101 LOW COST IDEAS

for brilliant schools engagement

Classroom Activities | Storytelling | School Guidelines | Careers Relationships

About

The world has changed, So must you. Across all industries, the businesses that are thriving are different to those just ten years ago – they are now more digital, more flexible, more inclusive, more accountable, more responsive to the norms and behaviours of their customers.

Young people coming through today's education system expect to join this world, not the one their parents joined years earlier. The pupils striking from school to raise awareness of the climate emergency won't be joining companies without clear, lived values and ethics.

For construction to move forward and secure some of this imminent talent, it's time to shake off the old thinking and get serious about our future.

The built environment matters. It has consequences. The things we build affect generations to come. Solving the mindset shortage and improving the built environment for all citizens are two sides of the same coin.

Schools need support and regular engagement from employers to deliver their careers education goals, so the opportunity for bright, ambitious, outspoken and impassioned construction representatives is yours for the taking.

This colliding of worlds - the structured and regulated careers guidance on one hand, and the need for modernisation and future-proofing on the part of the construction industry - provides the perfect storm. Don't let this opportunity to shape young minds pass you by.

I hope one or two of these ideas give you the inspiration you need.

Kathryn Lennon-Johnson

Founder of Built Environment Skills in Schools

Contents

01 PINPOINT

If you're serious about progress in schools engagement, you need to get honest about your organisation's internal commitments and objectives. Knowing what you want to achieve and how you want to get there makes everything else clearer.

02 PREPARE

The careers space is already packed with organisations, regulations and opportunities, and the smartest companies know that forming alliances with this inner circle is always the most efficient route to achieve tangible success.

03 PROMPT

When you get in front of your audience, what will you say? How will you say it? Will that be effective? How will you know?

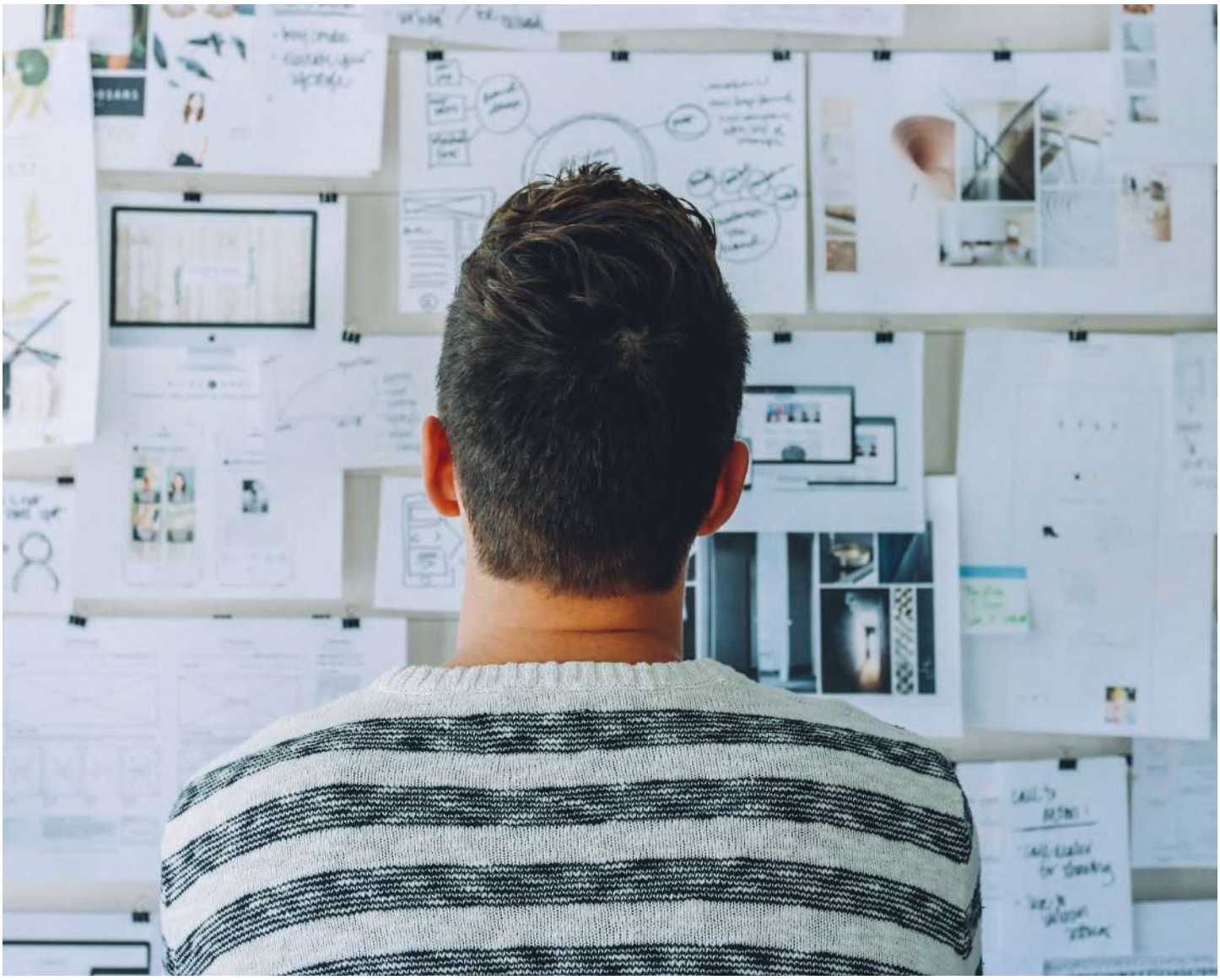
Understanding the world of educators and young people will help your schools engagement to thrive.

