

IN - TOUCH



WEBS Training Newsletter

ISSUE 1 Autumn 2019



Proud to support
The Furniture Makers' Company
the furnishing industry's charity

WEBS are One Step Champions!

WEBS Furniture Training are proud to announce their status as **One Step Champions** for The Furniture Makers' Company's **One Step at a Time Campaign**.

While many readers will be aware of **The Furniture Makers' Company**, fewer will be aware of the charitable role that it has held since 1903, in helping to support members of the wider furniture industry who have fallen upon periods of financial need or hardship.

Potentially, any member of the 338,000 strong wider furniture industry can be eligible for financial assistance or advice. This not only includes upholsterers and furniture makers, but also textile designers, carpet fitters, kitchen installers, and students or apprentices. In addition to this, former employees, retired persons, and those whose partners were in the industry but have now passed away, may also qualify for help.

Every person has a different story and **The Furniture Makers' Company** assesses each application individually, with care and consideration.

As **One Step Champions**, WEBS' role is to ensure that In-Touch readers are aware that the charity can be a **'lifeline in hard times.'**

If you would like to find out more information about receiving financial support or advice, you can contact Sue Dean (Welfare Officer), by emailing welfareofficer@furnituremakers.org.uk or by calling 020 7256 5558.

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It's official! WEBS Training is a GOOD Training Provider
Now let's work together to make it OUTSTANDING....

Clubbing with WEBS

Over the 50 years of WEBS' existence, hundreds of apprentices have successfully passed through our doors, and out into the wider world of furniture.

For many of those former apprentices, their training years will have been amongst the happiest of their lives. They will have had the opportunity to learn new skills; to develop a secure knowledge base around their profession and the wider industry; and to meet colleagues and make friends from other organisations.

In many cases, these former young apprentices have become employers in their own right, senior members of their organisations, and craftsmen, who can be justifiably proud of their profession. In all cases they will have developed knowledge, skills and workplace experience which is far beyond that which they had when they first started out.

With that in mind, WEBS believe it is high time to found our own **Alumnus** organisation: a mutually beneficial **network** of former apprentices, employees and members of associated organisations. Many other long lasting educational establishments already have their own Alumnus, and it is now time for WEBS to honour that tradition.

The benefits of belonging to such an Alumnus are enormous. They provide members with the opportunity to **network**; with individual members drawing from the strength, knowledge and skills base of the whole Alumnus, in order to support one other.

An Alumnus can provide the chance to share industry -related news and to keep abreast of current developments in the field. Members of the Alumnus can also contact each other to share or provide training, expertise or equipment when needed.

For those of a sociable disposition, an Alumnus provides a way of keeping in touch with old friends and former colleagues and can be a way of making new friends. Members can get together for an annual dinner, regular drinks, or meet occasionally to discuss items of mutual interest. Depending on the character of the Alumnus, opportunities might arise for such diverse activities as football (playing or watching), darts or golf.

The Alumnus can also form an influential group that can be harnessed for raising money for charities, and helping to support the community by giving something back.

Are You Interested?

If you are a former WEBS apprentice or employee, and would like to learn more about joining our Alumnus, please register your interest with Kevin Martin, WEBS Alumnus Officer in the first instance.

You can do so by e-mailing him at k.martin@webstraining.com

Voice on the Phone!



Adam Colbert **Senior Office Administrator**

"Joining WEBS was the best thing I ever did. I worked in retail after leaving college but was really bored. I joined WEBS four years ago and still love it. Every day is different, and so far I've been able to complete apprenticeships in Business Administration and Customer Service while working at WEBS. I feel really lucky."

Selected Highlights of the Furniture Makers' Company Fund Raising Year

So far this year **The Furniture Makers' Company** has raised funds through a range of charitable events.

These have included: the 4th Annual Curry Night, held in the Company's Yorkshire region at the famous **Aakash Restaurant** in Cleckheaton, Kirklees, and attended by around 100 people; the final of the Herman Miller Cup, where five-a-side **Axminster Tools and Machinery FC** defeated **Hypnos Beds** by 3 goals to 2 in a tense penalty shoot-out; and the Company's clay pigeon shoot which took place in Northwood, Middlesex and raised more than £34,000 alone for the charity!

If you would like to fundraise or make a donation to the charity, or if you would like to find out more about any of these, or any upcoming events, you can do so by visiting www.furnituremakers.org.uk.

Material of the Moment

Birch Plywood

It was a chance remark made by a joiner doing some work on my house that made me sit up and think.

"Birch plywood," he said "is a bit like Marmite. You either love it or you hate it."

Since then, I've talked to a range of WEBS' training officers and apprentices about this, and truth be told, **have not** been able to find **anyone** who dislikes machining it or using it. At worst I've heard it described as 'splintery at times' and at its best as 'cheaper, stronger and more rigid than natural wood.'

