



# Join the Club...

## What is The 5 Per Cent Club?

The Five Per Cent Club was set up five years ago by Leo Quinn, Group Chief Executive of Balfour Beatty, to encourage employers to offer as many 'earn and learn' training opportunities as possible, improving the employment and career prospects of today's youth and equipping the UK with the skilled workforce it needs to drive forward productivity.

The 5 Per Cent Club now has more than 340 employer-members, representing businesses across many sectors and sizes, who all aspire to having 5 per cent of their workforce undertaking 'earn and learn' training, including apprenticeships, graduate development schemes or sponsored student schemes.

## Why?

Away from Government initiatives and regulatory efforts (don't mention the levy), the 5 Per Cent Club's focus is on the employers themselves. Their argument is that companies should be taking the initiative and it's their duty to ensure that for every 20 employees, at least one is an apprentice.

Clearly, the need and desire to hire more apprentices is there. Less than two per cent of businesses are fully confident that their employees are well placed to take advantage of the rising use of new technology, according to the club's survey of its employer-members.

Meanwhile, 78 per cent of businesses surveyed strongly believe that earn and learn training opportunities, including apprenticeship schemes, can help address future changes in the workplace, and are critical for UK businesses if they are to successfully compete in a global market.

I recently spoke with the group's Director General, Lady Cobham, who told me how important it was that apprenticeships were given the respect due to them: "Parity of esteem is so important for young people when they approach apprenticeships. We have to work towards a situation where parents, schools and colleges put apprenticeships on a level playing field with University, as they do in other countries such as Germany or Switzerland."

## Valued Members of the Team

Although it might sound at odds with the name of the club, one of the key values held by club members is that they appreciate apprentices as people who can bring something to the table and not just as numbers.

Kier has been running earn and learn schemes for many years, and currently has close to 900 individuals on structured programmes to support their development.

Katie Nightingale, Kier Group Early Careers Manager, says: "People are the life blood to the built environment and we are committed to investing in the workforce of tomorrow. Our approach is clear, we do not see recruiting new talent as an HR initiative, but a staple part of the group's sustainable business growth strategy."

For more information about The 5 Per Cent Club visit [www.5percentclub.org.uk](http://www.5percentclub.org.uk)