



TURNING WORK
EXPERIENCE
**INTO WORK
INSPIRATION**
A Business in the Community campaign

Transforming Work Experience into Work Inspiration – the business benefits

An evaluation of Work Inspiration one year on June 2011



Report produced in partnership with:



CITY & GUILDS
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DEVELOPMENT

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Business in the

Community

This report has been prepared by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development on behalf of Business in the Community.

About the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development

The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development is an independent, not for profit research and development body for vocational education and training. It works to influence and improve skills policy and practice worldwide through an evidence based approach. It is part of the City & Guilds Group.

About Business in the Community

Business in the Community (BITC) stands for responsible business. We are a business-led charity with a growing membership of 850 companies, from large multinational household names to small local businesses and public sector organisations. We advise, support and challenge members to create a sustainable future for people and the planet and to improve business performance.

Our members work with us to define what responsibility looks like in the workplace, marketplace, community and the environment - and we share what we learn about driving performance through responsible business practice.

Transforming Work Experience into Work Inspiration – the business benefits

An evaluation of Work Inspiration one year on
June 2011

By Joe Shamash & Kate Shoesmith
City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development

Acknowledgements

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Below: What do young people want from their work experience?



Forewords

Foreword by Chris Jones



Director General and Chief Executive of City & Guilds

Going to work for the first time can be a daunting prospect, but it should also be an exciting and challenging time. Yet all too often, the first real experience young people have of work, during their work experience placement in Years 10 or 11, can be tedious and monotonous. It was for this reason that the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development, our own not-for-profit research and development organisation, was delighted to support this evaluation of Work Inspiration.

Those of us who work in the vocational education and training sector see the crossover between education and work first hand. With youth unemployment at its highest level since records began, we need to ensure young people can take advantage of every opportunity afforded to them when it comes to developing their employability skills. Work experience is a vital opportunity for young people to do just that. But as this report shows, the benefits of a meaningful and well thought-out work experience placement are not just accrued to the individual. Businesses can also gain from inspiring work experience programmes. At City & Guilds, we will be using this report to develop our own work experience programmes and we hope that other businesses will find it as informative and useful as we have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Jones', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Foreword by Stephen Howard



Chief Executive of Business in the Community

Work experience can often be a wasted opportunity. Bringing a young person into your workplace should be a chance to inspire and engage them and an opportunity to involve colleagues across the organisation.

Work Inspiration has been a key campaign for Business in the Community. Created and driven by business, it addresses the very real need they identified, to find a better way to excite young people about the world of work, make it relevant to them, and inspire them about their futures. When effective, work experience transforms the time young people spend in a company and as this report shows, adds value to the employees working with them as well.

Since we launched our Work Inspiration campaign in September 2009, we have been overwhelmed by the positive response from the business world. To date over 500 employers have taken up the Work Inspiration call to action which translates to 135,000 placements. We are grateful to all of them, but in this particularly difficult time, it is even more urgent to ensure all young people have access to this sort of experience. So we need more companies to come on board and join this growing movement of Work Inspiration employers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Howard', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Executive summary

This report has been prepared by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development on behalf of Business in the Community. It provides evidence of the business benefits of work experience, shares good practice and shows how different employers have overcome the challenges in offering work experience.

The research which informed this report was carried out in three stages:

1. A literature review identified any existing research on the benefits of work experience for employers.
2. A survey of employers who are signed up to Work Inspiration was carried out. 192 employers responded anonymously.
3. Interviews were conducted for case studies of eight different organisations.

The evidence gathered through each stage has been used to illustrate the key business benefits from participating in Work Inspiration and work experience programmes more widely.

The available literature showed how, to date, much of the research has focused on the benefits to young people. Far less has been done to ascertain how businesses use work experience programmes as part of their own business planning.

This research identifies four key impact areas:

1. Employee development and engagement

Companies reported that their employees often benefit directly in terms of the skills they develop from managing and supporting young people on work experience. Often, employees also develop greater levels of satisfaction and engagement with their employer.

2. Diversity and talent

Employers have used Work Inspiration as a way of opening doors and encouraging young people from a range of different backgrounds to consider careers in their sector, for example attracting more women into engineering. This is particularly important for organisations which require a workforce that reflects and understands their client groups.



Above: Sir Stuart Rose with young people from the Edge Learner Forum.

3. Business development

Particularly when it comes to winning public contracts, business engagement in local communities is viewed favourably by potential clients. Some of the businesses consulted in this report said their work experience programmes have won them business.

4. Community engagement

Work experience can help achieve profile - and not just with those they hope to employ in the future. Young people and their families are often also customers and their insights can be invaluable as a company seeks to position itself with its key market audiences. The best way of doing this, however, has been to ensure the integrity of the work experience placement.

Each of these themes is explored in more detail in the main body of this report.

Recommendations for the Work Inspiration resources

To help young people and employers get the most out of their work experience programmes, Business in the Community developed a series of three 'Insights' that provide tips and guidance on delivering Work Inspiration (see introduction, page 11). Employers provided the following feedback:

- **Insight 1 - All About Me** works most effectively when programmes allow for engagement with schools, earlier inductions and sufficient time for staff to prepare in advance. For the many businesses that have limited time to prepare, however, it was felt that a '**reader's digest**' of the Insight would be helpful.
- **Insight 2 - A Look Behind The Scenes** is frequently adapted by employers, many of whom feel a **whole project approach** (eg an overarching task or project for work experience students) to Work Inspiration in the business is particularly effective.
- **Insight 3 - Careers Happen.** In some instances, students struggle with the careers boards. **Video diaries** can be more engaging, and using **younger employees** as well as more experienced workers in careers exercises also helps narrow the gap between students and staff.
- **A new Insight 4?** Employers are interested in doing more on **employability and sustainability skills**.



Recommendations for the Work Inspiration campaign

- **Sustain links between Work Inspiration employers** - Talking with fellow employers and sharing Work Inspiration practice was a prominent feature of the most successful programmes; employers are keen for these links to continue to grow.
- **Reaching smaller businesses** - More promotion of good practice specific to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is needed.
- **Promoting work experience more widely with the public and with policy makers** - Employers felt that the scale and the profile of the Work Inspiration campaign offers an opportunity to work with the Government, and ensure that the right policies are in place to support good quality work experience.

About the case studies

Each of the case study boxes included in this report focuses on a particular key impact area and describes some of the good practice of that business, which has brought about certain business benefits. These are only snapshots of small areas within a larger picture.

A more detailed explanation of the aims and method behind this research is available in Appendix 1 of this report.

Left: Ian Livingston and Caroline Waters from BT discuss work experience with a young person from the Edge Learner Forum at the BT Tower 1st anniversary celebration, September 2010.

