

Make Innovation HAPPEN



**MIH Knowledge Article:
Skills to Tills - People Power**

Scotland
A LAND OF
food and drink

SCOTLAND
IT'S TIME TO INSPIRE



How investing in workforce could drive Scotland's food and drink industry growth

The success of Scotland's growing food and drink industry relies on our future workforce. With the rise of technology and automation in the sector, the skills that are required in every part of the industry are shifting, challenging recruitment and retention. Workforce shortages and skills gaps mean that investing in innovative recruitment and retention schemes are key to driving long-term business success. With food and drink being the biggest manufacturing sector in Scotland, what could food and drink businesses do to overcome those challenges?

Shaping long-lasting skills

The food and drink industry is evolving rapidly and many of the requirements for traditional skills have been superseded by the need for a different set of aptitudes.

Some of the core skills that are expected to be high in demand in the industry include:

- Communication skills
- Teamwork
- Entrepreneurial outlook
- Analytical ability
- Leadership
- Creativity
- Digital mindset

Finding talent with a strong entrepreneurial mindset and analytical skills is proving particularly challenging. Combine this with the difficulty of recruiting enough talent to fill science, technology, engineering and maths-based roles and it's clear that Scotland's food and drink companies need to be more creative and innovative in their approach to attracting the people it needs.

Communicate and attract for success

Researchers and skills professionals agree that there are three essential elements to job attractiveness; people, place and practice. Job satisfaction and development opportunities are key for employees to stay within a job; the work environment, safety at the workplace and opportunities to work productively and creatively are important factors when thinking about recruitment and retention.

According to research from the Institute of Grocery Distributors (IGD), 'work/life balance', 'promotion opportunities', 'on-the-job training' and 'company values' are most important factors for young people when searching for jobs; all ahead of 'salary'. 89% of young recruits joined the food and drink industry because of the career development opportunities.

This insight can guide companies to create new ways of working that recognise the part that work plays in peoples' whole lifestyle, rather than just in the workplace. This recognition can then be communicated in ways that chime with the target audience, creating messaging that talks about successful career building in a forward-looking industry.

Case Study: Dawnfresh

Scottish seafood producer Dawnfresh is a prime example of this new way of working, setting itself high standards when it comes to its workforce: *“At Dawnfresh we believe that great people make a great business and we invest in our people to promote our culture of excellence”*.

Dawnfresh offers a six weeks training programme for young people to dip into different areas of the company and to learn and develop new skills. For the company, an innovative and relevant approach to engage young people is central to its long-term planning.

Healthy Culture

Communicating the culture of a business is essential for building reputation. Engaging with local communities to raise awareness as well as designing attractive job roles that offer flexible working practices, promoting career opportunities and helping to show employees a clear path of progression are also key components to attract new recruits.

Health and wellbeing, physical and mental, is an area of people’s lives that continues to grow in importance, as open discussion and debate bring it centre stage. Research suggests that companies that make these a focus for investment alongside more traditional concerns will gain a competitive edge from a more productive workforce.

Case study: Dean’s Shortbread

Dean’s Shortbread, one of Scotland’s most recognisable food brands, benefits from its holistic approach to its investment in training and development programmes to retain employees. Every staff member has an individual training and development plan which is discussed and reviewed on a regular basis. Open communication and honest feedback of staff are key areas for continuous improvement in the satisfaction, development and retention of staff.

Growth opportunities

Scotland’s food and drink industry is growing and so is the demand for a highly skilled workforce. Skill shortages and skills gaps are key challenges in this sector making it important to invest in effective recruitment and retention schemes to drive long-term business success. Having the right working skills, working environment and culture is vital for future’s workforce.