04 PROGRESS

Changing perceptions of the industry will only happen at scale, and it requires influence. Sharing and publishing your ideas and experiences increases your credibility and your perceived level of influence. You'll draw others to you like a beacon.

01 IDEAS TO HELP YOU PINPOINT

What do you want to achieve in your schools engagement? Do you have the time and resources to accomplish it? How can you summarise your expertise succinctly? What are the steps you need to take to get you closer to your goal?



Make It Strategic

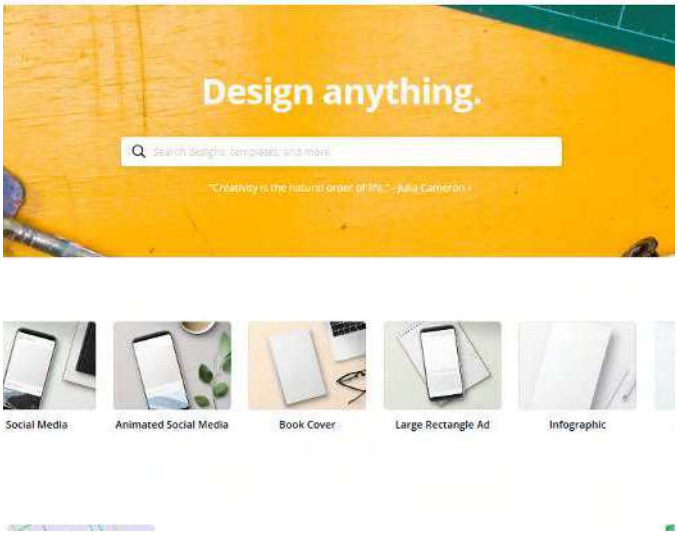
You've heard the old adage that we get what we measure, and when you make things strategic and planned rather than ad-hoc, you've got a much better chance of achieving the outcomes that you aim for. When you're looking at your schools engagement strategy, be clear on the budget and resources that you're committing to, and the staff time that you intend to make available. Make sure its realistic for your organisation, and that is enough to achieve the impact you want.

Get The Basics Right

Sometimes we're so keen to get started on the exciting stuff that we forget to get the basics right first. If a school visits your website, do they know how to contact the right people? In the right department? In the right office? Do students know where to direct their questions? Adding specific contact forms will help to make it really easy for them to quickly send a note straight to the right part of your organisation.

Create Your USP

If I was a teacher, why would I be inviting you in to talk to my students, as opposed to any other employer? Make sure you've got a compelling Unique Selling Point for your commitment to inspiring the next generation, before you start engaging with schools. How are you different? How do you bring your values and ethics to life? What technology do you use in your world, that could inspire young minds?



Brand It Up

If you are creating materials for schools, including promotional material, videos, posters and flyers, make sure that they're branded appropriately so students know who created them. That could be your overall corporate brand, or you could create a new brand specifically for your schools engagement and careers activity. It doesn't have to be expensive and it doesn't have to be complicated.

Which Problem Do You Solve?

Do you know what OFSTED look for when they go into a school to rate it? If not, make sure you brush up and understand what schools are measured on, and how you can help them with their inspection. OFSTED has a stated commitment to improving the lives of children, in particular the disadvantaged and vulnerable, and employers play a key role in creating aspiration for careers and qualifications.

