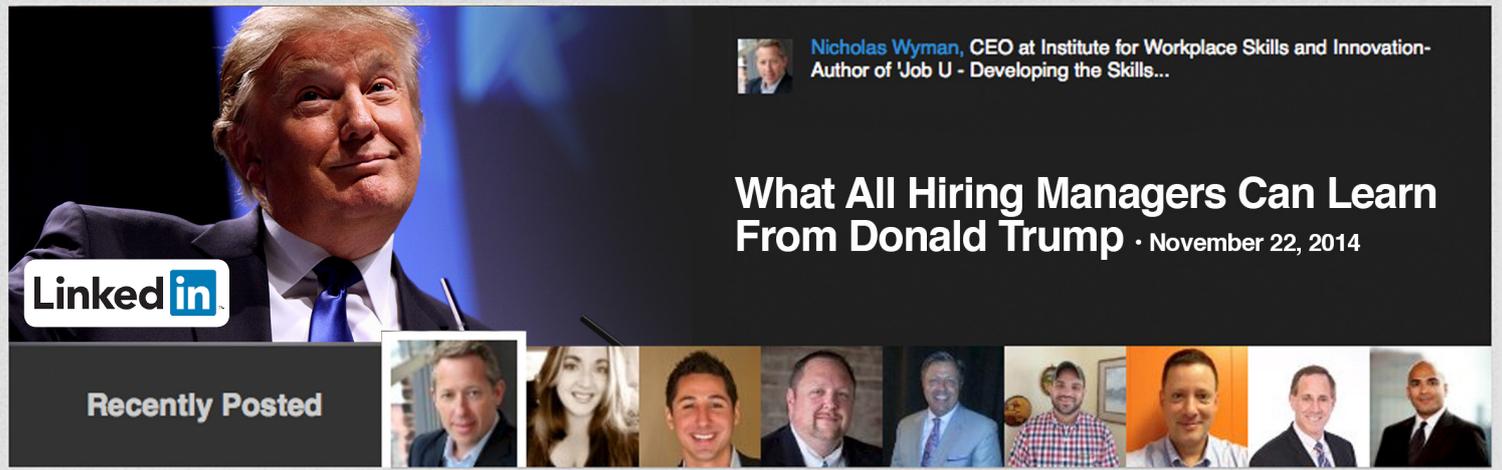


By Nicholas Wyman



Even if you don't share the American business mogul's passion for yelling "You're fired!", there is one lesson all hiring managers can learn from Donald Trump: hire apprentices whenever possible.

Apprenticeship has an impressive track record in countries like Switzerland and Germany, where it has been a huge factor in keeping unemployment rates low and economies healthy. Yet despite all its proven benefits – for companies and workers alike - It hasn't been as fully embraced everywhere, and that needs to change. While Americans may be tuning in to follow the progress of Mr. Trump's apprentices on television, the actual number of apprenticeships in the United States has fallen over the last decade.

At the same time, companies and hiring managers across the country are struggling to find the skilled workers they need. Apprenticeships are a big part of the solution to this problem and many others. I would even argue that they are the secret weapon in closing the skills gap that has shrunk companies' profits and curbed economic growth.

So if you're an executive, a manager, a business owner – or anyone else responsible for recruiting and hiring talented workers, here are 5 reasons why it's worth taking a page from Mr. Trump.

### 5 Reasons to Hire Apprentices

#### Reason #1: The bottom line.

Let's start with what really matters in business: the bottom line. Apprentices give employers a return on their investment. A study of over 1,000 employers across Canada in sixteen different trades found that for every dollar invested in training apprentices, employers see a net return of 47 cents.

This almost impossibly high return on investment rivals just about any investment a company can earn on its capital, and is much greater than the 10 percent typical among S&P 500 firms. Not only that, but research shows that apprentices generate an increasing net benefit over each year of the apprenticeship. That's math that's hard to argue with!

#### Reason #2: Apprentices are trained with the exact skills your company needs.

The middle skills gap is leaving many jobs unfilled due to lack of a technically trained workforce, but it's not the only problem hiring managers face. Many employers also complain that in addition to having trouble finding technically skilled candidates, they can't find candidates with the soft skills they need – like the ability to problem-solve, communicate effectively with clients, or work well in teams - even when interviewing recent college graduates. Hiring apprentices solves this problem.

Apprentices are specifically trained in the very skills their employers need, both the soft and the more technical varieties. Apprentices have been mentored, challenged, taught, performed and paid in a real workplace, over the course of several years. As a result, they are completely job-ready and possess not just the practical skills but the work ethic, communication abilities, and the experience in problem-solving that hiring managers are finding lacking in so many candidates coming straight from college or university.

#### Reason #3: Apprenticeships benefit the economy and in turn all of its stakeholders (that includes your company).

Each \$1 that governments invest in apprenticeships generates \$27 in economic growth. One reason is simply that apprenticeships can create more opportunities for a thriving middle class of skilled workers. And since apprentices do not carry tuition debt, it's a

start toward chipping away at the more than \$1 trillion owed to the United States government in student loan debt. Rather than borrowing money, apprentices earn while they learn, so that instead of inflating our debt bubble, they are putting that income to work and contributing in a number of ways to a thriving economy.

#### Reason #4: Apprenticeships are not just for carpenters and electricians.

Here's another thing we can learn from Donald Trump: apprenticeships work in a wide variety of professions – and not just the ones you'd expect. Although apprenticeships may be traditionally associated with skilled trades like construction, they work just as well in the world of white collar business.

In fact, in the U.K., where apprenticeships have expanded in recent years, the majority of new apprenticeships are in fields such as business administration, retail, management, and hospitality. There is also evidence that the apprenticeship model translates well to IT, health care, the arts, and even the hard sciences. More and more, smart employers are realizing they can reap the benefits of apprenticeship in just about any profession or field of study.

#### Reason #5: Apprentices are productive, enthusiastic employees.

I work with employers, government leaders and educators worldwide to create mentor-based apprenticeship programs, upskilling on average 600 apprentices at any given time, so I can tell you from first hand experience that apprentices are some of the most hard-working, motivated people out there. After all, they have every incentive to work hard within their training period so that they'll land the job.

Moreover, an in-house apprenticeship program also fosters a learning environment that increases productivity across the board. In the Canadian study mentioned above, employers observed that having apprentices was a benefit to their existing staff. Most employers also agreed that an apprentice they'd invested in training and mentoring was 29% more productive than someone hired from outside the organization.

So if you want to ensure the skilled, motivated, and productive workforce you need for today and tomorrow, take it from Donald Trump: hire apprentices.

## About the Author

Nicholas Wyman is the CEO of the Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation.



He is the Author of "Job U - How to Find Wealth and Success by Developing the Skills Companies Actually Need" published by Crown - a division of Penguin Random House. He speaks and writes on the business and leadership challenges companies face in finding skilled employees. Nicholas is a graduate of Harvard Business School and is a Churchill Fellow.



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