

BRING BACK TECHNICAL COLLEGES SAY BRITAIN'S SMALL BUSINESS LEADERS

Two thirds of Britain's small business owners (69 per cent) would like to see a return to technical colleges and skills-based learning as the current education system is not doing enough to boost entrepreneurial success, according to a new report sponsored by Lloyds TSB Business. Half of Britain's small business owners (50 per cent) believe that schools do not place enough emphasis on practical skills, almost matching those (49 per cent) who think that technical qualifications are not given equal status to academic qualifications.

The report, prepared by the Small Enterprise Research Team at the Open University*, asked whether Britain's schools are a breeding ground for entrepreneurial success.

Business owners appear to think this is not the case, with almost half (45 per cent) of those surveyed saying that schools are too concerned with meeting targets and 'box ticking' at the expense of the individual training or development that potential entrepreneurs may require. A further 43 per cent think that schools are actually struggling to provide a basic education, let alone the motivation and skills useful to an entrepreneur.

Bosses also cast doubt over work placement schemes run by schools, through which many youngsters get their first taste of the 'working world'. Thirty nine per cent think that such work experience schemes are not taken seriously enough by schools.

There are, however, mixed views over whether school or university equips people with the right skills to run a business, with a marked difference between smaller firms and their larger counterparts. **.../more**

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Over half (53 per cent) of firms employing less than five full time staff do not think that the education system supports these skills, while this drops to only a third (34 per cent) of those employing a larger workforce (20-49 FTE). Interestingly, the owners of the larger firms are also more likely to have spent longer in the educational system – suggesting that useful skills for business management are gained the further you progress academically.

Stephen Pegge, head of communications for Lloyds TSB Business, says: “Britain has developed technical and business skills in the past, and industry wants it to do so again. The education system has a key role to play, both in ensuring that small businesses are able to recruit staff with the right skills and the mindset to continue to learn and develop, and in fostering the spirit of enterprise amongst those with the potential to be entrepreneurs themselves.”

Other key findings of the report are:

- 26 per cent of small business owners say their education was essential in equipping them with the skills to be successful in business.
- 22 per cent report that success at school and university gave them the confidence to be successful in business.
- 20 per cent credit their education with opening their eyes to opportunities and making them more likely to achieve business ownership.
- 59 per cent of entrepreneurs claim that the most important lessons they learnt were out of school.
- 56 per cent say that schools provide the basics and it's an individual's own drive and hunger for success that takes them on from there.

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Notes to editors:

*www.serteam.co.uk

The research was conducted amongst small firms with typically up to 50 employees.

The research was carried out for Lloyds TSB by the Small Enterprise Research Team at the Open University Business School. The report is based on responses from a panel of over 350 small businesses within Britain drawn mainly from the manufacturing, business services and retail/distribution sectors of the economy.

The Small Enterprise Research Report (£30) is available to order from the Serteam website (www.serteam.co.uk) or contact telephone number: 01908 655831.

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