

# KTP Associate is recipe for success at family bakery

Barnsley-based family bakery Fosters was keen to continue its rapid growth but realised that to do so successfully, it would need to develop its management and employee capability, and link its human resource management to the strategic planning process.

Fosters' ambitious growth strategy was threatened by a number of factors. The bakery had not been seen as an industry of choice in the Barnsley area, and in the past, the best people were not attracted to the company. Further, Fosters had a number of serious HR problems, which were associated with a lack of dedicated knowledge and expertise. These included very high labour turnover and high levels of absenteeism, which had a detrimental impact on productivity and performance.

In one of the first HR management Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP), Associate Sarah Carmody has now been working with the company for almost two years – helping to set up a complete HR function, enabling the bakery to accomplish its growth objectives.

Key achievements include significantly reduced absenteeism and disciplinary proceedings, plus a vast improvement in the staff turnover rate. Sarah has also worked to continue and develop the firm's progressive policies of employing ex-offenders and migrant workers.

Fosters is now planning to apply for Investors in People accreditation and has also won the Food Manufacture Excellence Award for 'Diversity in Recruitment', for its work with migrant labour, ex-offenders, schools, colleges and universities.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are a government-backed initiative that enables companies of all sizes to utilise the scientific and business knowledge of UK universities to further their organisation, whilst providing graduates with the opportunity to develop their skills in a real life working environment.



## Key benefits for Fosters Bakery

- reduced absenteeism
- staff turnover down from 21.8 to 9.1 per cent
- significant reduction in disciplinary proceedings
- signed up to the government's 'Skills Pledge' – ensuring everyone is qualified to NVQ level 2 or above
- plans in place to find alternative ways of recruiting when the migrant labour pool reduces from 2011



Sarah Carmody, Fosters' KTP Associate, with operations manager, Michael Taylor

'Sarah's involvement has allowed us to make a step change in our approach to human resource management, introducing comprehensive policies and procedures, which have brought significant benefits to our business.'

**Michael Taylor**  
(Operations manager, Fosters Bakery)



KTP Associate Sarah Carmody collects Fosters' Food Manufacturer Excellence Award with colleagues

# Working in partnership

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships aren't just a work experience programme – by working together, the participating organisations and individuals each gain benefits that have a lasting influence on their future.

Fosters Bakery have benefited from two years' dedicated human resources support from Sarah Carmody, backed up by the expertise of her academic supervisors at Sheffield Hallam, Professor Liz Doherty and Ann Norton.

Sarah has gained a vast amount of experience and said, 'It's been a totally different environment from what I was used to – very hands-on with the chance to get involved in all sorts of things. It's been a steep learning curve but I've really enjoyed it.'

Sheffield Hallam University has also gained from the experience which has given the academic team the opportunity to reflect on what they've learned about strategic HR management in a small to medium sized business. That learning is being shared through internal seminars, presentations to industry and at academic conferences.

## Typical KTP projects

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are available in a wide range of industries, and include

- product design
- manufacturing
- technical innovation
- strategic marketing
- business processes
- HR management

'Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are an excellent way for businesses, graduates and the University to mutually benefit one another. Newly qualified students get the hands-on experience of working in industry, whilst businesses get to utilise the abilities of untapped talents.'

**Peter Hayes**  
(Director, Enterprise Centre at Sheffield Hallam University)

## Our other services to business

As one of the UK's leading new universities, strong links with the outside world are integral to our approach.

With more than 29,000 students and 5,000 staff working across a wide range of disciplines, we've got expertise to share. Our many research and business development units work with companies and organisations on a daily basis, building strong relationships and establishing long-term partnerships that really work.

So whether you need the latest research to help you develop an innovative product, professional consultancy or bespoke training to help you tackle a specific business challenge, or a source of highly skilled students who are ready to join your team, we can help.

## Just one call

For more information on how KTPs, or any of Sheffield Hallam's services for business, can help your organisation, please get in touch with **our dedicated team**.

Enterprise Centre  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Howard Street  
Sheffield S1 1WB

Telephone 0114 225 5000  
E-mail [business@shu.ac.uk](mailto:business@shu.ac.uk)

**[www.shu.ac.uk/business](http://www.shu.ac.uk/business)**

Further information on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships can also be found at **[www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)**