# Creating a Positive Workplace Culture and Involving Apprentices:

A good workplace culture doesn’t happen by accident - it’s built every day through teamwork, respect, and clear expectations. When apprentices join your business, they often have limited work experience and are still learning how to communicate, manage time, and take responsibility. A positive culture helps them adjust faster and develop the professional habits they’ll need throughout their career.

## 1. Lead by Example

Apprentices look to supervisors and senior staff to understand what’s acceptable. Your words, attitude, and approach to challenges set the tone for the whole team.

* Show respect in how you speak to others - especially when correcting mistakes
* Demonstrate punctuality, professionalism, and pride in your work
* Stay calm under pressure - apprentices will copy how you handle stress
* Model safe and tidy work practices.

***Employer Tip:*** *Apprentices will follow what you do more than what you say. If they see their supervisor cutting corners or using their phone during work, they’ll assume it’s acceptable behaviour*

## 2. Set Clear Expectations Early

Many young apprentices are joining a workplace for the first time and may not know what’s expected of them. Clear communication about behaviour, attendance, and teamwork prevents frustration later.

* Explain workplace rules and the 'why' behind them
* Be upfront about phone use - when it’s appropriate and when it’s not
* Talk about professionalism: being on time, following instructions, and taking initiative
* Encourage questions and explain that it’s okay not to know everything - but it’s important to ask.

***Employer Tip:*** *Make the first week about learning how the workplace operates - not just the tools or machines. A clear induction builds confidence and helps apprentices feel part of the team faster*

## 3. Create Belonging and Inclusion

Apprentices are more likely to thrive when they feel they belong. When they’re included in team discussions and celebrations, they take pride in their work and see themselves as part of something bigger.

* Introduce new apprentices to everyone on day one - names matter
* Include them in toolbox talks, safety meetings, and team lunches
* Acknowledge their contribution, even on small tasks
* Pair them with a mentor or buddy who can show them the ropes

***Employer Tip:*** *Take five minutes each day to check in with your apprentice - not just about work, but about how they’re going. It builds trust and makes it easier for them to speak up if they’re struggling.*

## 4. Build Healthy Habits and Professional Skills

You’re not just teaching a trade - you’re helping apprentices learn how to be reliable workers and team members. That includes time management, communication, and self-discipline.

* Encourage apprentices to take notes or photos (with permission) instead of relying on memory
* Help them develop routines - setting up tools, cleaning their area, checking plans
* Give them responsibility early, such as managing materials for a small job
* Offer feedback immediately after tasks - not just at formal reviews

***Employer Tip:*** *Turn small issues into teaching moments. If an apprentice is distracted by their phone, use it as a conversation about responsibility rather than just punishment: “We all get distracted sometimes - but when you’re on the tools, safety and focus come first.”*

## 5. Handle Generational Differences Positively

Younger apprentices may communicate differently or have different motivators than older staff. They value feedback, variety, and being involved - not just being told what to do.

* Give clear reasons behind instructions - they learn better when they understand 'why'
* Offer praise for effort, not just results
* Rotate tasks to keep learning interesting
* Use short, clear communication - avoid overloading them with information

***Employer Tip:*** *Use technology to your advantage. If your apprentice is glued to their phone, show them how to use it for learning - photos of setups, short videos for reference, or apps that track progress and training*

## 6. Address Poor Behaviour Early and Fairly

Young apprentices may test boundaries - that’s part of learning how workplaces operate. What matters is how you respond: firm, fair, and consistent.

* Give feedback privately, not in front of others.
* Be specific - describe what happened and what needs to change.
* Explain why the behaviour matters (safety, teamwork, productivity).
* Follow up to recognise improvement.

***Employer Tip:*** *Avoid labelling behavior as 'lazy' or 'disrespectful.' Instead, explain what the expected action looks like: “When you’re late, the team has to wait. Let’s work out how you can manage time better.”*

## 7. Keep the Team Accountable for Culture

Culture isn’t just the employer’s job - everyone contributes to it. Encourage your whole team to model respect, patience, and teamwork with apprentices.

* Call out negative comments or 'old-school' attitudes that discourage learning
* Recognise senior tradespeople who are positive role models
* Reward teamwork - not just individual output

***Employer Tip:*** *Apprentices remember the tradespeople who took time to help them. Recognising mentors within your team encourages others to do the same.*

PLACEHOLDER FOR CASE STUDY WHERE APPRENTICE HAS LEFT DUE TO POOR CULTURE

## Key Message:

A positive culture builds pride, teamwork, and loyalty. When apprentices are included, supported, and guided with patience and respect, they grow faster, stay longer, and become advocates for your business. Culture starts at the top - but it’s built by everyone, every day.