Recommendations for policy makers and the education sector

- **Support Education and Business Partnerships** - employers believe policy makers and education providers should encourage better coordination and data sharing.
- **Give clear, consistent and timely information to employers** - particularly on changing funding arrangements and plans for Further Education and Higher Education, such as tuition fees.
- **Promote more flexible work experience arrangements** - to allow employers to offer work experience outside the traditional two week window in the summer term.
- **Build on links between work experience and apprenticeships** - work experience placements have immense potential as a first step towards engaging employers in delivering more high quality, relevant apprenticeships.
- **Follow up on the Wolf Review's recommendations** for 'genuine' work experience placements for 16-18 year olds, and consolidate this with similar opportunities for 14-16 year olds.¹

Top tips

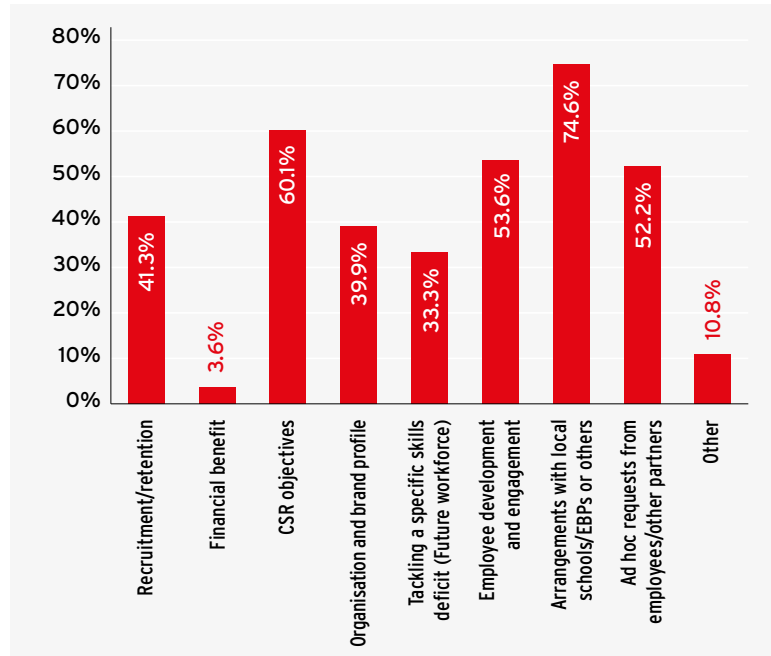
A short 'Top Tips' section for employers is included at the end of this report (page 30). This summarises the good practice and lessons learned that employers shared with us during this research. While some of them may be obvious, these are the tips that experienced employers recommend for any business that is seeking to turn work experience into Work Inspiration. These top tips include:

- In developing the programmes, ask young people for their input from the beginning so everyone has realistic expectations.
- Learn from each other - share challenges and good practice with other employers.

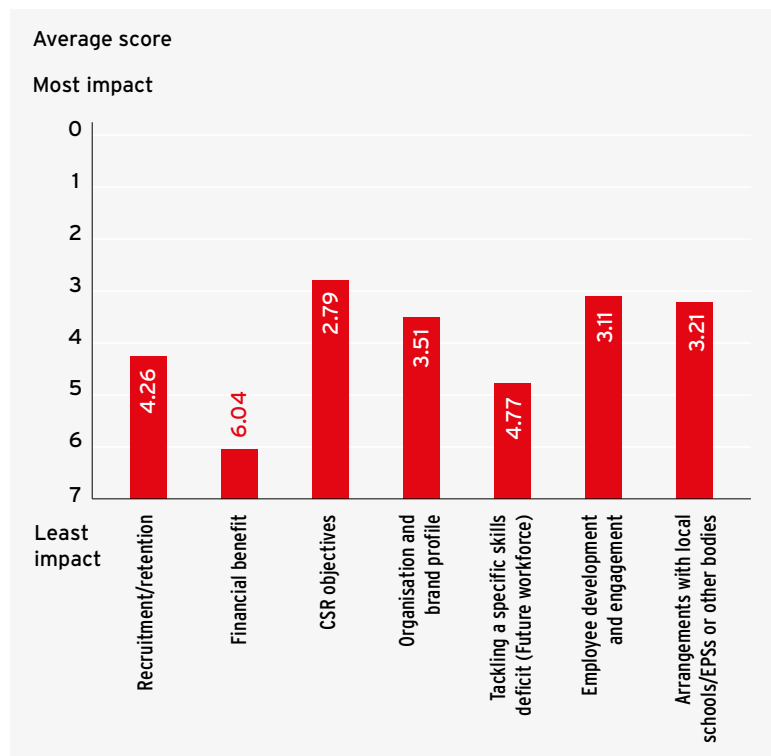
¹ Wolf, A. (2011) *Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report*, Department for Education: London. Last year, the Government commissioned a review of vocational education for 14-19 year olds in England.

Some findings from the survey

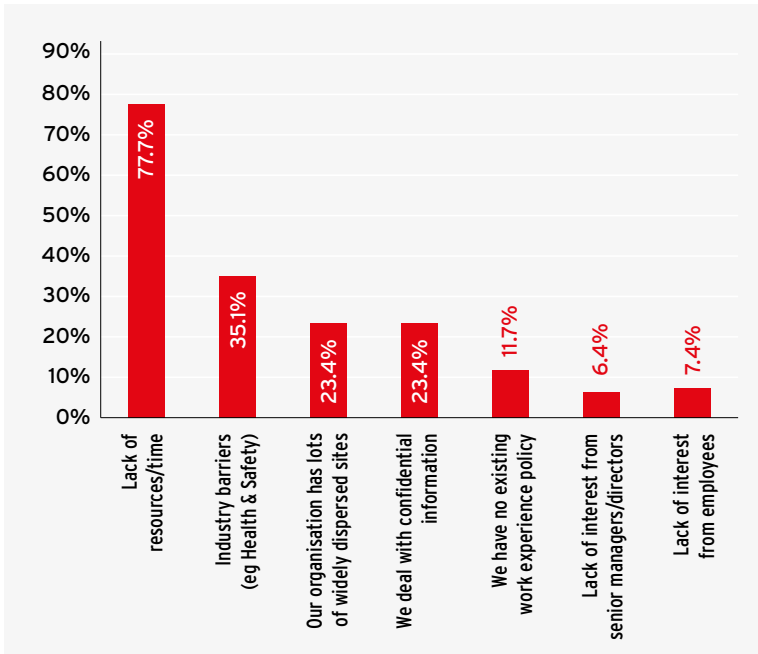
Which of these, if any, would you say is the reason why your organisation offers work experience placements?



What impact has Work Inspiration made to your organisation? Please rank the options, with 0 as the most impactful and 7 as the least impactful.



What are the challenges you face as an organisation in providing a work experience programme? (Respondents were able to tick more than one answer.)



Below: From the BT Tower 1st anniversary celebration.



Introduction

In response to the latest youth unemployment figures out earlier this year, the CEO of the Prince's Trust, Martina Milburn, said 'there are now enough unemployed young people to fill every football stadium in the Premier League, with almost 200,000 left queuing outside.'