Make Friends

On an average day, schools can get up to 90 emails offering them all sorts of careers-related activity and opportunities. Whilst they're really happy that you've chosen to contact them, and they're really grateful for any support you're offering, the reality is that if they don't already know you, they might not even get around to your email. Coordinating your approach with other businesses and organisations to create joint offers means you won't fall at this first hurdle.

The National Careers Strategy

At the end of 2017, the government published the National Careers Strategy, which sets out their ambitions and aspirations for careers activity across the UK as part of their commitment to improve social mobility. If you haven't already, download a copy today and make sure that you use it to help your school meet their requirements to deliver high-quality education, information, advice and guidance.

Give Your People The Skills

One of the most frustrating experiences for schools is committing to a talk or activity with an employer, and then finding that the person who arrives on the day has been volunteered at the last minute, and doesn't know the school, or the needs of the students, or the message they want to deliver. Training up your people in advance means that anyone who engages with schools has the necessary confidence and presentation skills.

Link To The Curriculum

The National Curriculum outlines the statutory secondary national curriculum, including programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects at key stages 3 and 4 – that is, secondary school. The National Curriculum document particularly highlights english, maths and science subjects. Whatever careers activity you're providing in schools, make sure it helps teachers to reach those attainment targets.

Add Audio To Your Website

You know your world, your discipline and your projects inside out, but you don't have to simply stick to the written word of blogs, press releases and articles. Adding audio to your website with something like Podbean, a podcasting platform, means you can interview your key people, talk to your project teams, get updates from your graduates and apprentices, and even profile your clients, in a way that engages visitors to your site, including teachers and students.

Unintended Consequences

Although the barriers to entry are very low in construction, and there are plenty of success stories of people joining the sector with no qualifications and rising to Chief Executive, teachers really struggle with this message when it comes to careers advice, particularly because students need to stay in education until they're 18. Make sure that you're talking about the aspirational, ambitious pathways into construction, and highlight the commitment to ongoing learning and training in the sector.

Offer Information Downloads

If you're creating great presentations to skill up and inspire your own graduates and apprentices, you can create valuable information for teachers who can translate your messages for their students. A site like Slideshare allows you to upload your presentations, share links with teachers, and give them the flexibility to download content as they need it for their own classes and careers guidance.

Named Internal Contacts

If I followed your company on social media, could I find the name and contact details of the person in your organisation who is responsible for handling school opportunities? Is it your HR department? Or your marketing department? Or an enthusiastic surveyor on the 3rd floor? Make sure that name is clear on your social media, on your press releases and on all the materials you produce for schools.

Warm Up The Cold Spots

In 2016, the Careers & Enterprise Company produced a report called Understanding the Career Cold Spots, and their analysis examined the areas in which young people are most likely to experience substantial barriers. The coldest areas – the ones with the highest numbers of barriers to careers - often have declining local industry and indicators of deprivation, including Free School Meals.

Presentation Skillz

Presenting to a room isn't everybody's idea of a good time, and presenting to a room full of young people can certainly bring its own challenges. If your team could do with a refresher, you can use a site like Highspeedtraining.com to access some low-cost CPD-accredited courses online, that your staff can use at their own pace. Rehearse your skills in team meetings to embed everything you learn.

Practice Your Lines

A wise colleague once told me that when you're public speaking, the distance between your brain and your mouth can be a thousand miles. What you think you want to say, and what actually comes out, can be totally different. Work with colleagues and friendly collaborators to develop and hone your messages, and practice saying them out loud until they're natural and comfortable.

Generate Ideas

Being too literal about the specifics of your work is often cited by teachers as one of their main disappointments when they hear from employers. Its hard for children to engage when they don't have the same frame of reference as you. Generating ideas internally with your team is a great way to challenge some of the technical terminology.

Brush Up Your Elevator Pitch

If you had two minutes to convince a teacher to consider you for part of the careers activity programme in their school, could you do it? Could you describe the benefits and the value that you bring? Could you explain how you'd engage the students, how you'd challenge their preconceptions, how you'd inspire them, how you'd provide activities and information they could use after you leave?

Understand Buyer Behaviour

When we're first exposed to an idea or a product, we experience a process known as buyer behaviour. Each stage in buyer behaviour allows us to assess and review the new thing against our own values and interpretation of ourselves, so we can decide whether we agree with it, whether it is right for us. Every student that you talk to is going through this process when they assess career choices, so make sure that you have the right information for each buyer stage.

Putting On The Ritz

Construction loves a black tie event! The annual calendar is full of lunches, dinners and award ceremonies, and sharing some of these celebrations with teachers and older students can help them to see how competitive and ambitious the construction sector is. It could even be appropriate to create specific events for younger students to celebrate their participation in challenges and competitions.

