

## Case study: Steve Willis Training Centres



**aptem.**  
apprentice

**Steve Willis Training specialises in gas, plumbing and electrical training. Launching in 2000, the company introduced apprenticeships four years later as a sub-contractor. In 2017, as a result of the demand for the programmes it joined RoATP as a main provider and now delivers apprenticeships directly.**

## The value of an apprenticeship delivery system

Steve Willis Training currently offers advanced apprenticeship programmes in Gas Engineering and Installation Electrician/Maintenance Electrician. The company has grown considerably in the past five years. Since becoming a main provider in 2017, numbers of directly funded learners have increased from 50 to nearly 500 learners in 2022. In a recent full Ofsted inspection, the company was graded Good with Outstanding areas, including behaviours and attitudes.

Due to the practical nature of its programmes the company delivers face-to-face at venues in the south of England. In addition to delivering apprenticeships, the demand for commercial training is also growing to support the industry and the ever-changing energy market.



## The challenge

The team was using a variety of systems, manual processes, spreadsheets and paper-based portfolios to deliver apprenticeship programmes. “We had a tracker system looking after the funding aspects, combined with paper-driven processes and spreadsheets managing the apprentice journey. Internal drives held our documents and there was a continual requirement to print paper-based copies of things like portfolios. What started as a set of processes that delivered what we needed, became vast and cumbersome as we scaled,” explained David King, consultant and Aptem Project Lead for Steve Willis Training, who has over 20 years’ experience in apprenticeships.

There was a level of inertia regarding onboarding an apprenticeship delivery system. “Our team are engineers,” explained David. “We naturally feel comfortable with paper-based processes. This is a challenging environment in which to introduce new technology, but we focused on the organisational benefits and adopted a people-based approach to change management.”



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**David King**, Aptem Project Lead,  
Steve Willis Training



## Organisational goals associated with purchasing a system

Steve Willis Training identified a number of issues with its apprenticeship delivery:

- ❗ Tutors and learners struggled to engage with the onboarding or ILR processes; everything was done via email. This was time-consuming for the admin team to collate and wasn't a great learner experience at the start of the programme when attrition is often high.
- ❗ The onboarding process required a lot of admin effort, chasing and guiding learners as they enrolled on programmes.
- ❗ The process wasn't scalable – and didn't suit the organisation's ambitions to expand.
- ❗ An employer survey indicated they felt disengaged with their apprentices' learning because they didn't have easy access to information regarding progress.
- ❗ Tracking learner progress and reporting at an individual tutor level, all the way through to senior leadership team level was a challenging and time-consuming process, involving a monthly cycle of analysis.

## The approach to identifying an apprenticeship delivery system

Steve Willis Training undertook a full market review of all the available delivery systems, and graded them Bronze, Silver and Gold against its organisational objectives.

### The ask:

- ✓ An end-to-end system that could manage the entire learner journey from enrolment to EPA.
- ✓ Flexibility within onboarding, to customise the enrolment journey.
- ✓ Ability for learning to be delivered online in the future and for the system to hold eLearning materials.
- ✓ Ability to adjust programmes throughout a learner lifecycle to ensure they have the best possible experience.
- ✓ Real-time reports within the system that could be used by all levels of the organisation – from tutors to team leaders, to the senior leadership team.
- ✓ Ability for employers to view learner progress and engage with the learner journey.

### The KPIs for measuring a chosen system over a 12-month period:

- ✓ Reduced costs associated with paper-based processes (printer and paper costs to print out portfolios).
- ✓ Reduced Admin Team time onboarding and chasing learners, so they could focus on improving learner experience.
- ✓ Reduced attrition at onboarding stage.
- ✓ Increased employer engagement scores.
- ✓ Increased learner retention via identification through real-time reporting of red flags early on.
- ✓ Evidence of continued optimisation of programmes based on feedback.