It's a stark image but it illustrates the size of the problem very well. Increasingly, young people are being encouraged to take advantage of every opportunity presented to them to develop their employability skills or risk being left behind. Work experience can be an essential first step in engaging young people in the world of work.

The current economic climate has made life difficult for individuals but it is also a very difficult time for businesses. At a time when many people assumed businesses would be cutting back on their commitment to training and to community and education partnerships, and at the height of the recession in September 2009, employer members of Business in the Community launched the Work Inspiration campaign.

Those employers realised that education partnerships are as vital for their own development as they are for the young people who participate in high quality work experience programmes. Yet when it comes to sharing good practice and understanding the potential benefits to employers from good work experience programmes, very little evidence exists.

Much of the research around work experience programmes looks at the benefits accrued to the young people who participate. Clearly, this is just as it should be - if good practice as perceived by the participants is not collected, the programmes cannot be improved. It is equally true, however, that businesses can only deliver effective programmes if they are given the tools to improve their work experience offer.²

This research addresses two distinct needs.

1. It explores the benefits and challenges of offering work experience programmes from the perspective of employers.
2. It provides the Work Inspiration campaign with an independent evaluation, one year on from its launch.

Continued...

About Work Inspiration

Launched in September 2009 by the former Chairman of Business in the Community, Sir Stuart Rose, Work Inspiration is a national employer-led campaign which aims to make work experience more meaningful, relevant and inspiring for young people. The campaign responds to the gap between young people's expectations of the world of work and what business expects from new recruits/apprentices. The core of the campaign is a set of resources, based on some insights from young people into their needs. These are freely available online for any employer to integrate and use to deliver quality work experience placements.

Business in the Community has delivered nineteen events with partners across its UK regions and delivered two with a sector focus - for professional services and for media and creative industries. 515 companies³ have put their name to the Work Inspiration campaign. By December 2010 these companies had delivered a combined 100,000 placements for young people. The Campaign aims to announce that this figure has risen to 200,000 by October 2011 and calls on all those engaged in raising aspirations through good quality work experience to contribute to that total.

For more information and to join the campaign, go to www.workinspiration.com

³ Correct at the time of publication

² Prince's Trust press release, 16 February 2011

- The Work Inspiration Insights

To support employers in building upon their current work experience programmes, BITC developed three 'Insights' into how work experience can be improved. These have been designed as simple sessions that can be integrated into existing programmes or used to develop new ones.

Insight 1 - All About Me

All About Me aims to ensure that each young person on work experience is given time; a one-to-one conversation to talk about what they're interested in and good at, inside and outside the classroom.

Insight 2 - Look Behind the Scenes

Look Behind the Scenes aims to ensure that whatever the specific experience of work young people have, they are also given the chance to become aware of the variety and scope of opportunities in the world of work.

Insight 3 - Careers Happen

Careers Happen aims to illustrate how careers unfold: how opportunistic the nature of career progression can be; often developing in a non-linear way; sometimes with valuable lessons coming from decisions that don't work out.

The timing of this report is also important. Not only have we been through the worst recession in a generation, recent policy developments have demonstrated how important it is to provide adequate information and evidence on work experience programmes. The recent Wolf Review of vocational education for 14 to 19 year olds recommended that the Government should investigate models of 'genuine' work experience for 16 to 18 year olds in full time education and consider how to reimburse employers for their time. We strongly support this recommendation and have also found that those aged 15 and 16 years old, who are currently offered a one or two week work experience placement whilst at school, can also benefit from the opportunity.

In the course of this research, a number of helpful hints and tips were identified to help companies of all sizes, whether they are new to Work Inspiration or not, integrate the Work Inspiration resources into their programmes. The key findings and recommendations are shared with you in the following sections of this report.

Below: Antony Jenkins, CEO of Barclays Global Retail Banking (left of picture) and John Heaps, Chairman of Eversheds, listen to students talk about work experience.



Key impact areas

1. Employee development and engagement

Whilst it is difficult to quantify the benefits, employers have frequently cited a number of qualitative benefits from offering work experience programmes to young people.

Work experience as part of a cost effective training programme

In the literature review, a number of sources stated how entrusting members of staff with the management of those on work experience placements builds their own competencies. A study by Corporate Citizenship (2010) of companies in the City of London, found that employees who participate in education partnerships use this engagement to develop a wide range of skills including communication, coaching and counselling, influencing, negotiation and resolving conflict.⁴ Corporate Citizenship found that, on average, it costs £381 for a business to support an employee volunteer per year. Given that the average training budget per staff member is often in excess of £400 per year, if a business was looking to train staff in the types of skills that education partnerships provide, the benefits would outweigh the costs.

Shapiro's 1999 research in the USA finds that school-to-work partnerships also serve as a reminder to employers to offer remedial and basic skills training that they might not otherwise have offered but that are still required by both frontline and technician workers.⁵

⁴ Corporate Citizenship (2010). *Volunteering - The Business Case. The benefits of corporate volunteering programmes in education.* City of London: London

⁵ Shapiro, D. (1999). *School-to-Work Partnerships and Employer Participation: Evidence on Persistence and Attrition from the National Employer Survey.* Institute for Research on Higher Education: Philadelphia, PA.

Work Inspiration within management training

The management skills developed by employees who mentor those on Work Inspiration is often cited as a benefit of the programme by Business in the Community members. As these quotes from the survey of Work Inspiration employers demonstrate, many organisations use Work Inspiration as a way of giving those who do not have line management responsibilities the opportunity to develop these skills:

"It gives our newer staff the chance to manage people and workloads and set priorities and plans for others."

"Our employees like working with new people, some getting a chance to manage people when normally that isn't part of their role. It's definitely a personal development opportunity but it's also a break from the norm and (in most cases) a stress reliever."



Above: A Work Inspiration student at BT.

- Supporting development internally and externally

A case study from BT

For BT, the telecommunications giant, it was important that the Work Inspiration experience was not confined to their own organisation. They have developed a 'federated model' for work experience, where they support employers and employees up and down their supply chain to adopt Work Inspiration.

At BT itself, they ensure their own employees can also benefit from engaging with the work experience placement students, particularly their apprentices. Apprentices find that working with the young people on Work Inspiration can hone a number of skills, particularly communication and team working. In feedback from participation it has been noted that 'the apprentices love it'.

It is recognised, however, that engaging staff in the first place can be a real barrier to participation. BT have worked hard to counter any negative perceptions from staff who may lack confidence in their abilities to participate, through a series of internal communication activities which seek to publicise the benefits of staff engagement. Over time, it also gets easier to recruit staff as they can see the benefits, particularly the skills development opportunities, for themselves.



Above: Work Inspiration students at BT.

