

GK Apprenticeships

“Our previous e-track system was unreliable and unfit for our needs”

GK Apprenticeships
formerly Partnership Development Solutions (PDS) Ltd.

Key Results

- ✓ Implemented an evolving platform that works the way we want to work
- ✓ Hassle-free transition from E-track to Smart Apprentices
- ✓ Highly personal and consultative service - to guarantee ROI
- ✓ Now work with a forward-thinking partner helping us shape our future

E-track didn't work for us

Challenged by an underperforming supplier and E-Portfolio that was unfit for purpose, GK Apprenticeships wanted to find a partner capable of taking a more consultative, tailored approach with the long-term in mind.

“Our previous system was not built for standards in apprenticeships and therefore the ability to track progress of learners, the data coming out of the system, and the system navigation was unsupportive of the way we wanted to work as an organisation. We also had a lot of outages, resulting in large volumes of our organisation unable to work.

“Our previous system wasn't being developed – it was static – and therefore it was limited and frustrating. Ultimately, the system wasn't fit for purpose. That was the feedback from managers, learners and staff, so we took all that on board which formed a key part of the brief for our new provider.

“We were keen to introduce a partner, not just another supplier. With a key business system like an E-Portfolio system, everything hangs off it. So, if it's not working for all those reasons, there is frustrations both internally and for learners and managers which reflects on GK Apprenticeships as an organisation.”

We wanted a trusted partner

"When we were looking to change our previous system, Smart Apprentices was an obvious choice to be a part of that process. We looked at a few other solutions but theirs was the best. What sealed it for us was that they put a lot of time and effort into really understanding what it was we wanted. Their experience and knowledge from years of working with learning institutions gave us new ideas about how to improve our learners' experience. They also enabled us to transition from E-track to their system quickly & effectively"

"What stood out for me most was that Smart Apprentices really cared - giving us a highly personal & consultative service. In fact, they even set up an academy with us to ensure complete return on our investment. No one else offered this level of service; that's what sealed it for me"

GK Apprenticeships decision to partner with Smart Apprentices was also influenced by the simplicity of the platform. Smart Apprentices has been developed by users for users, with a deliberately visual system making it easy to navigate and see where things are.

"Whilst there were other providers who showcased, they were selling their system, whereas Smart Apprentices listened to what we wanted from the very start, and also what we wanted from the solution. They had everybody engaged. We had business support, coaches, IQAs, quality, finance, product - everybody could come onto a demo and that was really good in making sure that there was a collective view and buy-in before we even started."

GK Apprenticeships set up a working group - a small group of people taken from across the business - to be the eyes and ears and offer input during the onboarding phase. Smart Apprentices also gave GK Apprenticeships visibility of its processes and Basecamp project management facility - a virtual, collaborative process that both businesses contributed to.

"You don't know what you don't know. With E-track we always had to rework our processes to fit their system with very limited training on how to use the system. Ultimately, the way the old system was set up caused us problems down the line, so we needed to avoid that this time around. Our experience of onboarding with Smart Apprentices was completely different. They really helped us understand the how their e-portfolio solution could enhance our processes & work in a more effective way. This was so refreshing."

GK Apprenticeships was working to a deadline, with its previous contract ending on a fixed date, whilst simultaneously importing 600 new workers, meaning there was a lot of work for Smart Apprentices to do straight away. By maintaining clear communication, this was achieved seamlessly as part of the onboarding process.

"The Smart Apprentices team is always there to help and support - and when we started on this journey together, we saw it as a long-term partnership. We believe we've now got it right and have a partner in Smart Apprentices that will help us evolve the experience we offer to our learners"

"Thank you, Smart Apprentices"

About the author

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Jenny's has an extensive and accomplished background in technology and HR. Jenny has worked in apprenticeships since 1997, when she was responsible for the first technical apprenticeship programme at Orange. Jenny founded GK Apprenticeships as PDS Group in 2005, with a focus on partnership with clients to create and deliver award-winning apprenticeship programmes, which she continues to do in her role as Director of Education and Talent.



Smart Apprentices. We promote personalised life-long learning through an integrated smart digital platform that's transforming the delivery of apprenticeships & traineeships for education & training providers across the UK



Smart Assessor: an e-portfolio that manages the full apprenticeship life-cycle



Smart VLE: enhances functional skills learning with customisable online assessments



Smart Applicants: enables apprentices & trainees showcase themselves to employers



Smart EPA: online management of end point assessments



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