

TELECOMS

Finding the edge by investing in training

A CASE STUDY WITH
LUMEN®

 **Henley**
Business School
UNIVERSITY OF READING

Where business comes to life

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

If you've ever used cloud-based technology in your work or at home – had a meeting over Zoom, for starters – you'll have encountered Lumen. You might not recognise the name, but its enterprise technology platform is what powers next-generation communications apps.

Lumen's purpose is bold: it enables people and companies to capitalise on emerging applications to power the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) – the ongoing digital transformation of infrastructure, manufacturing, services and pretty much everything we do via a screen, blurring the lines between physical, digital and biological spaces.

To help deliver on such a world-changing mission – furthering human progress through technology – Lumen has connected with Henley Business School through a range of apprenticeships that support its philosophy of continuous improvement. Now a Henley Partnership Member, Lumen is actively future-proofing its customer experience capabilities through a connected, engaged and highly skilled global workforce.

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THE BENEFITS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH APPRENTICESHIPS

With accountability for the delivery of Lumen services, the Client Services & Service Delivery team are laser-focussed on working with customers to ensure that new services are turned up with speed and quality.



We pride ourselves on being what we call 'the home of outstanding talent'. That's not just about providing great benefits packages but about constantly assessing how we make Lumen the home of outstanding talent. How do we attract, retain and reward the best people? How do we invest in them and help them grow?

*Vice President,
Client Services & Service Delivery, EMEA, Lumen*



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LEADING AND LEARNING BY EXAMPLE



The folks on my team doing an apprenticeship, whether that's a level 5 departmental manager or a Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship, are starting to question the root cause of problems. What's actually at the crux of the matter? What's the problem statement? What or who else can help me define how I'm going to fix it? What you learn on an apprenticeship helps structure your understanding of the problem statement and encourages you to measure what success looks like before you rush into fixing it.

*Vice President,
Client Services & Service Delivery, EMEA, Lumen*

The LUMEN logo is displayed in white capital letters on a dark blue rectangular background.

When CenturyLink merged with another technology company, Level 3 Communications, in 2017 the Vice President for Client Services & Service Delivery was one of the senior executives who piloted training sessions to test and assess a new one-company, one-culture training program to bring the two organisations together. The pilot was a success and, together with Hazel Berkley, Manager of Talent Management for the EMEA region, they helped to implement this cultural training to the EMEA region.

'I think it's important as a senior leader to showcase that not only do we understand and back the use of new concepts, but we're invested enough to deliver the training,' the Vice President, Client Services & Service Delivery reflects. It's a philosophy that applies to Lumen's positive relationship with Henley; having been through apprenticeships themselves, they understand their intrinsic value at all career stages – for their teams as well as for other Lumen senior leaders.

This leading-from-the-front culture has directly translated to behavioural change and operational benefits for Lumen. The business benefits are clear across apprenticeship levels.

REAL-WORLD IMPACTS

This structured approach to problem-solving – a reflective methodology encouraged by Henley course leaders – delivers greater benefit in terms of end results that stick over time. And the personal and professional benefits of continuous learning are evident, with Lumen's senior leaders observing long-term behavioural and operational impacts both within the organisation as well as for the company's many clients and end users. A positive return on investment, especially in a naturally agile industry not known for long-term strategic thinking.

'As a company that has thousands of customers and, dare I say, millions of pieces of technology in our infrastructure, it's easy to get lost in widgets and depersonalise some of the situations we deal with. But one of the things I think we do well as an organisation and as a culture is to look beyond immediate problems to understanding the real-life impact that problems could be having on a customer's business.'

That holistic view of the consequences of business decisions is a principal benefit reported by Lumen employees who have completed an apprenticeship with Henley. It's the difference between solving a customer's problem and measuring that solution against the tagline 'furthering human progress through technology'. One such example is how Lumen delivers wide area networks for pharmaceutical companies – ones that are now producing COVID-19 vaccines. 'If I hear that a pharma customer is having a problem with their network, what I actually hear is they're having a problem manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines. That's why I always ask of my people, "Talk to me from a customer's viewpoint and from the lens of their end customer. What's the true business impact?"'

Broader horizons, bigger ideas

Other benefits come in the shape of mixed-cohort apprenticeships, where participants can bring back learnings and methodologies from a range of industries. The Vice President, Client Services & Service Delivery's own mixed-cohort Executive MBA group at Henley gave them a broader understanding of business impacts from peers working in other sectors.