Development opportunities in smaller firms

BT's engagement in Work Inspiration shows just how important it can be to have large firms leading the way and helping smaller companies within their supply chains to participate. Companies of all sizes have been found to benefit from offering work experience. In many smaller organisations, there may be relatively few opportunities to offer people management experience and according to one SME that responded to the BITC member survey, this is why Work Inspiration has proved beneficial to them:

"Employee development has been very positive, and all colleagues involved previously have committed to being part of the placements again. In a small firm, it is often hard to give people the chance to manage and train colleagues, and this is a great opportunity for that."

Improving employee retention

The investment in staff development can also be a way of increasing employee support for the company, thereby reducing staff turnover (Trebeck, 2007).⁶ One survey respondent indicated the programme can be a way of gathering information on staff interests and then responding to those interests more effectively in the future:

"... by increasing work experience we're working towards the development of staff who require a greater set of skills for line management etc. Also, it is good for workforce planning, knowing where the interest of the future talent is [and] how to develop them."

⁶ Trebeck, K., (2007) *Private sector contribution to regeneration: Concepts, actions and synergies*. Centre for Public Policy for Regions: Glasgow



Above: Work Inspiration at Geopost.



Above: Work Inspiration at Geopost.

— Making the most of the available opportunities

A case study from Geopost

Geopost is the UK parent brand for a range of courier companies. In an organisation like Geopost, where staff turnover in the head office is so low, the work experience programme has been particularly valuable in providing employees with a chance to improve their coaching and mentoring skills. For this reason, Work Inspiration has also been built into Geopost's management development programme.

David Poole, Director of HR & Training at Geopost, says: 'the thing that stands out in my mind is how quickly it's grown from humble beginnings.' When David joined the organisation three years ago, there was no centrally co-ordinated community interaction and this is something David and the team have turned around. Employees are equally positive about their participation in Work Inspiration and this is part of the reason why employees gave the communication strategy for the organisation an average score of 5.5 (out of a maximum of 6 points) in the most recent employee opinion survey.

2. Diversity and talent

Work experience and recruitment

When talking with Business in the Community members who have adopted Work Inspiration, it was clear that many members have seen this as a way to access potential employees from a more diverse range of backgrounds. Employers often recognise how important it is for their staff profile to mirror that of their local community and their customer base.

When given the right support, work experience programmes the world over have been shown to be effective ways for companies to recruit students directly from school. A study of work experience in Australia found over a third of students (36%) had been offered a job with the employer where they had undertaken their work experience (Smith, Dalton & Dolheguy, 2004).⁷

Work Inspiration and recruitment

Although it is too soon for many employers who have adopted Work Inspiration to say if it has helped them in terms of recruitment, some Business in the Community members reported that they have recruited apprentices and new staff members from their work experience intake:

“We initially offered Work Experience placements as part of our CSR, and to develop relationships with local schools. From our work experience programme we run in Luton, we have recently recruited 2 staff who had been previous placements.”

Employees recruited through work experience programmes have been found to be very well suited to their organisation – performing more effectively, requiring less training and demonstrating better respect for supervisors and a greater ability to work in teams (Hughes, Bailey and Mechur, 2001).⁸ In order to attract the best talent to their workforces, it is perhaps not surprising that many employers are now seeking to engage with young people before they even leave school. For one employer that has a younger than average recruitment age for new staff, this was extremely important:

“[Work Inspiration] helps us to raise awareness with young people of us as a local employer, we offer full and part-time jobs from age 16. The schemes we carry out enable us to identify early future employees in our field.”

⁷ Smith, P.J., J. Dalton and R. Dolheguy (2004). Student experiences of work placement in school-based vocational programs. *Education + Training* 46.5 pp. 262-268

⁸ Hughes, K., T. R. Bailey, M. J. Mechur (2001). *School-to-Work: Making a Difference in Education A Research Report to America*. Columbia University: New York

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Britain





Above: BITC facilitates a planning conversation with employers.

Social mobility and plugging skills gaps

Many employers reported how they use work experience to engage young people who may not have considered a job in their sector before:

“As a company we are trying to enthuse students into careers in engineering.”

“The placement individual(s) are able to discover an important aspect of the Financial Services industry (and the City of London) and found the insurance sector to [have] more attractive/challenging careers than imagined.”

“Given the diversity of the work inspiration participants and their feedback, we believe a wider cross section of young people will now consider [the organisation] and the communications/IT sector as a career choice. This increased from 1 in 10 pre-event to 7 in 10 post-event.”

“Many years ago we were approached by a 15 year old who had been told to find [her own] work experience place in the graphics field as her careers teacher had never heard of graphics. From there we recognised that we could put back into the community whilst identifying early talented youngsters who might be possible employees or even clients.”

“We are starting to see more students from disadvantaged backgrounds seriously consider a career in the legal profession. The downside is the funding for university is likely to make this now less likely as they are petrified of debt.”

(Quotes taken from survey responses).

As the last quote shows, the wider political and socio-economic contexts can be just as important in allowing companies to realise the full benefits of work experience as anything that they do as an organisation.

Another recent study from Australia complements this finding and shows that work experience – even when for very short placements – plays a crucial role in helping learners assess and act on their career options, especially for those who are in more academic programmes. 85.3% of participants said work experience had an effect on their career decision, with 44% saying it had made them seriously think about a career in that industry for the first time (Smith & Green, 2005).⁹

⁹ Smith, E. & A. Green (2005). *How workplace experiences while at school affect career pathways* National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide

Left: Stuart Rose in conversation

Engaging young women in the construction sector

A case study from Lakehouse

Lakehouse, a service provider specialising in social housing, education, health and public buildings, was motivated to adopt Work Inspiration by a desire to expand the company in a way that is consistent with its company values as a family and community orientated business. In staying true to these values, Lakehouse is seeking to diversify its workforce by encouraging more women to consider its sectors, particularly construction, as a future employment prospect. Work experience is seen as one way of opening the door.

Lakehouse has spent a significant amount of time investigating its approach to work education partnerships. Using findings from a number of evaluation exercises, Lakehouse has updated its programme, with one strand of activity focusing on how to share information and engage young people better via their website.

The employees who are recruited through work experience are described as the 'best of the bunch' by Lakehouse, and they have found that work experience placements work very well as an extended recruitment process, helping them to see the individual's key strengths and aptitudes. They have found that people who might not interview well in the first place, can do very well and mature during work experience. It also gives staff an opportunity to get to know the young people better and see if they would be a good fit for the organisation.



Right: Work Inspiration at Lakehouse.



Above: Work Inspiration at Channel 4.

- Finding regional talent

A case study from Channel 4

Like many media organisations, Channel 4 is located in and often heavily focused on London. So when it came to establishing Channel 4's 4Talent Programme, the company had to think about how it would attract a diverse range of people from across the UK to participate.

The organisation ran a series of 'Inspirational Days' around the country which sought to give young people a small insight into what it would be like to work at Channel 4. Young people are then encouraged to specify up to three departments in which they would like to work during the work experience application process.