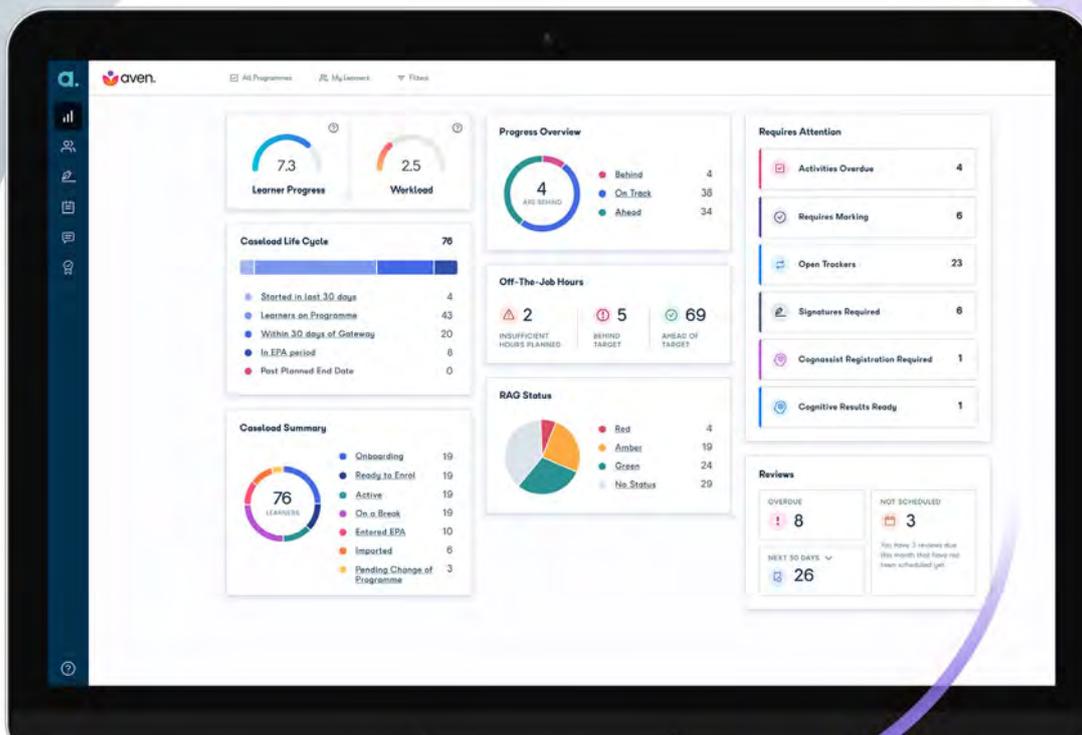


System options were presented to the Senior Leadership Team, who shortlisted Aptem and asked for a range of system demonstrations, before taking the decision to purchase at the end of 2021.



Choosing Aptem was a strategic decision related to the direction of our business. We need a system that we can customise and that can grow with us over the years. An ‘out of the box’ solution wasn’t going to meet our ambitions. Aptem was not the cheapest option, but it was the one that would deliver us the greatest value over time and meet our KPIs.

**David King**, Aptem Project Lead, Steve Willis Training



## Implementing Aptem

Prior to implementation, the project team at Steve Willis Training developed a blueprint for its programmes:



**What is delivered weekly**



**Learner objectives**



**Learner achievements**



**Required OTJ hours per week, based on curriculum**



**How the learning is applied to the workplace**

The organisation internally mapped their language so that everyone had the same understanding. As a result, when it came to build the delivery programmes this helped to support a more streamlined process. The output is that what the learner sees is very logical and comprehensive. “The blueprint was still skeletal. Aptem allows us to build in functionality and learning along the way, which is great as we want to continually enhance our programmes to deliver the best possible learner experience. But having that blueprint definitely helped us and sped up the implementation process,” said David.



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Implementation began in January 2022. “We had a two-stage plan to migrate learners – leaving those in year 3 on the current system, and initially bringing over those who are going into Year 2 and Year 1 in September 2022. Overall our migration programme will take 18 months,” said David. By May 2022 new learners were onboarding using Aptem, ready to start their programmes.

Crucial to the success of the onboarding migration was the Admin Team Leader immersing herself in the system and taking ownership of how she wanted the system to work for learners. She worked alongside Aptem’s Implementation Consultant and the Steve Willis Training project team to customise the onboarding steps.

As a result, the Admin Team are already seeing the benefits of the system, with the amount of chasing reducing. “The ability to initially build an onboarding process to match our requirements and then to continue to adapt Aptem as we optimise the learner onboarding experience has been invaluable,” said David.

Users of Aptem, including tutors and admin teams, were engaged early on in the implementation process. “We created a place where we stored documentation, training session recordings and live Q&A requests,” said David. The approach was purposefully light-touch, offering opt-in 30-minute monthly implementation briefing overviews with Aptem’s Implementation Consultant and the project team.



