

# Case Study

**SCOTLAND  
FOOD & DRINK  
PARTNERSHIP**

## Dawnfresh

# Our people development programme futureproofs the business

*“When we began our work on people development, I wish I’d known how much support was available from the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership – it would have made my job a lot easier.”*

**Kristy Reynolds**  
Learning and Development Manager

**Believing that great people make a great business, Dawnfresh works hard to be an employer of choice. Our investment in areas such as core skills, wellbeing and fair pay served us well during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Dawnfresh Seafoods is one of the UK’s largest producers of fish and seafood. In addition to using our own farmed trout, we work with many other species, producing for retail, export and foodservice. Our brands include R.R. Spink & Sons, Silvertide and Loch Etive.

Believing that great people make a great business, we aim to attract and retain the best staff, and we have Investors in People (IIP) and Investors in Young People (IYYP) Gold status. In line with our values of respect, integrity, trust and excellence, we pay the Living Wage and above for all roles.

### How we prepared for Covid and other challenges

During the Covid-19 pandemic, our challenge was to produce the same output as usual, but to do so in a very different way – adapting to changes like social

distancing, disrupted supply chains, and having staff furloughed or shielding.

We were able to do that, and deliver for our customers, thanks to our previous work to build capability in our teams, for example:

- **supporting people in their roles**, through training and also building their understanding of other roles in the business
- **succession planning**
- **investing in people’s wellbeing**

Through this people development programme, we had prepared for Covid without even knowing we were doing so.

### Options for businesses of all sizes

The intention behind developing our staff was to futureproof the business and make it more resilient. Two examples show how successful that was during the Covid pandemic.

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**Apprenticeships:** Dawnfresh has delivered over 300 apprenticeships since 2012, through Foundation, Modern and Graduate frameworks. We currently have 50 apprentices working across aquaculture, food and drink, engineering and supply chain. They help us improve the technical skills in the business, and also recruit and retain talented, hard-working staff – people know we will develop their potential.



Covid highlighted another benefit – that apprenticeships also teach core skills, such as communication. There were people in our cross-functional Covid team without previous experience of working on project teams but they effectively disseminated the information from the daily meetings back to the shop floor, and vice versa. A lot of actions we took in response to Covid were based on ideas coming up from people working in the factory every day. It was a collaborative approach, made possible by skill sets developed through training.

Not every business can deliver apprenticeships on the scale that we do, but they are still an option for small companies. We certainly recommend them.

**Staff wellbeing:** We had previously invested in staff wellbeing by training mental health first aiders. This came in really useful when we had people furloughed or shielding – our first aiders were able to check in on them, and see how they were coping. Having mental

health first aiders is something even the smallest company can do, and it can be invaluable when a business has to deal with difficult situations.

## Using recruitment to futureproof our business

Another way Dawnfresh builds resilience and future success is by recruiting great people. We engage with young people through various initiatives, spreading the message about careers in the food and drink industry. One way we get people interested is by highlighting the breadth of roles and opportunities available – from finance to fish health to engineering to marketing.

Covid should help us with recruitment. It has demonstrated the value of food and drink producers' work, and showcased the industry to different people. Post-Covid there will be people looking for new opportunities, and they'll be more aware of the many reasons to work in this industry. It's a strong platform for attracting the people we need.

[www.dawnfresh.co.uk](http://www.dawnfresh.co.uk)