Record Your Thoughts

Its so easy to take for granted all the amazing things you do in a normal day that would be fascinating to young people as they look deeper into opportunities in construction. Capturing your thoughts and experiences as you go along could give you a bank of ideas and insights for careers activity. Doing this regularly with the voice memo recorder on your smartphone gives you mp3 files you could even add to your website or your presentations.

Explain " Why?"

You won't be surprised to know that many of the young people I talk to want to work for Google or Apple. They're not really so concerned about the job at this stage, they just want to be part of the vision. When we get hung up on the detail of job roles in construction, we're missing the opportunity to talk about the incredible products: the built environment.

Know Why It Matters

If your organisation is committed to schools engagement because of your CSR requirements, or because it helps you to win new projects then that's great. But it's so important to understand the impact you're having on children's lives. Young people worry about their future job prospects. They know about recessions and low social mobility, and they hear all the talk about Brexit impacts. Don't underestimate how important you are in shaping their future.

Understand Financial Metrics

Commitment to schools engagement takes time and resources and money. And the outcomes can be very long-term in delivering results for your own pipeline of skilled workers or the sector's overall skills shortage. Using a social value calculator allows you to measure and manage the financial contribution that your organisation and supply chain makes to society.

Sign Up For A MOOC

If you want to learn more about schools engagement at your own pace, you could sign up for a MOOC (massive open online course). The Built Environment Skills in Schools courses might be a good place to start, and you can learn about storytelling skills, embedding curriculum learning, choice architecture, generating ideas, developing your elevator pitch, and adapting your targeted student messages.

Measure The Non-Financials

Some of the success measures for corporate social responsibility are very soft and difficult to quantify. But that doesn't mean they're not there. Are your staff benefiting from the additional development opportunities from your schools engagement? Is your skills pipeline increasing? Are you working in collaboration with other businesses and organisations that can ultimately provide you with profile and credibility? Are schools starting to approach you?

A Marathon, Not A Sprint

Tackling the skills shortage in construction isn't a sprint. In fact, we've been running this marathon for over 25 years. Making sure that your plans and your commitment reflect the long-term approach needed to achieve change keeps us all focused on strategic outcomes, rather than jumping from one ad-hoc idea to the next. Show schools how serious you are about building ongoing relationships and giving your staff the training and resources they need to get results.

02 IDEAS TO HELP YOU PREPARE

Do you know who to contact to accelerate all your schools engagement efforts? How will you make contact with teachers? Are you clear on the regulations affecting careers guidance in schools? Do you know the difference between Free Schools and Multi-academy Trusts?

Be Clear On Costs

School budgets are always a consideration, and it's important to be clear on the costs to schools involved in any activity you want to deliver. This could be direct costs like subscriptions or entry tickets, or indirect costs like teacher time and use of school resources. If you're able to support schools with a contribution to travel, or lunch, or classroom resources, always make that clear.

Preparing A Phone Call

Preparing to make that first phone call to a school can be really quite intimidating, so make sure that you stack the deck in your favour. Consider the time of day, or time of the school year, that you're calling, and if you're calling for teachers or career guides, call after morning registration. Make sure that you call during term time, but try to avoid the busy times in the school calendar, particularly the first fortnight in September, the run-up to Christmas, around exams and the beginning of terms.

Support Primary Schools

This quote is taken from the National Careers Strategy document, and it highlights the positive impacts from supporting primary schools, including pupils finding out about a wider range of jobs, gaining role models, and committing to higher and further education. In addition, the primary school timetable can be more flexible than the timetable in secondary school, giving you more chance to engage.

Build Relationships

Like any business relationship, creating a strong understanding takes time and it doesn't happen in one conversation, but keeping in touch can become ad-hoc if it's not part of your planned activity. Newsletters, regular emails, blog posts and social media updates can help to keep teachers, colleagues, partner businesses and careers organisations informed and engaged about your activities in between the face-to-face conversations.

Schools Are Not Created Equal

Schools are not one homogeneous mass. They can vary in their governance, in their structure, in their finances, in the size of their classes, and in their ambitions for their students. When you're first looking to engage with a school, do some research in advance. You can find out more about them, including the number of free school meals they provide, their OFSTED reports and average GCSE grades.