However, although plywood appears to be a modern material in many ways, it actually has a rich historical legacy, stretching back for thousands of years to at least the time of the ancient Egyptians. Although no one can know for sure, it is thought that plywood was developed as a way of conserving scarce building timber stocks and promoting sustainability. This was because of the nature of Egypt's climate, where its high temperatures and aridity meant that good building timber, such as cedar of Lebanon, ebony and cypress had to be imported from neighbouring, and often hostile territories. Although palm trees grew in great profusion, these were considered to be too splintery for furniture use, and tended to be used for roofing.

One example of an early use of cypress plywood included a royal coffin, of around 2680 BC, which was made up of 6 layers of veneer, each 1/8 of an inch thick, laid on top of each other with the grain running in alternate directions before being bonded using resin. Each layer resembled a patchwork of pieces butted together, as no one piece was as long or as high as the base, side or lid of the coffin. The craftsmanship involved in this construction was truly remarkable, considering the joiners of the day were using copper tools hardened with arsenic, or bronze.

Fast forward to the mid-19th century, and Immanuel Nobel, father of scientist Alfred Nobel, invented the rotary lathe, which allowed layers of veneer to be produced from spinning circular logs. These were peeled using a blade as they spun, and the peel was flattened and dried to become the veneer. This was a revolutionary innovation, as before veneer was produced manually using flat sawing, rift sawing or quarter sawing techniques, and resulted in pieces limited by the width and length of the log.

By the 1860s rotary lathe plywood manufacturing had become established in France and the USA.

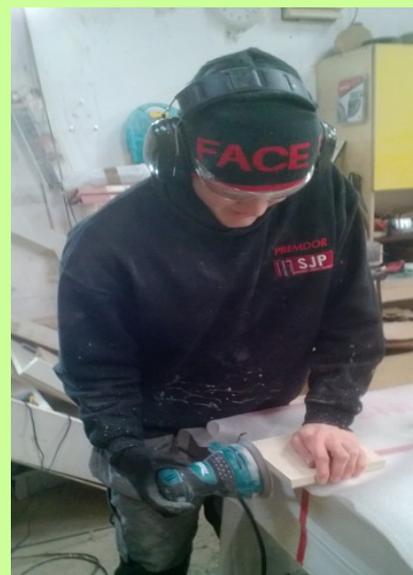
Meanwhile, in the UK, the technology was developed in order to mould plywood into ornamental shapes, which resulted in a profusion of ornately designed chairs, and stove pipe hats!

In Russia in the 1880s, A.M Luther used Baltic and Russian birch trees to produce thousands of tea chests and packing cases. Indeed, it is a remarkable reflection of the durability of birch plywood that the 2500 Luther cases and chests used by the Shackleton Antarctic Expedition (1907-1909) were able to withstand temperatures of minus forty degrees centigrade and blizzards, to then be reused to make furniture for the expedition members, and even the covers of the first book to be produced in the Antarctic, **Aurora Australis**.

By 1928 the first standardised and familiar 4 foot by 8 foot sheets (1200mm by 2400mm) had been developed as a general building material, and were in widespread use all over the globe.

In the present day, birch plywood is still as popular as ever, even in the face of competition from MDF, chip-board and other manufactured boards. Part of its popularity lies in the sustainability of birch, a hardwood, which is a rapidly growing tree, able to thrive on poor soils and tolerate low temperatures. In many cases, birch plywood can be bought from known sustainable sources, and chains of custody can show exactly where they were sourced.

It is likely therefore, with climate change and the environment becoming ever more prominent issues, that birch plywood will be with WEBS apprentices for many years to come!



Jordan Searby of Farmwood Timber Products Ltd,
Level 2 General Furniture Manufacture

Success & Achievement

September's **Apprentice of the Month**, Robert Palmer of Covercraft Upholstery Ltd, Long Eaton, was awarded the accolade for his consistent enthusiasm for upholstery and long-term commitment to his training and personal development.

Senior Upholstery Training Officer Joe Bryan said *'I have known Rob for almost 2 years now, first as a Level 2 apprentice, and now as a Level 3 apprentice. During that time I have found him to be cheerful, enthusiastic and always trying to improve. Rob always takes the extra time to learn more about the methods, materials and techniques needed in upholstery, and to expand his knowledge base at every opportunity. He is mint.'*

Lindsay Brown, a Functional Skills Tutor added *'Rob's definitely a top man. A simple question from me about his project work led to a fascinating conversation about Georgian furniture styles, Chesterfield sofas, rococo style fabric, finding pile direction on tricky fabric, and Georgian colour schemes. I was really impressed by Robert's knowledge, and the quality of his explanation. The best part was that he was able to keep working quickly as he talked, and again, I was incredibly impressed by Robert's precision and attention to detail, even in the face of my distraction!'*

All at WEBS agreed that Rob was definitely an upholsterer to **'watch for the future'** and an asset to his organisation. We wish him well for his imminent End Point Assessment.