## Managing the change project

The focus was on change management and empowering people to feel that this is their system and it's there to help them to deliver exceptional apprenticeships:



- **Why are we doing this?**
- **What are our high-level business objectives: efficiencies, better user experience, integrating the learning.**
- **What have we achieved this month in terms of implementing Aptem?**
- **What do we plan to do next month?**
- **New features to present.**

“Nearly everyone across the organisation ended up attending these sessions. They have supported the engagement of the team and helped to introduce new users as and when it’s appropriate,” said David.

In addition, Aptem’s Implementation Consultant ran training sessions for the project team, who are now able to support in a ‘train the trainer’ approach. “Holly, our Aptem Implementation Consultant, has supported the team throughout the entire implementation process. When we run sessions internally now, the project team is in the room, coaching as people explore and use the system. This works really well for our teams.”



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David King, Aptem Project Lead, Steve Willis Training



This was a very smooth implementation, in no small part because of the methodical approach taken by the team at Steve Willis Training. They took the time upfront to scope out their needs and build and test. They built a project plan with milestones and timings, which identified who needed to be in which meetings and training sessions. They had a very supportive leadership team and access to subject-matter experts.

**Holly Thompson**, Aptem's Implementation Consultant

## Beyond implementation – the value of Aptem

### The onboarding experience:

Previously this involved lots of phone calls, interview, and face-to-face meetings. Now there is a three-stage process in place:



**Eligibility review**



**Interview run through Aptem**

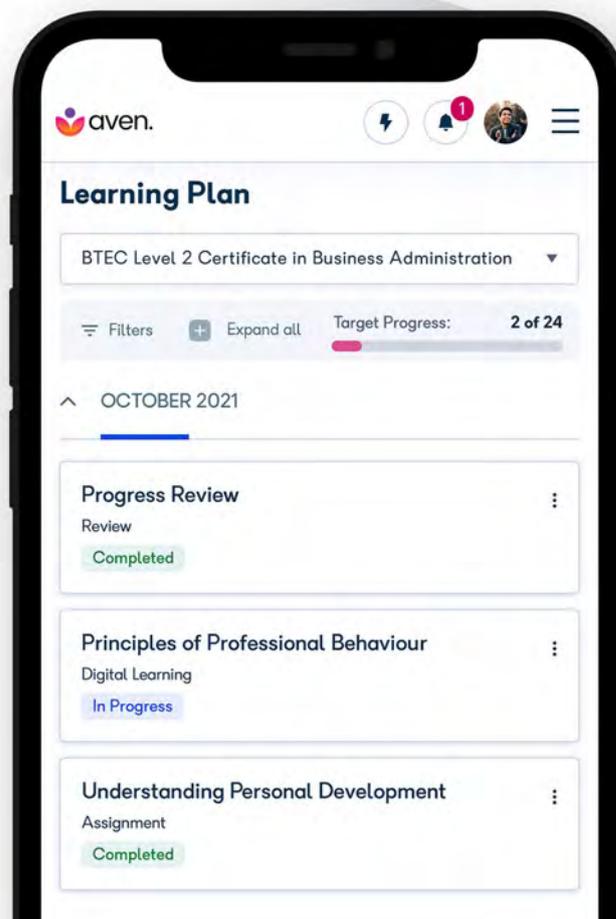


**Full application**

As a result, even in the early stages of adoption of Aptem, learner and employer engagement is higher and feedback has been very positive. The admin team is being freed up to concentrate on tasks that result in less attrition and higher levels of engagement.

### Tracking learner progress:

Before Aptem, paper-based files and learning plans were held by individual tutors and the admin team. Now, everything can be held within Aptem and everyone who needs it can have access to the Learning Plan and learner progress, including employers. The ability to see where any learner is at any point in time through the embedded Power BI dashboards will be invaluable.





## Advice from Steve Willis Training for others purchasing an apprenticeship delivery system



Scope out your organisational objectives, both short and long term, up front so that you can be sure the system that you are choosing now is future-proof.



Be very clear about how your programme is built, how you are delivering the programme and what you want in the system.



Ensure internal teams are all using the same language.



Implementing Aptem well requires organisational support. You need to identify a team of invested people who clearly see the benefits.