One of the most important things about Work Inspiration for Channel 4 is how it encourages young people to understand the broad range of roles that they offer as an employer - it is not just about television presenting and camerawork. Often, young people see how roles in HR and marketing can offer just as many interesting and exciting opportunities and how these departments are vital support services to employers.

For many businesses in the UK, particularly professional services firms, the recent Milburn Report on social mobility and fair access to the professions was a call to action¹⁰. Several businesses involved in Work Inspiration spoke of the need to engage with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have comparatively little access to information on particular industries, and might have seen certain careers as an unrealistic option.

This study is by no means the first to document the role of good quality work experience in this regard. A recent report by the CBI (2010), for instance, found that for those working in science and technology (also termed STEM subjects), work experience was an opportunity to engage young people who would not have previously considered working or studying in that industry.¹¹

¹⁰ Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, chaired by the Rt. Hon Alan Milburn MP (2009). *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*. Cabinet Office: London.

¹¹ CBI, (2010). *Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills. Education and skills survey 2010*. Confederation of British Industry: London

Below: Work Inspiration at Channel 4.





Above: Eversheds Unlocked, Work Inspiration at legal firm Eversheds.

— Unlocking the legal profession

A case study from Eversheds

One of the biggest challenges the legal profession faces is raising awareness of the sector amongst young people from families with no history of university education. The profession generally 'isn't something that's top of mind for students from these backgrounds' says Margot King, Head of Corporate Responsibility & Diversity at international law firm Eversheds.

Eversheds sought to tackle this problem when it signed up to the Pathways to Law initiative with the College of Law and the Sutton Trust in 2008. As part of the initiative, the firm launched a work experience programme for A level students who were potential first time family members to go to university. At the time of writing, over 200 students have gone through the 'Eversheds Unlocked' programme.

'The programme aims to dispel the myths surrounding the legal profession,' says Margot. 'We bring in barristers and in-house counsel who have themselves come through a non-traditional route and are willing to share their own career paths and experiences.'

Once students have finished their placement, they can move on to a 'staying in touch' programme, in which they are paired with a mentor. This has enabled Eversheds to **keep track of the students** as they progress from education into training contracts.

42% of the first cohort of work experience students gained places at leading universities, while half of the first cohort also went on to study law. The company has taken these figures as clear evidence that they are raising interest, and Margot believes this is '**turning that [student] interest into action**'.

As the programme continues, Eversheds expects to continue tracking student destinations. 'The first cohort of students to participate in Eversheds Unlocked started university in 2009, so we hope to see some of them applying to begin training contracts with us or other law firms in 2012/13', says Margot.

3. Business Development

Work Inspiration and direct financial benefits

Very few businesses involved in Work Inspiration have attempted to measure the financial Return on Investment. Only 3.6% of businesses surveyed for this evaluation said financial benefit was a key reason for them offering work experience placements.

When asked to comment on Return on Investment to work experience, employer perspectives ranged from:

- Return on Investment is too difficult, perhaps even 'impossible' to measure accurately.
- Measurement would be of interest if guidance was offered by those who had succeeded - perhaps summed up as 'Please show me how'.
- Financial benefit is not an important driver for engagement - with some commenting that this is 'not what it's about'.

- These kinds of benefits will only become clear later on, a few years into the Work Inspiration programme, and it is still 'too early to tell'.

Despite this, the survey respondents indicated that **costs and resource demands are the main barrier/challenge to participation** (77.7%). Demonstrating the benefits, if not in clear financial terms, then at least in terms of improved opportunities and performance, is therefore important in widening engagement in work experience programmes.

Work Inspiration and the spill over business opportunities

Survey and interview responses from employers across a range of sectors did indicate that there is a relationship between work experience programmes and business gains. For many, these links were most obvious in how work experience helps to build **stronger relationships with suppliers, customers and clients**, and thereby opens up **new business opportunities**.

— Lakehouse Legacy and Work Inspiration: Building stronger relationships with clients and communities for a work experience win-win

Lakehouse's Legacy programme, of which Work Inspiration is part, has helped the firm win a string of awards, including the Building Awards Contractor of the Year in 2010. Lakehouse's experience in community engagement has also helped win new contracts with local authorities, schools and colleges, and has strengthened existing links with customers as well. 'We have been asked by customers to support them in achieving more work experience placements' says CSR manager, Jonathan Brookes. In Suffolk, for example, a new customer recently cited Lakehouse's social responsibility credentials as a deciding factor in selecting their bid.

Getting senior management involved has been crucial to the success of Lakehouse Legacy, and has helped the company make the most of the spill-over benefits that work experience offers. Chief Executive Steve Rawlings chairs the company's CSR board, at which Work Inspiration is a regular agenda item, and also meets each new work experience student. Rawlings also recently set up a project in Greenwich, in partnership with the local council and a local college, to offer 30 work experience placements on a live new build site. Within the partnership, the construction programme has been modified, with many processes slowed down to accommodate students and mitigate any risks.

It is clear to Lakehouse that involvement in work experience is primarily about 'staying true to the company's family values', but it has also helped them grow, and, by enhancing their relationships with customers, it has also given them a valuable competitive edge.



Above: Work Inspiration at Capgemini.

- Capgemini's client facing business model – Turning a work experience challenge into an opportunity for all

IT and business service consultancy, Capgemini, is client facing, and often conducts business off-site. This business model has presented the firm with a number of challenges in establishing Work Inspiration, and some valuable opportunities to inspire students, employees and clients as well.

The first, and most obvious challenge the company faced was **finding time and space**. To get round this, while also giving students a wide range of experiences, Capgemini put together a programme made up of:

- 'Entrepreneur for a Day' events where young people work to come up with solutions to real life business problems;
- Industry Insight days focussing on key Capgemini capabilities that employees showcase for students;
- Case studies for students;
- Structured work experience hosted by employees.

The programme has required **working closely with schools and others in Education Business Partnerships** to ensure the content is right. Capgemini's programme has also provided new ways to strengthen relationships with clients and partners while benefiting students. The Entrepreneur for a Day activities use real examples of Capgemini's work with clients and partners. The firm showcases business challenges from organisations that young people will have an affinity with, working through different business issues, from finance and research to project management and marketing.

'The students' ability to relate to the problem allows them to be creative in solving it' says Michelle Perkins, Engagement Director of Capgemini's Sustainability Team. 'It's a win/win/win because the young people get to see how business works, and Capgemini and our client/partner can **access different ways of thinking.**'

Capgemini have also found that Work Inspiration has helped strengthen bids for new work. 'Sustainability is a large part of many client bids now' says Michelle. 'Having very strong credentials is important, it might not win you the deal but often you can't compete without a good sustainability story... Work Inspiration is a key element of Capgemini's national approach. As we run it flexibly, we are able to offer clients/prospects the opportunity to work with us on Work Inspiration.'

