



ATA EXTENDED TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

The IMI has launched two new accreditations with its ATA programme designed for customer facing staff. One is for service advisers and the other for parts advisers.

“Improving and maintaining the customer facing side of any business is imperative,” said Sarah Sillars, IMI chief executive. “With the economic challenges facing the auto retail industry today, it has become more crucial that staff provide customers with the very best service to retain business and build relationships.

“The major aim of ATA is to assess the standards within the industry and provide recognition to those who have the required skills. These are two offerings from ATA that will assess those who are usually the first point of contact in the motor industry.”

The service adviser scheme is designed for front line customer service personnel working specifically in the auto retail industry, both experienced and fresh into the business, with a minimum of three months relevant work experience. However, it is a voluntary scheme and no prior qualifications are required.

Based on National Occupational Standards, individuals are measured against five core skills:

■ Interpersonal skills

Communication abilities such as listening carefully, taking clear notes to ensure full understanding of situations and problems; being able to influence others and build relationships internally and externally.

■ Personal commitment

Remaining upbeat, motivated and positive at all times and committed to delivering excellent customer service.

■ Leadership and control

Teamwork and being able to learn from mistakes.

■ Business orientation

Product knowledge, ability to cross-sell, ability to offer clear explanations of technical works, plus understanding manufacturer warranties.

■ Managing performance

Working without supervision to achieve identified objectives within the stated

years’ industry experience in an appropriate role or hold a relevant nationally-recognised qualification with 12 months’ post-qualification experience.

Assessment is usually a one-day process and involves knowledge assessment, practical skills assessment and other areas such as communications, sales and marketing, vehicle identification and administration.

“Successful candidates receive a photo ID card and are included on an online register of ATA Accredited Parts Advisers,” said Mrs Sillars. “Accreditation provides demonstrable proof of ability that candidates can carry with them at all times. It also shows that they have made a personal commitment to a code of honest conduct.”

Individuals will need to undertake re-assessment every five years to prove familiarity with industry developments to maintain ATA accreditation.

Further information can be found at the nearest IMI Awards assessment centre.

APPRENTICES WILL REPRESENT UK

by Neil Kennett

Top apprentices from across the automotive sector will represent Squad UK in the World Skills finals in Calgary this summer.

Those deemed good enough to represent their country include: Dean Jones, of Mercedes-Benz Swansea, and Paul Abbey, of Gattonside Garage, in the automobile technology discipline; Ben Eaton of Sytner Sheffield in the car painting division; Daniel Cain, of Just Car Clinic, in the autobody repair section; Christopher Coates and Elliot New, of Bentley Motors Crewe, in the CNC Milling event; and Fraser McLean, of Rolls Royce, in the CNC Turning category.

Frances O’Grady, deputy general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), welcomed the automotive sector’s commitment to the competition.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the skills of our young people who far too often get a bad press. Sometimes the vocational route is seen as second best and we need to nail that myth once and for all,” he said.

Research published by the Apprenticeship Ambassadors earlier this year concluded that organisations that continue to invest in apprentices will have a competitive edge as we emerge from the recession.

Rob Foulston, chief executive of ReMIT, supports this view: “Investment in training continues to be vital for auto retail sector businesses with an eye on the future. Apprenticeship training is one of the best forums for developing new staff and ReMIT is working with thousands of businesses across the UK, working on technical as well as non technical qualifications.”



time.

Assessment is usually a one-day process at an IMI awards approved ATA Customer Service Assessment Centre, comprising a knowledge assessment and a practical skills assessment.

For the parts adviser ATA there are two levels of accreditation available: parts adviser and senior parts advisor.

The scheme is designed for parts advisers working within the auto retail industry who ideally either have two

But the IMI reports there is an increase in the number of apprentices being made redundant, and used Apprenticeship Week 2009 (held in February) to push its 'Apprentices Make Things Happen' message. This emphasised the many apprenticeship routes that are available and that employers can benefit from full funding for apprenticeships from 14 years through to 19 years.

■ *Jaguar Land Rover has announced another recruitment programme offering over 40 Advanced Apprenticeships to enthusiastic 16+ year olds wanting a career within the automotive industry. The apprenticeships consist of a 36-48 month programme, with the initial period at college. During this time they will earn an NVQ2 in Performing Engineering Operations, an NVQ3 in the chosen trade pathway and a Technical Certificate, as well as developing wider key skills.*