

Paragon Skills & Bud - working together to drive quality in apprenticeship delivery



Paragon Skills is a leading national apprenticeship provider with a diverse offering of apprenticeships. Meeting client needs and delivering quality learner experiences are at the heart of Paragon Skills' business.

One of the largest apprenticeship providers in the sector Paragon Skills has been operating for over 20 years and support nearly 1,500 organisations and 4,000 learners. Their teams are passionate about lifelong learning and committed to providing an outstanding experience for learners and employers alike. Paragon Skills proudly pledge "to deliver an outstanding teaching and learning experience to every learner, every time".

Ian Bamford, Chief Operating Officer at Paragon Skills, AELP board member and practicing Ofsted inspector, took the time to reflect on Paragon Skills' journey to date implementing Bud and the significant benefits Paragon Skills have experienced as a result of this partnership.

The Challenge

As a national training provider, Paragon Skills are no exception when it comes to facing common sector challenges. Managing growth of their business, changes from Frameworks to Standards, and driving quality and compliance in a highly regulated sector are challenges Ian understands very well.

Ian explained "We were using several systems including PICS funding management and Smart Assessor ePortfolio, in addition to other systems for enrolment and a multitude of manually updated spreadsheets. We recognised how Bud would drive value in every area of apprenticeship management and delivery because it's a single system. We were excited by the opportunity to partner with Bud as an early adopter of the platform."

A key business driver for Paragon Skills, was to be able to benefit from a platform that supported the ability to standardise programmes and resources across the business. "We are a large national provider with Personal Tutors in every corner of the country. With the change from Frameworks to Standards, there was a real need for us to be able to roll out change in a consistent way which was centrally quality assured. Giving our learners and Personal Tutors the material they required to deliver an outstanding teaching and learning experience." Ian describes. "Failure to do so, would have put quality and consistency at risk, which would have been a real challenge for our growth aspirations and new business wins."

The Solution

Paragon Skills have benefited from significant improvements in enrolment, management and delivery of apprenticeships, with Bud's single platform replacing the previous complex combination of systems and legacy spreadsheets.

To achieve a consistent approach to teaching and learning, Bud's Programme Design suite has empowered Paragon Skills to take control of their apprenticeship design in an intuitive way. As an integrated part of the software, the tool helped Paragon Skills to easily create and deliver professional, consistent, high quality training programmes, for every learner every time. Programmes now contain more digital content, supporting a modern, more blended offer to their clients' learners, which in turn helps drive engagement and progress.

"It changed the way we went about our delivery. Our talented Personal Tutors find Bud really intuitive. We plan how the apprenticeship will be delivered in partnership with our quality team and employers before enrolling learners."

The Benefits

When asked about the benefits of this approach, Ian simply said "We have complete reassurance, regardless of where the learner is in the country, they will have an approved, quality assured learner journey that we are confident will deliver an outstanding teaching and learning experience and drive high quality outcomes for learners."

When asked how other stakeholders have found the change, Ian stated "Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Learners are delighted they can access the platform from any device. We can easily showcase our customised programmes to employers. Our Personal Tutors have everything they need to deliver outstanding learning and track the progress of their caseload with ease."

Since adopting Bud, Paragon Skills have seen huge benefits across the business. Ian proudly reflects on many achievements and improvements, most notably "Paragon Skills boasts a strong Grade 2 - Good Ofsted inspection and above average success rates across all sectors, which have increased year on year, for three successive years. Paragon Skills have seen an impressive increase in our success rates since implementing Bud with numbers rising from 66.7% to 71.4% in a single year."

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