In the future the firm hope to invite more partners and clients to collaborate with them through a more flexible and varied series of Industry Insight days.

4. Community Engagement

Raising awareness and building reputation

Almost 40% of Work Inspiration employers who responded to the survey said raising the profile of their organisation is an important reason for offering work experience placements. Raising the profile of a specific sector or profession was an equally common motive.

Raising awareness of organisational values, and building up brand

"We've always encouraged our restaurants to participate in their communities - that's a value stretching back over 50 years - so work experience is a logical thing for us to do."

Sue Husband, National Education Manager, McDonald's UK

Engaging and inspiring work experience programmes have enabled businesses across different sectors to establish themselves within local communities.

This positioning within local communities tends to form a key part of business values, and successful and sustainable business models for companies of all sizes. For McDonald's for example, each restaurant's mission is to be a part of its local community. Other employers reported similar goals in responding to the survey for this evaluation:

"Work placements allow us to engage with schools, pupils and parents supporting our brand profile and our local efforts to promote [the organisation] as a family retailer."

"Raising profile of our business and business sector in the local communities."

"Work experience helps us to connect and engage with the communities in which we trade - the young people, their parents, families and schools... It helps to raise awareness of us as a local trader and helps promote us as the local co-operative in their community."

(Quotes taken from survey respondents)

Employers also frequently cited the impact of involvement in work experience on **meeting, and exceeding public expectations, and staying true to company values**, as Richard Ellis, Group Head of CSR at Alliance Boots pointed out. 'There is an expectation that a company like Boots does these kind of things'. Another employer summed up the value of business involvement, as allowing the company **'to keep our family values as we grow'**.

Below: Stuart Rose launches the campaign in September 2009.



Engaging with younger audiences

In recent years, research has shown that the consumer power of young people, in particular under 16s, has grown faster than that of any other age group. This has led marketers to identify **three roles young people play** – as **'current consumers; influencers and future purchasers'** (Miller, 1998, p 316).¹²

Work experience has proven to be an effective and very direct way for businesses to get closer to this increasingly influential group – helping businesses better understand potential customers and building up brand awareness amongst them, and by extension, their families and peers.

The most effective programmes, however, have kept **marketing as a secondary objective** only, not letting it dictate the focus and approach of the actual work experience offered (Miller, 1998).

This is consistent with the successful Work Inspiration programmes considered here. Businesses are aware of the benefits to their brand, however, **the most successful way to achieve these benefits is through ensuring the integrity of the work experience programme.**

¹² Miller, A. (1998). Making education our business: lessons and issues. *Education + Training*, Vol. 40 Issue: 6/7, pp. 314 - 320

Below: Work Inspiration at McDonald's.
Right: What do young people want from their work experience?



Above: Work Inspiration at McDonald's.

- A case study from McDonald's

For a company that employs 10,000 new young people every year, Work Inspiration just makes sense for McDonald's. As Sue Husband, National Education Manager at McDonald's explained, work experience is often used as a 'taster' for those who may go on to later be employed by the restaurants, including future McDonald's apprentices.

Given McDonald's restaurants aim to be a well-established part of their local community, it is important that the staff working in McDonald's reflect their community. Work Inspiration is also a way to change any preconceptions young people, customers and the community might have about working for McDonald's.

McDonald's has found that the best way to manage work experience placements is to apply exactly the same principles to Work Inspiration as to the recruitment procedure for any other role in McDonald's. They use an online application process for work experience placements, just as they do when recruiting to all new roles. Equally, a young person participating in work experience undergoes a shortened version of the induction programme offered to new employees.

To continuously improve its work experience offer, McDonald's encourages young people to keep an online diary of their work experience and last year, participants of Work Inspiration were asked to help reshape the offer for future applicants.



DRESS APPROPRIATE FOR ENVIRONMENT

Be interested / work ethic

Be prepared

How can you provide impressions they make in an interview?
Depends on if it's given to you or not?
"can't be"



Next steps for Work Inspiration

Feedback and recommendations on the resources

It is clear from each phase of the evaluation that the three insights offered within Work Inspiration are valued highly by the majority of employers who have used them. 79.8% of employers felt that the Insights have improved the quality of work experience placements either 'a fair amount', or 'a great deal'. For example, BT found that Insight 1 'all about me' was particularly useful, and was 'the most valued'. Employers highlighted the positive aspects of each, and many also described ways they had improved on and adapted the Insights in their own programmes.

Insight 1 - All About Me

While businesses found the All About Me Insight 'very good', some did find it 'hard to use', suggesting it is perhaps more applicable to longer term placements, or students who were already familiar to the employer. Where programmes allowed for **earlier inductions, engagement with schools, and sufficient time for staff to prepare in advance**, integrating 'All About Me' seemed to be a more straightforward process. For the many businesses that have limited time to prepare, it was felt that a **'readers digest' of the Insight** would be helpful.

Insight 2 - A Look Behind The Scenes

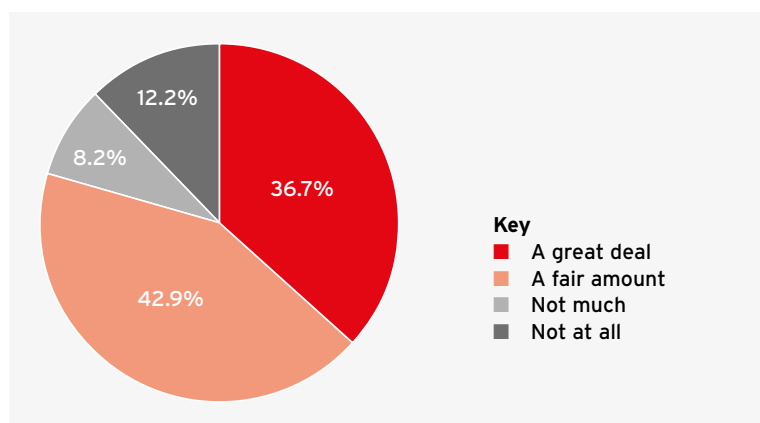
Employers frequently discussed the importance of raising awareness of the many different roles available in a business, making 'A Look Behind the Scenes' a popular exercise. A **whole project approach** was another popular and effective way of building up student understanding, offering them an engaging way of seeing a cross section of a business. One employer said 'having an over-arching task or project to work on during the week focuses them.' Some employers also pointed out the ways this exercise helped them to make efficient use of staff time by asking the students to design exercises, such as writing press releases, which can be reused.