Know Your School

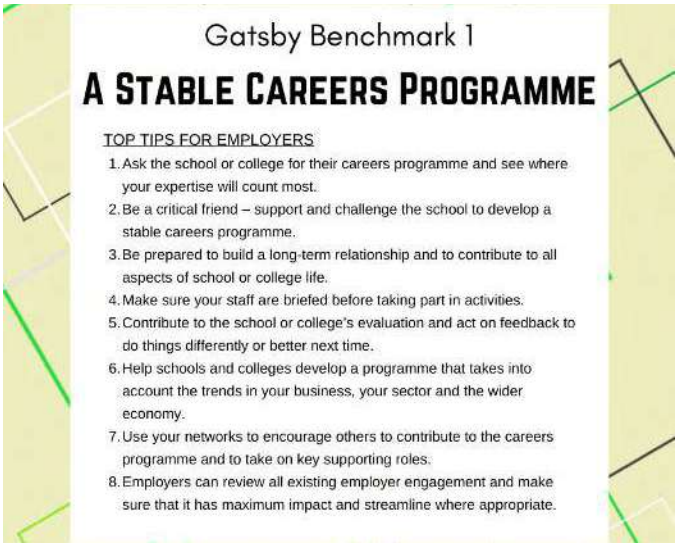
The school landscape has changed dramatically in recent years, and depending on the format of your school it could impact the curriculum they teach, the freedom they have over their finances, the way they select their pupils, and the governance they employ. Is it a state school? Free school? Multi-academy trust? Grammar school? UTC? Private school? Get to know your school so you can support them effectively.

Ask Them What They Need

You might be fizzing with ideas for the kind of fully conceived activity that you want to provide to schools, but talking to the teacher first will help you to develop an offer that works best for their students and their lesson plans. They can guide you on the kinds of activity they need, and on the best ways to engage their pupils including any promotional material to get children interested.

Choice Overload

Choice overload is a phenomena that paralyses us when trying to decide between seemingly equal possible choices. There are ways you can help pupils to overcome choice overload in careers decisions: reduce the overall options you discuss, or put the options into categories; make details vivid rather than vague or technical; and take the 'selling' process in small, bitesized steps. They don't need to pick a job this minute, so walk them through the stages.


Gatsby Benchmark 1

A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Ask the school or college for their careers programme and see where your expertise will count most.
2. Be a critical friend – support and challenge the school to develop a stable careers programme.
3. Be prepared to build a long-term relationship and to contribute to all aspects of school or college life.
4. Make sure your staff are briefed before taking part in activities.
5. Contribute to the school or college's evaluation and act on feedback to do things differently or better next time.
6. Help schools and colleges develop a programme that takes into account the trends in your business, your sector and the wider economy.
7. Use your networks to encourage others to contribute to the careers programme and to take on key supporting roles.
8. Employers can review all existing employer engagement and make sure that it has maximum impact and streamline where appropriate.

Gatsby Benchmark 1

The Gatsby benchmarks were created in 2013 as the good career guidance benchmarks, to establish what good looks like in careers. And in the recent National Careers Strategy, the government asked all schools to adopt and meet the eight benchmarks. Benchmark one says that all schools must provide a stable careers programme for every pupil, with support from local and national employers.

Meet With Teachers First

Teachers don't want to find out the messages you're giving their students at the same time as the students! They need to know first, and meeting with them builds trust and rapport in just the same way as it does with any business prospect. A simple site like Calendly.com allows you to block out occasional slots in your diary and make them available to teachers to book, for meetings or phone calls, without all the usual email toing-and-froing.

Communicate 7 Times

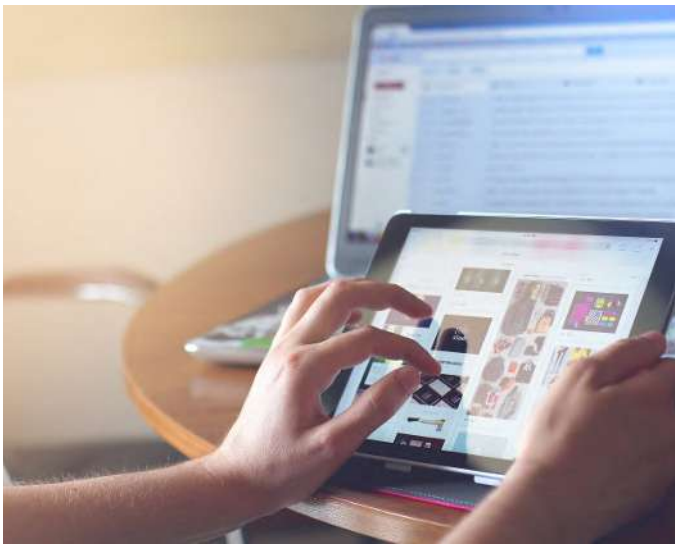
Seven is the magic number. That's the number of times it takes for someone to receive your message before it seeps into their consciousness. This is partly due to the amount of noise and information that we're exposed to all the time, and partly because our subconscious brain keeps us sane by filtering most things out without us even realising. To get your message through to students, you'll need to be visual, audible and kinaesthetic. Your messages will need to be spoken, written, implied and overt.