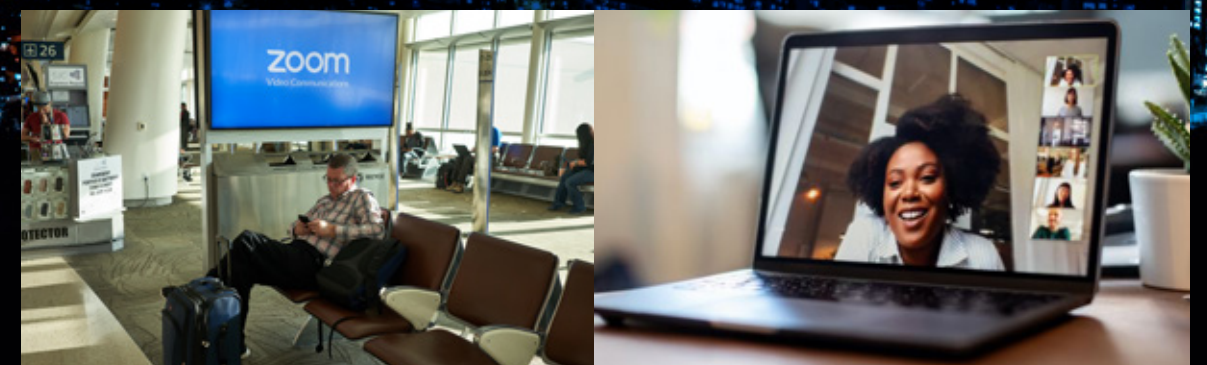
'I found talking to participants from non-tech sectors to be tremendously eye-opening. When we were studying leadership and change during my Henley Executive MBA, for example, someone working in oil and gas talked about the importance of lubrication in large manufacturing plants, which, if something goes wrong, has an environmental impact and can affect huge numbers of people.

'What I took away is that it's not just about the impact to the business but the importance of the services we provide to our customers. Take the travel industry – what we provide is actually about making sure people aren't queueing in airports, that planes are taking off on time, knowing how much fuel they've got on board, how long the crew have been flying. These are all critical data points that often get lost in the day-to-day because they're just part of the underlying infrastructure that we run.'



You suddenly look at what change means to different organisations in different sectors – same topic, completely different outcomes. That's the real power of mixed cohorts – bringing together different lines of thinking.

Vice President,
Client Services & Service Delivery, EMEA, Lumen



In their leadership role, the Vice President, Client Services & Service Delivery is constantly assessing core operations and outcomes against Lumen's mission. The wide-ranging understanding they acquired – from their first apprenticeship through to their Henley MBA – has contributed to bringing focus to Lumen's three core objectives: to grow the organisation, to be an industry leader in customer success and to become the home for outstanding talent. Which is where the value of apprenticeships really comes in.

'It's why investment in people is so big for us. We pride ourselves on being what we call "the home of outstanding talent". That's not just about providing great benefits packages – that's a given – but about constantly assessing how we make Lumen the home of outstanding talent.

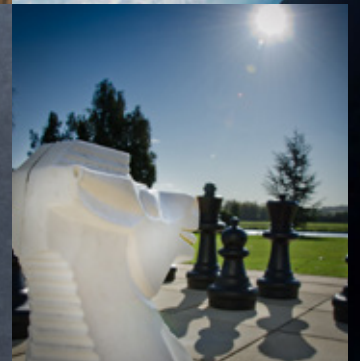
'How do we attract, retain and reward the best people? How do we invest in them and help them grow? How do we make sure those people not only come to work to do a job but also come to work because they feel valued and know that they're invested in?'



It's about the act of listening to your employees, understanding what they want and what will help further them. That's where the apprenticeship levy programme fits in as a wider piece of work. It's not one size fits all – there's a right course and the right investment for the right person."

Vice President,
Client Services & Service Delivery, EMEA, Lumen

A TALENT FOR LIFE



A TALENT MANAGER'S VIEW

As a human resources professional with more than 30 years' experience, Hazel Berkley has seen her share of talent management projects, training and development programmes and apprenticeships at most levels. Her career has taken her from pharma to retail banking to, now, technology – she joined CenturyLink when the company became part of The 5% Club of employers committed to having a minimum of five per cent of their employees in 'earn and learn' positions.

'Before CenturyLink acquired Level 3 and became Lumen, I'd been in charge of our active apprenticeship programme,' Hazel recalls. 'We achieved a very good score – around 6.2% – as part of the government's 5% Club. We had a lot of employees in different apprenticeship and internship schemes at different career stages. And we had a very active early-career programme, which I was responsible for managing. Then when the apprenticeship levy came into force, it was another opportunity for us to accelerate that programme throughout the business and a chance for us to see where we could help people think about and define their careers.'

We already had an established relationship with Henley Business School when the apprenticeship levy became available and they told me they were going to run the level 5 programme. And because of Henley's solid reputation and the credibility of the speakers and tutors, it was very easy to get people involved.