Insight 3 - Careers Happen

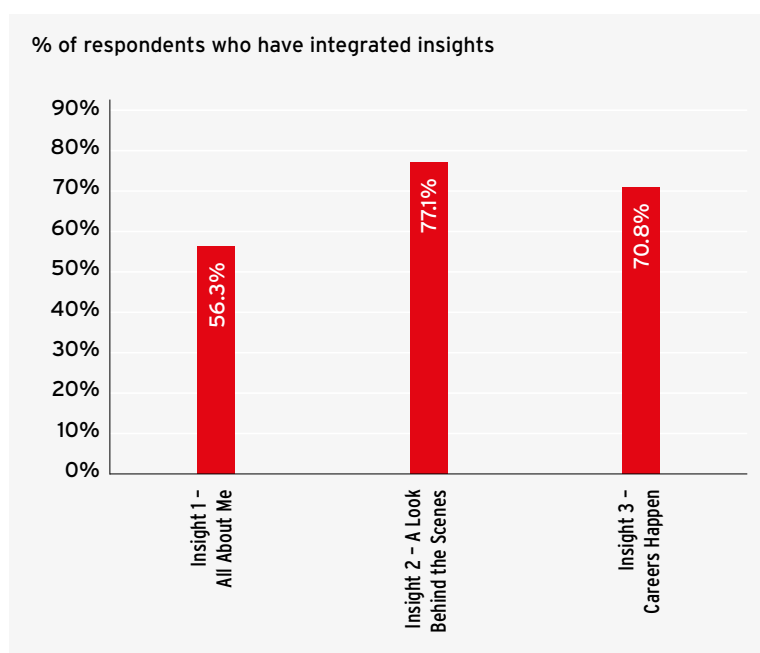
For some young people, producing the career boards suggested in Insight 3 could

prove challenging. BT got round this issue by getting students to make video diaries instead, with similar content - covering both their experiences and interviews with staff. BT were also one of several companies that sought to involve younger staff in helping with Work Inspiration, including graduate trainees and apprentices. This allowed employers to make the most of the opportunities for staff development, and also gave students someone closer to them in age to talk to, so, as one employer put it, 'the jump to working life does not seem such a leap.'

To what extent, if at all, did the insights improve the quality of the placement?



Have you integrated any of the insights into the work experience programme you offer? Please tell us below which of the insights you have adopted.



Feedback and recommendations on the wider roles for the Work Inspiration campaign

Several employers were keen to look in more detail at **employability skills and sustainability skills**. CV and job interview workshops were often used to wrap up placements, while sustainability exercises, such as tasking students with creating eco-friendly, or CSER guidelines for staff, had earned programmes positive feedback from all involved. More than one employer suggested employability or sustainability would be an interesting subject for any additional Insights.

In addition to the feedback on the Work Inspiration resources, employers identified three crucial roles that Work Inspiration filled, and that could perhaps be expanded on.

1. Supporting links between employers
2. Promoting the work experience agenda
3. Reaching smaller businesses

The first was **supporting links** between Work Inspiration employers and bringing new employers on board. Talking practically with fellow employers, and sharing experiences on Work Inspiration, has been a prominent feature of some of the most successful programmes, from the initial stages of planning in the business, right through to expansion into areas outside the business.

The second was **promoting the work experience agenda more widely, and establishing greater engagement with the general public, policy and education sector audiences**. There was a perception amongst some employers that government interest in work experience is waning, and that this undermines the long term prospects of good quality work experience programmes. Employers felt that the scale and the profile of the Work Inspiration campaign offers an opportunity to work with the Government, and ensure that the right policies are in place to support good quality work experience.

- Reaching Smaller Businesses

The vast majority of Work Inspiration placements are at larger businesses, however 59.8% of the private sector workforce is employed in Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). Smaller businesses face greater barriers to engaging in work experience programmes, and the challenges and opportunities around work experience in smaller businesses are different. CBI, for example, found that 39% of companies 'with 50-199 employees currently have no links with schools', compared to just '18% of companies with more than 5,000 employees' (CBI, 2010, p. 27). However, the benefits, from improving links with customers and suppliers, to attracting talent and developing staff, to raising company profile, all remain just as significant for SMEs, if not more so. Smaller businesses are also often very well positioned to offer students well coordinated placements that cover all aspects of the business.

'A federated model' developed within Work Inspiration has proved to be one effective way for addressing this, by using larger employers with established work experience programmes to lead work experience placements and to provide support, advice and encouragement to smaller neighbouring companies in their supply or customer chains.

Comparatively, there are fewer good examples of smaller businesses involved in work experience. Work Inspiration has attracted a number of smaller businesses who are really seeing the benefits of engaging with a younger workforce in terms of recruitment and addressing local or industry specific skills gaps. In order to engage more SMEs, greater promotion of SME specific good practice is needed, either by Work Inspiration or similar initiatives. The 'scaling down' of approaches used in larger businesses is unlikely to be sufficient on its own (Jenkins, 2006).¹³

¹³ Jenkins, H. (2006). Small Business Champions for Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics* (2006) 67:241-256

Next steps for policy makers and the education sector

Supporting Education and Business Partnerships

Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) were identified by many employers as playing a pivotal role in any successful work experience programme. Some employers, however, have highlighted concerns over the number of EBPs that have cut activities due to funding reductions. The same employers were also concerned that this could get worse with rising financial pressure on schools.

The businesses that work with several different EBPs also emphasised **major issues with bureaucracy**, having *'to go through exactly the same checks with different EBPs.'* This was also highlighted as a potentially serious barrier to SME involvement in work experience. *'A centralised system for clearance checks which all EBPs could reference'* was one frequent suggestion for cutting bureaucracy and avoiding duplication. Although some employers said that such links did exist between some EBPs, in practice these appear to be inconsistent, and held back by a lack of clarity.

Giving clear, consistent and timely information to employers

This was a clear recommendation that came out of the evaluation of Work Inspiration and it was recommended that policy makers could:

- Make clear the Government commitment to supporting good quality work experience.
- Place the emphasis on recognising work experience successes, rather than criticising failures.
- Encourage regulatory bodies to be proactive, rather than prohibitive, in allowing employers to offer work experience.
- Provide businesses with up to date information on tuition fees and other financial arrangements for further and higher education, to allow them to give appropriate advice and guidance to work experience students.

Promoting more flexible work experience arrangements

Employers often pointed to the narrow windows for work experience as a barrier to greater involvement. Where possible, greater consideration should be made in **allowing work experience placements, in their various forms, to take place at different points in the year** - and not just in line with school summer term.

Building on links between work experience and apprenticeships

Many of the businesses involved in Work Inspiration have demonstrated the immense potential of work experience in strengthening apprenticeship programmes. Placements can perform multiple functions, particularly as an extended recruitment process, early corporate inductions, and as part of apprentice development. Given the right support and guidance, work experience placements could provide the key to reaching the Government set target of 360,000 apprenticeship places in 2011, and 400,000 a year from 2014.¹⁴

Following through on the Wolf Review's recommendations

The recent Wolf Review of vocational education for 14 to 19 year olds recommended that the Government should investigate models of 'genuine' work experience for 16 to 18 year olds in full time education and consider how to reimburse employers for their time. The evidence gathered in this report strongly supports this recommendation. This report also provides the basis for similar considerations on the equally important issue of work experience for those aged 15 and 16 years old.