Offer A Pick 'n' Mix

Teachers need to provide a broad scope of activities and talks for their students, covering many different industries and sectors, and targeted to different groups of pupils. Classroom activities, enrichment events, careers fairs, digital broadcasts, site visits, speed networking, interview skills coaching, curriculum content, pop-up lunchtime stalls, or school competitions could be the perfect format for your school. Try to be flexible with your activity format, and collaborate with other businesses to create something really impactful.

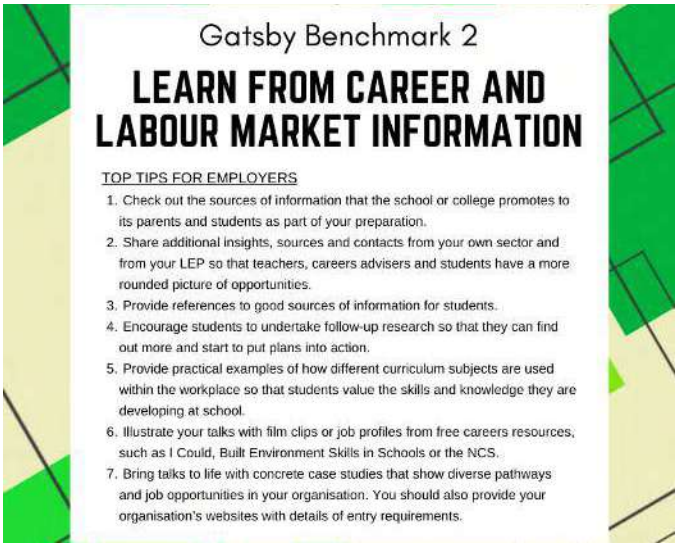
Venture Far And Wide

Schools that get the least support and engagement from employers include rural schools and schools for students with special educational needs. These children can lack careers experiences with businesses, and as a result they have a higher risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) and they are more likely earn less than their peer-group average for the same role.



What Do Teachers See?

When a teacher wants to find out about your organisation, they head straight to the internet and type you into a search engine. What will they find about your careers activity? Or your commitment to the next generation? Or your views on vocational qualifications? Or the classroom materials you've created? Can they read case studies? Or reports? Or press releases? Is there an information area you've created especially for teachers?



Gatsby Benchmark 2

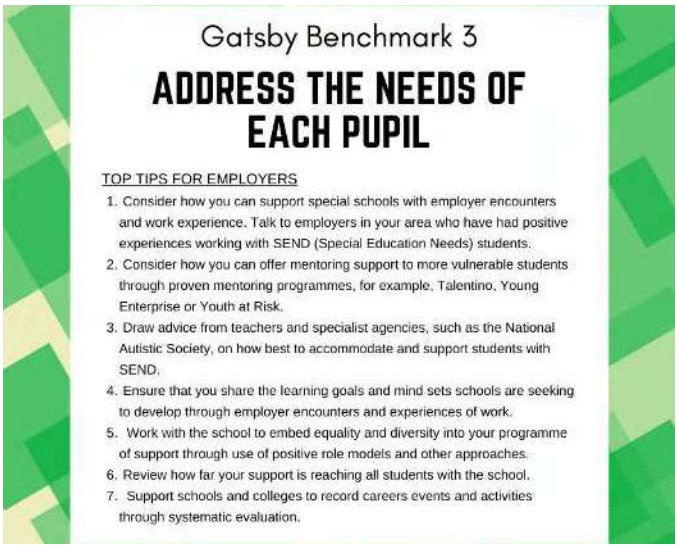
LEARN FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Check out the sources of information that the school or college promotes to its parents and students as part of your preparation.
2. Share additional insights, sources and contacts from your own sector and from your LEP so that teachers, careers advisers and students have a more rounded picture of opportunities.
3. Provide references to good sources of information for students.
4. Encourage students to undertake follow-up research so that they can find out more and start to put plans into action.
5. Provide practical examples of how different curriculum subjects are used within the workplace so that students value the skills and knowledge they are developing at school.
6. Illustrate your talks with film clips or job profiles from free careers resources, such as I Could, Built Environment Skills in Schools or the NCS.
7. Bring talks to life with concrete case studies that show diverse pathways and job opportunities in your organisation. You should also provide your organisation's websites with details of entry requirements.

