Royal Mail launches Â£1 million apprenticeship levy gifting fund to help small businesses grow

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Royal Mail has today launched a £1 million small business apprenticeship levy gifting fund as part of a new set of commitments to support growth. The initiative comes as new figures show that a quarter of businesses are struggling to recruit skilled workers and the skills gap is one of the biggest barriers to growth.

The apprenticeship levy gifting fund is one of a number of commitments1 Royal Mail is making to small businesses which are published in full today in a report by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and Royal Mail titled Small businesses: delivering growth for Britain.

The report includes the findings of in-depth research including a survey of more than 1,200 BCC members and supporting qualitative insight into what small businesses see as the biggest opportunities and barriers to growth.

Other key findings in the research include:

- More than a third (35%) of UK firms expect to grow in the next year, while 41% forecast 'business as usual' and 22% expect to downsize
- Four in 10 businesses (38%) see the UK domestic market as the biggest opportunity
- Online remains a key driver of growth for businesses – firms expect proportion of e-commerce sales to increase by 25%

The report also includes calls to Government2 to provide targeted support to help small businesses reach their growth potential. The report and commitments form part of Royal Mail Means Business, a new campaign which aims to champion small businesses and the important role they play – from entrepreneurs and start-ups through to established companies with up to 250 employees.

A relaunched Small Business Hub contains advice and tailored content focused on fuelling growth, including simplifying and demystifying exporting, and providing more expert advice on topics businesses said they need help with as they expand into e-commerce and look to grow online sales.

Royal Mail's apprenticeship levy gifting fund is now open3. It is available to owners or employees of registered companies with up to 250 employees. The funding can be used to complete any Government registered

apprenticeship course, which could include courses to upskill small businesses on traditional skills as well as help them to adopt new technologies such as AI to boost efficiency.

Source: International Distribution Services

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