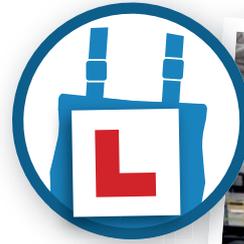


“When you look at the full sector, there are a host of different apprenticeships in areas that still need that skillset”

Andy Murdoch

Build it and they will come



Remit’s new heavy goods vehicle academy in Derby opened three weeks before the COVID pandemic hit. Good timing it wasn’t, but despite that temporal misstep, the group is going from strength to strength, finds Will Dalrymple

The story of the heavy goods vehicle academy began four years ago, when the training provider, which also offers apprenticeships in IT, management, business, hospitality, retail, food and care, built a new light commercial vehicle facility. At that time, 80% of its training was for LCV, but also ran HGV courses out of a small workshop with enough space for two truck cabs.

Within two years, the LCV facility, which has workshops for body, paint and vehicle engineering, had fully booked up, and it still had enquiries from a number of truck manufacturers looking for something that other providers weren’t offering, as automotive senior account manager Andy Murdoch tells it.

So a new facility was built two doors down. It offers six classrooms, two bays with full-size pits and three additional bays for engine and tyre training rigs, as well as air conditioning and EV training.

Over the past year or so, Remit has signed deals with MAN Truck & Bus, IVECO and Arriva bus to train their technicians to heavy goods vehicle service and maintenance technician Level 3 standard. Remit handles all of the theoretical and practical aspects of apprentice training; they attend the site’s courses every other month, while working the rest of the time at a local dealer. (In addition, another contract sees Remit staffing and running



apprenticeships at Scania’s training centre in Loughborough).

Originally, the plan was to train apprentices in the classrooms. But in the months after March 2020, the organisation began to develop a computer-based training programme, which does not exactly replicate the classroom course. “Even from my own experience, it’s hard when you’re sitting in front of a laptop from 9-5 remaining motivated and engaged,” he admits.

Instead, the course is based on small chunks of learning spread across the day, around set activities for the apprentices to do around the dealership, after which they go back online for an internet lesson and present their findings. Murdoch continues: “We have to make it clear to dealerships that apprentices can’t be working during that time - they need to study, and ask questions, and do research. Candidates actually prefer this kind of route; this generation of learners is very active with phones and computers.”

Some of that structure will remain once social distancing restrictions are relaxed, Murdoch says, as, apart from anything else, it reduces travel and accommodation disruption and costs.

BIG PLANS

Remit isn’t stopping here. First, there are plans to build a new facility for HGV end point assessments. Second, a new apprenticeship is launching in Derby and Loughborough (for Scania) later this summer in automotive parts, a topic of which most - 85% - can be taught remotely, apart from vehicle identification and product knowledge, says Murdoch.

In addition, there are courses in customer service, business administration and sales. “When you look at the full sector, there are a host of different apprenticeships in areas that still need that skillset,” he adds.

So, why go with an external provider like Remit? Murdoch contends that running a good apprenticeship programme requires its own competences. “Ultimately, if you are manufacturing and servicing vehicles, that’s what you’re good at. Training providers have expertise in learning and understand the component parts required in the delivery of an effective programme that meets the requirements of the learner, the employer, the funding bodies and Ofsted. That’s not so simple.” 