

How the Swiss Train Apprentices Differently

U.S. BUSINESSES often complain that the young people they hire simply aren't job ready. It's not just technical skills they lack—so the story goes—from showing up on time to communicating with their co-workers, high-school age youth simply don't know how to behave in a business setting. These are not complaints you hear from Swiss employers.

What do Swiss employers do differently? For one thing, they don't expect schools to teach work. They follow a carefully balanced apprenticeship model that combines 1–2 days on campus with 3–4 days on the job each week.

Swiss employers have figured out how to train workers at no net cost to them and, in fact, at a substantial profit. A win-win that has turned Switzerland into one of the most resilient, innovative, and competitive economies in the world.

What Americans find surprising is that Swiss businesses are the primary champions of the apprenticeship system and invest a hefty \$5 billion annually in apprenticeship education.

career start at 19. That leaves many years ahead for advanced training, even a degree and higher earnings—all debt-free.

At \$2.4 trillion, the California economy is four times bigger than the Swiss economy and yet has four times fewer apprentices. Imagine what the California economy would look like if its apprenticeship investment were on the Swiss scale.

Instead of the 70,000 apprentices California currently has, it would have more than 750,000. California businesses would invest around \$18.75 billion into their training and earn around \$20.625 billion on that investment during the training period.

Even when in apprenticeships, young people would add \$18 billion per year in consumer power to the California economy, while reducing student debt by almost \$16 billion per year and the youth unemployment rate down to 3%.

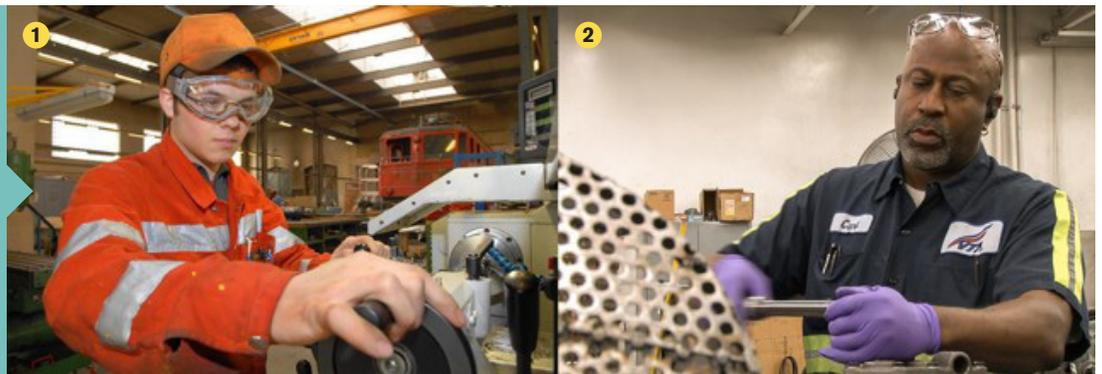
All the ingredients that created Switzerland's win-win are present right here in California—a multi-path, quality educational system that closely parallels our high schools, community colleges,



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(1) Swiss Federal railway apprentice (Credit: Luzerner Zeitung).

(2) Coach mechanic apprentice Joint Workforce Investment, Santa Clara, CA (Credit: Alexio Goncalves).



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However, the businesses make \$5.5 billion back during the initial training period alone. This is because trainees, who work at low training wages, increase their productivity so much that they increase company profits, even while being paid for attending school and going to work.

This has become such an attractive path that 70% of Swiss youth choose apprenticeship as their ticket to a lucrative career. They start earning a paycheck at 16 and graduate with transferrable skills, work experience and a

CSU and UC systems; a large and varied labor market; and a supportive policy environment at both state and federal levels.

It was only about a decade ago that Switzerland began this most recent apprenticeship renaissance and California's has already begun. That means that with a focused effort we can get there by 2027.

Find out more and join in at the CApprenticeship 2.0 LinkedIn group at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13555551>