



# Modern Apprenticeships Offer Young Adults On-the-Job Training with Pay

COVID-19 has employers rethinking how they deliver training to students

By Kathy Gurchiek

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*This is the fourth article in a four-part series about approaches employers are taking to prepare young adults and emerging professionals for the workplace.*

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating an uptick in interest in U.S. apprenticeships in medical technology, communications infrastructure and online software platforms.

Opportunities at organizations handling online consumer goods are in demand; positions in the tourism and hospitality industries are waning, says Nicholas Wyman, founder and chief executive officer of the Institute for Workplace Skills & Innovation (IWSI) America.

The IWSI America develops U.S. Department of Labor-registered youth apprenticeships in the U.S. for private companies and government organizations. Amazon ([https://www.iwsiamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IWSI\\_ITS\\_TIME\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.iwsiamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IWSI_ITS_TIME_REPORT.pdf)), CVS Health, Dow Chemical Co., Interapt Skills, JPMorgan Chase, LinkedIn, Lockheed Martin and Nike are among the companies IWSI America works with to create modern apprenticeships. Unlike internships, apprenticeships (<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/6-differences-internship-apprenticeship/>) often take several years to complete, include classroom instruction that is tied directly to the occupational training, offer greater pay and guarantee a job with that employer upon successful completion of the training.

In the midst of the pandemic, Wyman said, employers have had to rethink how they deliver training to students, who can begin as early as high school in pre-apprenticeships or through traditional internships that roll into apprenticeship programs lasting one to three years.

## FUNDAMENTALS FOR CREATING AN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Employers looking to develop modern apprenticeship programs should take the following steps, says Wyman in the report *It's Time: Using Modern Apprenticeship to Reskill America* ([https://www.iwsiamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IWSI\\_ITS\\_TIME\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.iwsiamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IWSI_ITS_TIME_REPORT.pdf)):

- Identify the occupation that the apprentices will be working in.
- Identify and engage an internal team, including people from direct service, middle management and leadership, who will formulate and implement the program.
- Identify and engage external partnerships, including community colleges, high schools, civic and nonprofit organizations, and state apprenticeship organizations.
- Identify mentors and coaches.
- Outline candidate qualifications.
- Identify achievable core competencies.
- Create on-the-job training goals as performance measures and related curricula.

- Determine training and scalable wage schedules.
- Establish marketing and recruitment strategies.
- Develop ongoing evaluation processes based on feedback and outcomes.

"One of the biggest things we have to worry about [for] this particular generation is disengagement" as the pandemic rages on, he said.

"We have to work out clever and creative ways to continually keep young people engaged. That's absolutely critical. ... We can't just stick with what we did in the past."

That includes how training is delivered, Wyman told *SHRM Online*.

"Some industries are moving forward a lot more than others with this idea of virtual learning

(<https://www.chiefflearningofficer.com/2020/06/02/video-its-time-to-start-thinking-about-long-term-skills-development/>)," he noted. IT, health care and cybersecurity occupations are "very easy to translate to an online learning environment. It gets a little more challenging when we get to the service industries," such as hospitality and tourism.

He pointed to EdApp as an example of making learning accessible through technology. The open-source micro-learning platform was started with funding from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (<https://www.edapp.com/media-assets/release/educateall-release.pdf>) and offers organizations of all sizes supplementary onboarding and interactive training for their employees.

[*SHRM members-only toolkit: Using Government and Other Resources for Employment and Training Programs*

([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/using-government-and-other-resources-for-employment-and-training-programs.aspx?\\_ga=2.30779391.1528823307.1602514188-1296205769.1578683579](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/using-government-and-other-resources-for-employment-and-training-programs.aspx?_ga=2.30779391.1528823307.1602514188-1296205769.1578683579))]

The pandemic also has caused some organizations to expand the reach of their training. Interapt, a Louisville, Ky.-based software development company, would like to see a broad range of applicants, including a greater representation of people with disabilities, and has opened its apprenticeships to rural areas now that training in some fields can be delivered by fully online platforms, according to Wyman.

IWSI America worked with Interapt (<https://educationcabinet.ky.gov/Document%20Search/IWSI%20It%27s%20Time%20Report.PDF>) to develop training for high school students that included a mentorship component so that every apprentice has access to a one-on-one mentor.

