

To: Sir John Cassels CB - Chairman, UK Skills

From: Mr. J. D. G. Hammer CB

Date: 31st January 2000

Subject: Funding of International Competitors' Additional Training

You asked me for estimates of what sort of amounts would be involved in funding bursaries to competitors or compensatory payments to their employers to enable their release for a specific period to enable them to receive the necessary additional training to compete with a good chance of success in World Skill competitions.

I have consulted 8 experts in various fields but 2 or 3 have still to respond.

Barrie Rowe, representing the building trades, tells me that in recent years Skillbuild has funded each competitor for 6 weeks training at £250 per week, paid either direct to the competitor or as a contribution to the employer who then paid normal (higher) wages and made up the difference. Skillbuild also paid any travel expenses and lodging costs.

Barrie said that the arrangement was made because so many employers raised the issue when for the first time their employees were contributing to the profits of the company but Skillbuild did not pay for the employers loss of earning capacity.

What Barrie felt was vital was to have a fair system which measured and monitored what actually took place and he himself visited all the competitors and experts several times during the training process.

Whilst the payment to employer or competitor was about £1,500 each, cost varied greatly and for instance the stone mason, was expensive in 1999 because it involved flights to Northern Ireland.

His view was that 6 weeks was enough training "in isolation", what was really needed was more training in a simulated competition environment against time pressures. He also felt that trainees should be made to fail, and perhaps we need to bring in harder outsiders as experts during the training process because the experts themselves get too close to their competitors. In any case, the experts should be made to bid for the available funds, to justify the expenditure which should be rigorously monitored.

Incidentally, he said that the total bill to Skillbuild for Montreal (including payments to UK Skills) was of the order of £90k.

Bill Jones (car painter) said that the length of training time would depend on the outcome of the initial skill audit but he would want about 6 weeks because competition work was so very different from day to day ~~for~~ car spraying. Car sprayers would be paid some £7.50 per hour with the labour charged out at about £21. Compensation could perhaps be offered at £16 per hour which would make £640 per week or say £3800 maximum for 6 weeks.

He agreed that obviously in view of the kudos accruing to the employer, a lower figure could be negotiated. On the other hand, the new experiences which competitors had gave them a new confidence and a portable recommendation so that they tended to move abroad after competing. Return to the "normality" of their previous job is a great let down.

Alan Jones (automotive mechanics) had always aimed for 6 weeks training which usually meant one day's travel per four days actual work. At the rate of £12 per hour for 36 weeks this would amount to £430 per week or a maximum of £2500, although it would vary greatly as to whether the competitor came from a major company like Mercedes or Toyota or from a private garage.

In addition he mentioned that it was important to be able to fund training courses. In the past, by pleading poverty and the charitable status of UK Skills, he had been able to get competitors attached to courses without charge, but he was unsuccessful in doing so in one respect prior to Montreal and a few hundred pounds would have been extremely useful.

Delia Suffling (information technology) said that the important payment would be to ensure the commitment of a really top rate trainer for 5 days. Prior to Montreal, IBM had promised three days with their top man but owing to intervening commitments, only 1½ days were received. Therefore 5 days training at say ^{normal} the half day rate price of (say £300) would amount to some £750 plus accommodation and travel. ^{£2500}

But Peter Neale contested that such high level training was not appropriate

As in other trades, compensation for loss of earnings would depend on the status of the competitor and attitude of the employer.

Christine Vokins (hairdressing) said that this year's competitor was self employed and received no pay from her employer during the time she was absent from work. In the case of hairdressing it was vital that she had at least two weeks direct training of the competitor under her direct supervision, preferably in four blocks of 3 days (Monday to Wednesday the less busy days). It was simply not possible to trust the competitor's employer in their judgement of a competitor's ability against international standards.

An employee at 22 would perhaps earn £5.00 an hour or £200 per week, so one was talking of perhaps £500 plus travel costs.

Christine believed that there should be a formal contract between Skill Hair, UK Skills and the employer, and there should be a very clear understanding between the competitor, the employer and the expert as to the commitment and any financial arrangements right at the outset.

Summary

I am still awaiting responses in respect of engineering and cookery and will let you have details as soon as possible. Meanwhile I apologise for the somewhat garbled format of this message but it was dictated in considerable haste.

J. D. G. HAMMER CB
Technical Delegate