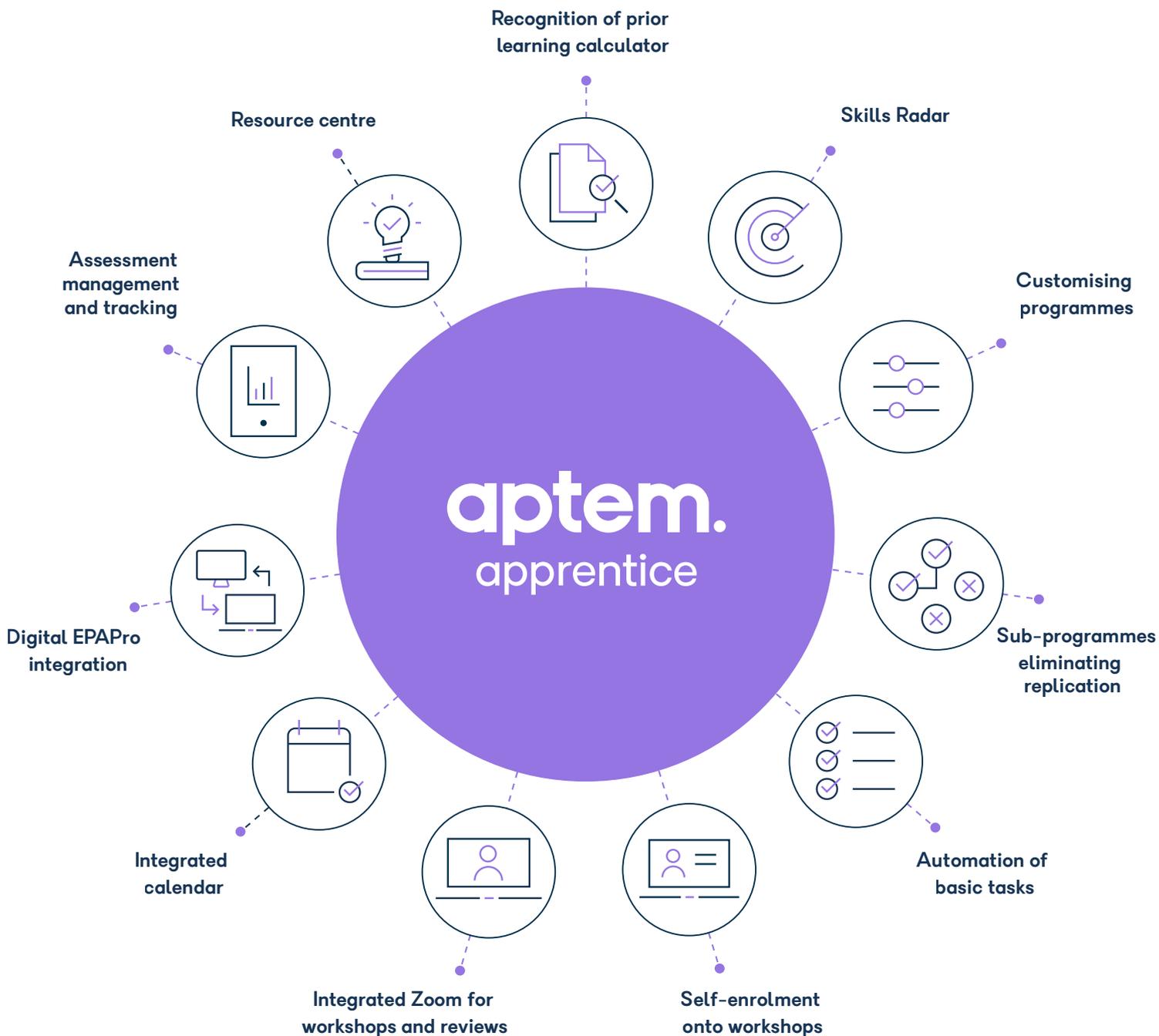


Involve stakeholders and users of the system from an early stage and give them freedom to input and help to develop it. One of Aptem's key differentiators is its flexibility and customisability to truly make this your system.



Empower your teams so that they understand this is their system and it's there to help them – whether that's freeing up their time to do more important tasks, delivering a better learner experience, or giving them access to information that can optimise delivery. Everyone will get something positive out of onboarding Aptem.

## The features that make Aptem Apprentice unique





We are already seeing the value of Aptem through financial and efficiency gains and our team are really positive about the system. We're on a journey and we're looking forward to the coming years working in partnership with the Aptem team.

David King, Aptem Project Lead, Steve Willis Training



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