¹⁴ John Hayes, Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, speech at the unionlearn conference, London, 9 February 2011.

Right: John Heaps, Chairman of Eversheds LLP demonstrates his 'Careers Happen' board.



John Heaps
Chairman
Eversheds LLP

Top tips – for both new and existing employers adopting Work Inspiration

Planning the programme

- Work Inspiration works best when **Senior Managers are involved** and support the programme.
- **Agree the programme in advance** – a strong partnership between the school and the employer helps to achieve this. If possible, involve parents – it might be as simple as thinking about what you or your staff would want for your/their child when they participate in work experience.
- **Ask young people for their input** from the beginning so everyone has realistic expectations and you can match the needs of the student and the business. Short application and interview processes are a good idea to ensure young people are given the chance to input.
- Consider ways of **integrating the Work Inspiration Insights** into your programme. These can be planned early on as well as revisited throughout based on staff and student feedback.
- Get proper **health & safety and legal advice before offering Work Inspiration** – the burden may not be as onerous you think. Work experience can be flexible, and can take different forms.
- **Collaboration** is often the best way to overcome barriers, share best practice, and build up relationships that can prove valuable to the business.
- **Make best use of the resources you have** – e.g. booking placements in the quietest part of the year, using client sites instead of your own, adapting events for smaller venues, replicating exercises designed by certain staff with certain expertise, can all be useful methods.

Planning a placement

- **Plan the week/two weeks in detail** – it might seem a lot of work at first but this will help ensure any projected benefits can be realised.
- **Include an induction** at the start of the placement so everyone is clear on the plans.
- **Diversify tasks** for the work experience placement – make them interactive where possible and engage a wide number of business functions so there is new learning at all stages. This can also help to spread the load across the organisation.
- Decide whether to have one central point of contact, a team to share out responsibilities or an individual contact for each work experience person. Different contexts will require different arrangements – **do what works for you**.
- Ensure **all relevant staff are aware** that work experience students will be visiting and why.
- Examine ways to **link work experience to other recruitment and development programmes** (for example, apprenticeships, undergraduate and graduate traineeships, staff CPD and appraisals, etc).
- Some people recommend giving **Work Inspiration participants time together** and/or engaging younger staff members so the students on work experience do not feel overwhelmed. A similar approach might be achieved by giving them a buddy to work with.
- **Measure and evaluate** the experience to get a good sense of benefits/costs – this helps improve the programme over time and ensures continued senior buy-in.
- Try to make work experience **challenging and stretching** to young people. They will get more from it and so will you.

Right: Young person from the Edge Foundation at the campaign launch in September 2009.





Left: Work Inspiration at Alliance Boots: students in Nottingham with Alex Gourlay, Chief Executive, Health & Beauty Division, Alliance Boots.

Case study: Work Inspiration as a work in progress – Boots UK

How can work experience be made to work harder, delivering something of real value for employers and the employees of the future? Over the years, Boots UK has given placements to many thousands of students, so it's a question they've thought long and hard about. The company freely admits that it hasn't always come up with the right answers to this challenge. The varying results have in part been due to the expectations of both staff and students, which can at times be quite different. Students might imagine being general managers for the day, while staff expect an extra pair of hands to help with the more mundane jobs. With 2,500 stores all potentially offering work experience, Boots saw Work Inspiration as an ideal opportunity to develop new ways to make work experience relevant and worthwhile for everyone.

The biggest change, when adopting Work Inspiration, was a move from relying solely on 1-2-1 activities, to much larger group activities, having as many as 100 work experience students together. Under the new model, Boots provided a week long series of activities, for example developing and presenting ideas for a new sun cream, which gave students insights into the kinds of skills which might be needed in the world of work.

Feedback has been almost universally positive and, thanks largely to **an emphasis on preparation and support for employees**, Boots feels it is progressing well on a planned, continuous journey. The company will continue to incorporate feedback and use this to update and expand its offer. Boots is working towards making 'Work Inspiration the norm for work experience across the business', and is sharing best practice with other employers.

This was just one example of an employer's awareness that work experience programmes are, like many business activities, a constant work in progress. In an environment of continuous change, **the benefits of work experience to businesses appear to be greatest where programmes are continuously updated to ensure they are kept 'fresh and current'**.

Appendix 1

Evaluation background, aims, methodology

This evaluation was conducted by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD) in partnership with Business in the Community.

Aims

In order to raise the quantity and quality of work experience opportunities provided by businesses, this project looked to:

- clearly articulate and provide evidence of the business gain (especially skills gain) of offering innovative work placements.
- provide employers with practical guidance on improving their work experience offer for the benefit of the young person and the business.
- inspire other organisations through case studies.
- ensure that the 'Work Inspiration' campaign continues to be effective, maintaining momentum beyond 2011.

Methodology

There were three distinct phases in this research and evaluation.

Stage 1: Literature Review

In order to ascertain if there is any available evidence on the benefits, challenges and good practice for employers in offering work experience programmes to young people, CSD scanned the research available.

The initial inquiry looked for research published in the English language, both from the UK and overseas, after 2000 (to ensure its relevance to today) and that specifically looked at the employer perspective on work experience. Where a document was felt to be particularly relevant but was published prior to 2000, this has been included in the literature review. As was suspected, there is a lack of quantitative research specifically examining work experience from the employer point of view and so it was agreed that this report should aim to go some way towards filling that gap.

The literature review is available as an independent report, available on the Work Inspiration website - www.workinspiration.com and on CSD's website - www.skillsdevelopment.org.

Stage 2: Survey of Work Inspiration companies

Those organisations that have signed up to Work Inspiration were invited by Business in the Community to participate in an online qualitative survey. The survey asked employers to provide details of their work experience programmes, the successes and any lessons learned. 192 responses were received in total. The responses were made anonymous and then analysed and interpreted. The sample size was not large enough across different employer groups to produce any meaningful statistical data. The responses to the survey did, however, show major areas of impact, and quotes from the survey have been included in this report to illustrate the general findings.

Stage 3: Case studies of Work Inspiration companies

Following the survey, CSD interviewed some employers who have actively engaged in Work Inspiration in its first year. It was not possible to collect case studies from all participants in Work Inspiration and so eight companies, representing a broad range of industries, were interviewed.

These companies were Alliance Boots, BT, Capgemini, Channel 4, Eversheds, Geopost, Lakehouse and McDonald's. Interviews were conducted with those senior managers who have responsibility for Work Inspiration within their organisation.

The case studies were analysed, alongside the literature review and survey findings, for shared themes. Running through each strand of research, CSD identified the four key themes which are explored in this report.

Below: Richard Ellis and Alex Gourlay from Alliance Boots with a young person from Edge Learner Forum at the BT Tower 1st anniversary celebration September 2010.



For further information

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