Another hugely successful WEBS apprentice, sewing specialist **Jovita Bertule** (Modern Upholstery), was also recently honoured by her employer Whitemeadow Furniture Ltd as Employee of the Month. Training Officer Joe Bryan commented *'She really deserved this award and I was very proud of her achievement. The work that she does for me is always top quality, and I can see why they gave her the award. Well done Jovita.'*



Level 3 apprentice Robert Palmer sharing his expertise with Brandon Lymbery (Level 2), of Lievens



From left to right, Mandy Harper, Jovita Bertule and Ian Oscroft **Managing Director**

Customer Service Award!

In-Touch recently spoke with Customer Service & Business Administration Training Officer Tyna Burnett and her apprentice Daniel Pickering, of Belfield Furnishings Ltd about success and achievement...

TYNA! Congratulations on your Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner apprentice, Claire Clayton of Hypnos Contract Beds, being presented with WEBS' very first Apprentice of the Month Award. What are your thoughts on this?

I was absolutely thrilled when I heard. I think Clare really deserved to win the award. Not only does she have to deal with her apprenticeship written work, but she has to do her job as well, which can be VERY challenging, especially when she has to answer an onslaught of customer calls! Clare's confidence has really improved over the course of the apprenticeship, and she has truly mastered her role and made it her own!

DANIEL, some people say that employees in a customer service role only need to be polite and to get on with the public to succeed at work. What is your view?

Of course these are both very important qualities, but you also need to know about policies and procedures, GDPR and data security, and health and safety. Even if you do get on with people, this course helps you to be more effective by teaching active listening skills and more confident communication. Tyna has really helped to build my confidence by writing scripts that I can use when talking to the public on the phone, which have been really helpful. You also learn useful things like sales theory, which I don't need for work, but is useful for the bigger picture.

TYNA, how would you like to see this qualification develop in the future?

This is a solid qualification that celebrates and builds on the tripartite relationship between the employer, Training Officer and learner. I think any developments that build on this can only be a good thing. When it comes to learning how to deal with pressure, you can't beat an apprenticeship!

TYNA, colleagues in the training office keep talking about your success rate! What are they on about?

Ah! What they mean is that all four of the learners that have gone through end-point-assessment in Customer Service so far have all scored distinctions for every part of the work that they completed; the professional discussion, the apprentice showcase, and the practical observation of apprentices dealing with real customers. The end point assessment is extremely rigorous. The assessor is looking for naturally occurring evidence in the workplace environment, and during the observation it is impossible to control which customers appear. The learner just has to respond to their needs while being professional at all times. I don't see my learner at all during the whole assessment process, or even know who the assessor will be, but I always tell my learners 'We believe in you, and now **you** believe in you, so go and do this!' This is their time to fly solo. It is really hard work, but ultimately worth it.

DANIEL, Do you have any advice for any school leavers who want to work in a customer service role?

It's definitely worth doing the apprenticeship, even if it means living off the apprenticeship wage for 15 months. I found my course incredibly helpful, and the skills, knowledge and experience I've gained will help me make my career develop the way I want it to. I will also have a recognised qualification. I think that means a lot in the industry. I would not have got a qualification if I'd just gone into a job after leaving school. I've enjoyed the course thoroughly, and it's been really interesting.

Are You Interested?

If you interested in finding out more about any of our apprentices, please the back page for further details.



Daniel Pickering, diligent as ever!

Success & Achievement



WEBS Training Apprentice of the Month
August 2019

Clare Clayton
of
Hypnos Contact Beds

**Left to right: Julie Haynes (Customer Service Manager), Clare Clayton
and Tyna Burnett (Training Officer)**

Course Listing

If you would like to find out about any of the apprenticeship opportunities at Level 2 and Level 3 listed below, then please contact:

Emma Dougan, **Business Development Manager**.

You can do so by e-mailing her at e.dougan@webstraining.com,
or by telephoning on 0115 967 7771.

Bed Manufacturing

Business Administration

Customer Service Practitioner

Fitted Furniture Installation

General Furniture Manufacture

Modern Upholstery

Modern Upholstery (with Sewing specialism)

Supply Chain Warehouse Operation

Team Leader/Supervisor

Trade Supplier

Wood Machining



Emma Dougan

Business Development Manager

WEBS Training Ltd



Luke Marsden

Level 2 Modern Upholstery Enthusiast!

PF Collections