



swisscom

Short information about Swisscom Vocational Training Program

Vocational training at Swisscom

Swisscom is Switzerland's biggest national telecoms provider. Since its privatisation in 1998, its areas of business have changed dramatically and have continued to develop. Starting out as a primarily technically focused state-owned enterprise, it has developed into a modern company with a strong focus on customers and customer benefits over the course of the past few years.

This is also illustrated in the development of our job profiles' portfolio. Whilst fifteen years ago we mainly trained electronics apprentices and no retail apprentices, these days the opposite is true. Swisscom no longer owns the repair facilities which used to repair old telephones. The number of sales outlets has quadrupled.

New job profiles have arisen, e.g. media specialists – a challenging and demanding apprenticeship which creates an important bridge between the needs of the customer and the technical specialists. It is also a profession that integrates the new media into daily work, to quote "Unified Communication" as one example here. As well as the aforementioned retail professionals and media specialists Swisscom also trains computer scientists, data communication technicians and retail specialists.

In Switzerland vocational training is increasingly also characterised by integration: society expects a social employer such as Swisscom to get young people who display practical talents - i.e. those who were unable to satisfy the educational performance standards of a customary three or four-year vocational training course - into training and integrate them into the world of work. This is why we also offer two-year courses to train people as IT technicians and office assistants.

To give you an idea of the numbers involved: we currently employ around 820 apprentices in Switzerland which is around 4,5 % of the number of Swisscom employees in Switzerland.

Vocational training at Swisscom is centrally organised in the Group and has responsibility for apprentices across the entire Swisscom Group. Throughout the country we run 10 vocational training centres and currently employ 47 staff; the majority of these employees are known as mentors or learning coaches.

Why does Swisscom train apprentices?

There are four main reasons: 1) business benefit, 2) to safeguard the supply of young professionals we need in the future 3) the social responsibility of a major company towards society 4) to learn from the youngest generation that we have in our company

- The business benefit arises if you have confidence in the abilities of the apprentices and allow them to work independently as far as possible. In other words: integrating them into the workplace instead of protracted study and theory in the classroom. Of course access to current specialist knowledge, by means of theoretical studies at technical college, is also important. However, "knowledge is the only resource which increases through use" – and consequently the transfer of expertise and knowledge and skills training in working life form a central element in the dual training model. For the company providing apprenticeship training this gives rise to added value which serves to refinance a part of the training costs. We believe the return on investment actually occurs during the training period itself (and not only once the training is over), although it is necessary to note that the added value contribution varies considerably depending on the professional profile. A trainee retail specialist in a shop in the second year of their apprenticeship already generates sales



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comparable to those for a fully trained shop employee. In technical professions it generally takes longer for attributable added value to arise. Of course the recruitment costs are also slightly lower to appoint a trainee than to recruit for a post on the external market. And you know the person and his or her capabilities and potential from his or her three or four-year traineeship.

- The training of young professionals is also particularly important in terms of demographic trends. Well-trained professionals are becoming a rare commodity! Admittedly, we currently train more apprentices than we subsequently appoint. But this means that we can choose those individuals who best suit us from the 250 newly qualified trainees. Trainees know the company and already have an internal network of contacts, they bring the necessary decision-making skills and responsibility and have often already worked in the areas where they are appointed after the training period. All this means a short induction period.
- The social responsibility: Swisscom is a large, well-respected and highly regarded company. Active involvement in the community can also have a positive impact on purchasing decisions. But above all through the training of young people we are also making an important contribution to their integration into the world of work. The transition from school to working life is an important chapter in the lives of young people – and also a challenging one. Requirements on independence and individual accountability suddenly rise sharply. For school leavers, dual apprenticeships facilitate a smooth transition into the working world.
- And last but not least to learn from the youngest generation. Our trainees are digital natives and their first internet device was a smartphone and mobile. They have a completely different approach to search, get and work with informations. If we like it or not, it will shape our future work environment. So it is our goal to learn from this generation, to see business challenges from their points of view. That's why we integrate them actively into product development processes.

Swisscom's training model

An apprenticeship at Swisscom places particular expectations on the trainees' personalities. We are not looking for the students with the best marks; we are looking for young people who have already developed a certain independence and a propensity to think and act independently. Qualities such as the motivation to learn, commitment, respect, openness, curiosity and adaptability are important to us. Or to put it another way: it is all about determination!

In Swisscom vocational training the apprentices plan and manage their own training plan independently to a large degree. In so doing, they acquire the skill to describe a goal and to communicate this goal and to align their approach accordingly. As part of an iterative process and, if necessary, supported by the mentors, they continually reappraise their specialist, methodical and social skills and define the next training steps. This is normally done in the form of project work.

These practical projects are posted by Swisscom employees on an internal project market place. Here, the apprentices look for projects which correspond with their current training goal – and submit their applications. If they are accepted, they define as independently as possible the project deployment goals and their own personal learning goals. Performance is recorded regularly in an electronic (interactive) learning journal and discussed together with the project provider and the mentor.



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We have introduced this training model in stages from 2004 onwards – and it has proved to be a largely positive experience.

Recruitment of apprentices

Consequently, we are looking for school leavers who have the aforementioned qualities. The recruitment process commences approximately twelve months ahead of training and runs in accordance with a multi-stage selection procedure, starting with a questionnaire, systematic evaluation of the written application files, a short video interview and finally a personal interview. Every year we receive around 5,000 applications for the 250 available apprenticeships and we only accept online applications.

Summary

Vocational training is a success story and enjoys an excellent reputation in the Swiss economy as well as in our own company. The apprenticeship constitutes an important career starting point and is also an important foundation for all subsequent professional education and training.

The combination of the three training options – companies, technical colleges and industry associations offering industry-wide courses – has withstood the test of time and proved to be highly successful. Thanks to the knowledge they have acquired at school and also thanks to their practical training in the companies providing apprenticeship training, job prospects for school leavers in Switzerland are good. If someone completes the vocational school-leaving certificate during or after the traineeship they may even be able to secure a university place.

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