



How **Kwik-Fit** uses National Occupational Standards to maintain its status as a brand leader

Background

Kwik-Fit has run a strong apprentice programme since 1995. Last year the company received 18,000 applications for its apprentice programme which takes on 150 apprentices per annum. Once apprentices at the company have completed their training programme, they are three times less likely to leave the company than other employees, and many progress to become area managers or managers. The company has also supported 1400 employees through the NVQ Level 2 Train to Gain qualification.

Kwik-Fit's technical training provision for apprentices is delivered by the company at its five training academies (Edinburgh, Derby, Gloucester, Harlow and London) with all the trainers and the assessment team employed by Kwik-Fit.

Using National Occupational Standards (NOS) alongside NVQs

Paul Binks, Head of Training, has used NVQs and National Occupational Standards (NOS) since 1996. Over the last 12 years he has also been involved in rewriting NOS for the fast fit sector of the motor industry to ensure that the standards align to industry requirements.

“Very early on we started to use NOS to write our own internal assessments as well as using NOS within NVQ frameworks. We also used NOS to create the job descriptions for our fitter grades in the business, so effectively there is a very close association between a person’s job description and the national standard which meant that the delivery of NVQs was easier given the fact that the qualification was no more than someone’s job,” explains Paul.

At Kwik Fit there are four grades of fitter and they range from a basic tyre fitter to a master fitter who deals with brakes and suspension: NOS are written according to each of the skill levels. These standards all fit naturally into the career ladder, allowing the fitters to progress with relative ease.



How a brand leader sets an example by using NOS

As Paul states, having an influence on designing the industry NOS has meant that the assessments are aligned to industry best practice. Bringing NOS into the training programme has given the company more focus in terms of understanding the bigger picture – not just in terms of Kwik Fit but getting involved in designing the NOS with other organisations and training providers that operate in the same industry, including ATS Euromaster, National Tyres and the sector skills council.

“One of the reasons why Kwik Fit is going through the qualification and NOS route with its employees is so that we, as a company, can demonstrate that our staff are trained to the highest possible level and that we can stand up and defend ourselves if we are required to do so. The fact that our staff are trained to national standards, which are externally verified, sends out a very powerful message to the market,” says Paul.

Why NOS are practical for recruiting and maintaining working practices

When the company was refining job grades and job roles it made sense, according to Paul, to use NOS to form the basis of an employee’s job description:

“Over the last ten years or so, I think it became very apparent that we wanted to raise the bar in terms of our own quality standard so we used NOS as the basis for redefining job roles,” said Paul.

This practical measure allowed for employee skills to be transferable and, during the recruitment process ensured that prospective employees bring with them skills that were in-line with the company’s expectations. Using NOS also ensured that the job descriptions did not have to be re-written because the standards were already in place.

As Paul concludes, “NOS are certainly helping Kwik Fit maintain its status in the automotive industry: we can’t sit still when standards in this sector move forward, so we have to be with them. We are always looking to exceed these standards, rather than just go with them and NOS provide us with a reference point on which to base our very high standards.”

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