Wyman suggested employers consider the following when developing an apprenticeship program at this time:

- Host virtual events and webinars to build company culture and community, starting with onboarding. It is important for students to connect with one another and other employees of the company.
- Use apps such as Slack, which provide employers a way to check in frequently with apprentices.
- Use other communication and project management tools such as Microsoft Teams, Jira and Trello, and shared online spaces such as Google Docs.
- Group apprentices into small learning pods so they may train and tackle tasks together. This is becoming an increasingly common practice in schools, Wyman said, and may be a vital new tool in the workforce.

"Can the whole apprenticeship be done virtually? Probably not," he acknowledged. "It depends on the occupation."

## A Different Kind of Apprenticeship

Mandatory work-from-home policies are requiring a different kind of apprenticeship, CareerWise Colorado notes on its website. High school students can train for jobs (<https://www.careerwisecolorado.org/en/howitworks/>) such as graphic designer, real estate facilities manager, marketing coordinator and claims representative—occupations not typically associated with apprenticeships.

Participating companies include the Bank of Colorado; the Community Hospital of Grand Junction, Colo.; the Denver Museum of Nature & Science; and Pinnacol Assurance, Colorado's largest workers' compensation carrier.

Pinnacol's first priority was reconfiguring its program to accommodate a fully remote environment, said Mark Tapy, the company's apprenticeship program manager.

"For us, that meant issuing monitors, mouse-keyboard sets, docking stations and even Wi-Fi hotspots, in addition to laptops, to ensure that our participants could log in effectively each day and do their best work from home," he said.

Content for the onboarding and training curriculum had to shift, although most training already was heavily computer-based, allowing for a considerable amount of continuity, Tapy said. "We are still able to include guest speakers, facilitate shadowing experiences and train apprentices through tools like Zoom that allow our apprentices to get a sense of the work going on around the organization and connect with staff."

Pinnacol also has had to be much more intentional in finding ways for teams to bond, using apps such as Google Chat to develop peer support networks. All apprentices have a coach, in addition to a supervisor, to "help guide them through the complexities and nuances of the professional world," Tapy said.

Students need to take initiative in adapting as well, CareerWise advises students on its site, by setting up a space where they can be productive, practicing self-discipline, working with their supervisor to identify tasks that can be accomplished remotely, and fostering mentorship and skill development through open communication.

"Ultimately, there is no way to fully replace the feeling of learning how to work while in an office environment surrounded by adults and feeling like a member of a business," Tapy said. "However, with [all of] these strategies in place, we have been very pleased with our apprentices' knack for adaptation and ability to learn and acclimate to their roles exclusively through virtual platforms."

#### **Articles in this series:**

Pandemic Forces Organizations to Get Creative in Prepping Young Employees for the Workplace ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/Pages/Pandemic-Forces-Organizations-to-Get-Creative-in-Prepping-Young-Employees-for-the-Workplace-.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/Pages/Pandemic-Forces-Organizations-to-Get-Creative-in-Prepping-Young-Employees-for-the-Workplace-.aspx)), *SHRM Online*, September 2020

Employers Engage Interns with Zoom Lunch-and-Learns, Speed Mentoring ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/Pages/Employers-Engage-Interns-with-Zoom-Lunch-and-Learns-Speed-Mentoring.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/Pages/Employers-Engage-Interns-with-Zoom-Lunch-and-Learns-Speed-Mentoring.aspx)), *SHRM Online*, October 2020

Externship Program Offers HR Students a Career Preview ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/Pages/Externship-Program-Offers-Students-a-Career-Preview.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/Pages/Externship-Program-Offers-Students-a-Career-Preview.aspx)), *SHRM Online*, October 2020

#### **Other SHRM resources:**

Apprenticeship Expansion Passes House Committee ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/democrats-pass-apprenticeship-expansion.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/democrats-pass-apprenticeship-expansion.aspx)), *SHRM Online*, October 2020

COVID-19 Changes Internships, Apprenticeships ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/pages/covid19-causes-changes-to-internships-apprenticeships.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/pages/covid19-causes-changes-to-internships-apprenticeships.aspx)), *SHRM Online*, April 2020

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