his degree and another initially taken on for a four month work experience and progressing to achieve a degree.

HCE excels at spotting potential in its Apprentices and nurturing that talent. The company presents them with daunting challenges on occasions but they soon realise the right support network is in place and invariably surprise themselves at what they can achieve – and what they learn. HCE constantly monitors how its employees are progressing and looks to recognise, reward and promote a job well done.

HCE has made enormous inroads in its Apprenticeship programme as it consistently strives for excellence and drives a policy of continuous improvement. This ethos applies to all areas

of the business and is evidenced by HCE being positioned sixth out of 109 in the BAM Health and Safety Awards and one of its managers, Mick McCarthy being nominated by Willmott Dixon, for exceptional site management.

HCE also works with award-winning learning providers including YOR future shared apprenticeship scheme which recently received the 'Committed to Training Award' from the Chartered Institute of Building.

Since 2003, HCE has invested thousands of hours in nurturing and training its apprentices and will recruit a further nine apprentices over the next three years. The business has offered apprenticeships in 13 categories. Additional success stories include how James Page came on board as a labourer 9 years ago and has progressed to manage HCE's biggest ever project - Arla Foods in Aylesbury with an £11 million contract value.

The company's open door policy ensures that managers and mentors always make time to support and enhance the career progression of its trainees.

If selected as Apprenticeship Employer of the Year HCE would spearhead a vibrant marketing and PR programme to communicate and champion the benefits which employers can derive from taking on apprentices. This programme would include:

- Spreading the word via our respective partners communication platforms
- Promoting the awards programme across traditional PR (trade and regional) and digital platforms
- Maximising apprentice case studies across the above

To find out more about Howard Civil Engineering's Apprenticeship Scheme, please contact 0113 249 8569.