Gatsby Benchmark 2

Many children will be interested in particular careers because of film and TV, or through family members, but if those jobs don't exist in the local area any more, or if they aren't actually the way they're portrayed on screen, teachers need to be able to provide factual and up-to-date information. Understanding salaries, entry requirements, or similar related roles can really help teachers to provide the right advice.



Gatsby Benchmark 3

ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF EACH PUPIL

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

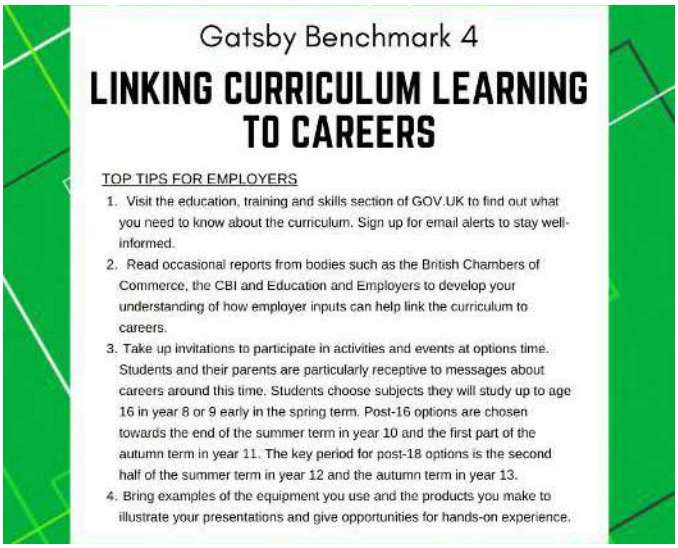
1. Consider how you can support special schools with employer encounters and work experience. Talk to employers in your area who have had positive experiences working with SEND (Special Education Needs) students.
2. Consider how you can offer mentoring support to more vulnerable students through proven mentoring programmes, for example, Talentino, Young Enterprise or Youth at Risk.
3. Draw advice from teachers and specialist agencies, such as the National Autistic Society, on how best to accommodate and support students with SEND.
4. Ensure that you share the learning goals and mind sets schools are seeking to develop through employer encounters and experiences of work.
5. Work with the school to embed equality and diversity into your programme of support through use of positive role models and other approaches.
6. Review how far your support is reaching all students with the school.
7. Support schools and colleges to record careers events and activities through systematic evaluation.

Gatsby Benchmark 3

Gatsby benchmark 3 notes that students have different career guidance needs at different stages in their education. Schools must tailor opportunities for advice and support, and you can help them to do that by considering the particular segment of students that your message could suit best, whether that's the scientists and mathematicians, the historians, the world-changers, the creatives, the entrepreneurs, the active outdoors types.

Post-16 Options

Just as secondary schools have changed in their structure and curriculum, so have the post-16 options for young people. Students can opt for many different routes including traditional A-levels, or new ones like baccalaureates, vocational courses like NVQs and BTECs, and in-work training like apprenticeships and traineeships. What paths did your staff follow, and what will you require of your future workforce?

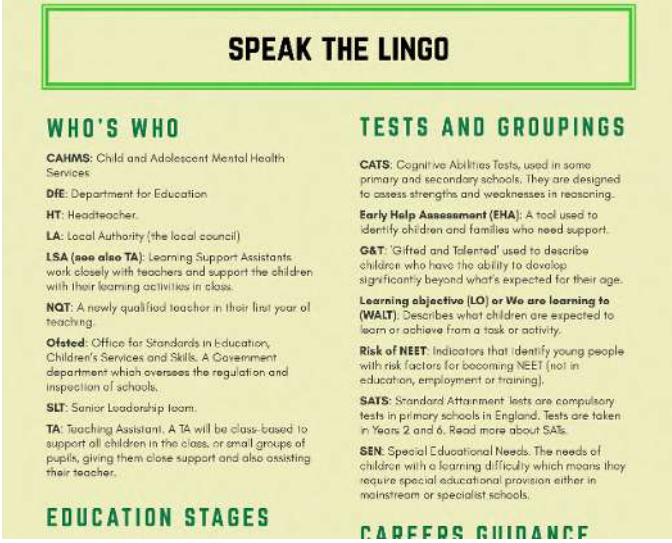


Gatsby Benchmark 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers really is the holy grail of schools engagement. Anything and everything you can do to help teachers deliver this will start to bridge the gap between education and employment. STEM subjects are a particular focus, and construction lends itself to maths, physics and engineering so its essential that you consider the school lessons that link to any activities or challenges you deliver with schools.