Hazel Berkley, Manager,
Talent Management, EMEA, Lumen



Credibility and collaboration

With its excellent ranking as a business school and reputation for thought leadership, Henley Business School became a natural apprenticeship partner of choice for Hazel and her team. One pivotal moment Hazel recalls is a conversation with the Vice President, Client Services & Service Delivery about up-skilling some of their department's team members. 'We already had an established relationship with Henley Business School when the apprenticeship levy became available and they told me they were going to run the level 5 manager apprenticeship. And because of Henley's solid reputation and the credibility of the speakers and tutors, it was very easy to get people involved.'

Hazel is pleased to report a number of successes from that and other Henley apprenticeship programmes shared by Lumen learners.

One learner enrolled on a Henley MBA has been promoted twice during the 18-month period he's been studying and is currently applying for another role.

Having completed a senior-level apprenticeship herself, Hazel agrees that a near-universal benefit is boosted confidence and accelerated business knowledge. 'When I ask learners for feedback on their experience, they point to their business acumen, their business knowledge, their confidence to speak to senior leaders both inside and outside the organisation... all tremendously improved. But it's also about improving their personal skills. That might be listening or coaching or leading a team.' All valuable soft skills that translate to deeper engagement alongside more effective communication and collaboration.

Breadth and depth of knowledge across multiple business verticals were also critical benefits, says Hazel, especially following CenturyLink's acquisition of Level 3 Communications and the merging of the two organisations and company cultures. 'When we were first thinking about the level 5 apprenticeship programme, we were careful to have an equal number of people from both organisations in order to accelerate networking and bring people together. That worked really well because they were necessarily collaborating from an early stage. And because they were all at a senior level, they were able to share that knowledge up to their managers as well as within their teams.'



CAREER ACCELERATION

Lumen learners on the level 5 apprenticeship have also pinpointed using data to be more analytical and to help with decision-making and identifying stakeholders – something Hazel herself also experienced.

This determination and drive may have been even more sharply felt over the past year, Hazel remarks, because of the shift in mindset brought about by successive lockdowns and remote-working conditions. People have said they're more reflective now – a methodology encouraged by Henley programmes. 'It's all about your personal reflections, what you've learned and how you've been able to apply those learnings. It's that constant checking back with yourself and understanding your own personal takeaways. This kind of behavioural change is so significant in the context of development.'

Collaboration is also key, says Hazel, for the business, for development and for company culture. She cites two Lumen learners – one from the former Level 3 organisation, one from the former CenturyLink – who collaborated on their Henley MBA final assignment.

Not only did the experience connect them as colleagues, it also gave both of them very different perspectives. 'They've been able to collaborate and support each other significantly, which is of course valuable to them as individuals, but the work they're doing is also being used by the organisation, which is of huge value for us as well.'



A lot of people, whether they were on the level 5 or the MBA, said they felt much more ambitious now because they have more visibility across the business through the work they've done on or through their assignments. They seem more determined to accelerate their career.

*Hazel Berkley, Manager,
Talent Management, EMEA, Lumen*



henley.ac.uk/apprenticeships



SET FOR GROWTH

That broad-reaching growth mindset is something that Lumen's new managing director, Annette Murphy, is keen for employees to embrace. 'Growth mindset is one of our universal competencies,' says Hazel, 'and to support that we need to ensure that everybody thinks about their careers and what skills they – and we as an organisation – need for the future. If we were to carry on doing what we're doing, that would be fine in the short term.'

'But the skills we need for the future are very different from the skills we were relying on even last year. Who would have thought selling virtually would be so business-critical? But it is now, and that's why I'm currently working on a skills-transformation project.'

Around 10% of Lumen's employees are on an apprenticeship of some form.

That learning culture is reflected in the take-up of the Henley level 5s, MBAs and other apprenticeship programmes – Hazel estimates that around 10% of Lumen's UK employees are on an apprenticeship of some form.

That high level of engagement and up-skilling has almost certainly had a direct impact on Lumen's position in the 2021 Gartner Magic Quadrant Report, which names the organisation as an industry leader for network services – an enormous accolade and a validation of Lumen's vision and evolving business capabilities.

All of which are underpinned by a talent strategy that places huge emphasis on continuous learning and personal development. Being a Henley Partnership Member now offers Lumen even greater opportunities for managers and senior leaders to network and learn from top business thinkers.

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MORE THAN JUST A BUSINESS SCHOOL

For 75 years, Henley Business School has developed confident and resilient business leaders; leaders who are self-aware, agile in their approach, see the bigger picture and can drive their business forward with conviction. Whether you are looking to develop individuals or deliver organisation-wide change, we look forward to welcoming you to Henley.

World
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25

#2

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* Financial Times Executive Education 2020, combined ranking
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** Financial Times Executive Education 2020, ranking of open programmes

*** Financial Times, European Business Schools Ranking, 2019