Educate The Educators

Very often, teachers won't have come from the same background as you – they won't understand your expertise, or your qualifications, or the structure of your organisation. Educate the educators about the importance of the built environment, the way it helps individuals and communities, the way it creates safe cities, the way it moves commuters and visitors. Engaging teachers is so often overlooked.



Speak The Language

Construction has it's own language of abbreviations and terminology, and so does education. Understanding these is a big part of acknowledging and respecting another sector because you speak their language. Instantly sound like you belong with this handy guide to the most common abbreviations and acronyms.

Gatsby Benchmark 5

ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Promote encounters as an exciting new staff development opportunity and a way of aiding retention, increasing motivation and attracting new recruits.
2. Build links with local schools and colleges and be prepared to reach out to both special and mainstream schools. Being rooted in local communities helps enhance your business reputation and diversifies your talent pool.
3. Ensure the role models and staff you deploy are well briefed and encourage interest and achievement from the broadest range of students.
4. Ensure consideration is given to what the students want to learn and the teaching activities that will best meet these.
5. Develop a shared approach with the school to plan and judge the general effectiveness of the encounters.
6. Explore ways in which both the teachers and students can benefit from the encounters.
7. See this as a long-term investment. Building relationships with local schools and colleges will help deliver sustainable high-impact programmes.

Gatsby Benchmark 5

Gatsby benchmark 5 highlights the importance of encounters with employers and employees. Every student should have multiple opportunities to meet employers and employees from a diverse range of industry sectors – in fact, the Careers & Enterprise company has evidenced that 4 or more high quality employer encounters during a student's time in education reduces their chance of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) by 86%.

Tricky Questions

If you've done schools engagement before, you know that pupils can ask some really tricky questions! Although they might make you feel awkward, or embarrassed, or uncomfortable, this information is the only way that children can start to differentiate between the hundreds of different roles and careers that are being presented to them, and make decisions about their future. The best way to help them is to prepare and rehearse your answers in advance to get comfortable with what you'll say – and if you can't anticipate their questions, ask colleagues what they've faced.

Share Curriculum Videos

It would be hard to overemphasise how valuable curriculum-related videos are to teachers. Videos should be a maximum of three minutes long, and they should only cover one idea or thought or issue per video. Use the same information that you've developed to link curriculum learning to careers, and demonstrate how one part of your work or your expertise requires knowledge from a school subject.

Gatsby Benchmark 6

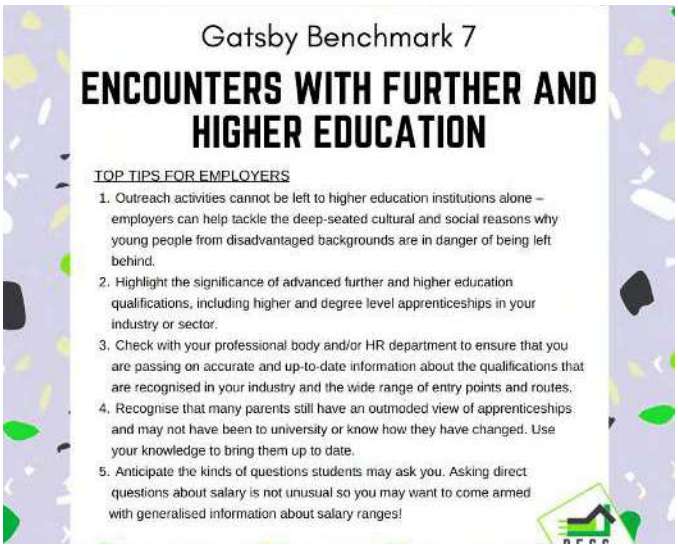
EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Schools must decide whether adults working with pre-16 work experience students need to be vetted by the Disclosure Barring Service.
2. Set open-ended and real-life projects to inspire students and develop their enterprise and problem-solving capabilities.
3. Formulate a policy for your organisation around the links you want to have with schools and colleges. It should explain the business and philanthropic case for having links, such as social responsibility and brining on the next generation, and enable you to prioritise your use of resources.
4. See your organisation's links with schools and colleges as a training and development opportunity for your staff, especially for newly-appointed staff who can learn valuable skills while supervising students.
5. Participate in local collaborative networks such as the local enterprise partnership, local chamber of commerce, Rotary or similar grouping to co-ordinate and plan links with schools and colleges.
6. Explore different work experience models and get accredited with the Fair Train work experience quality standard for employers.

Gatsby Benchmark 6

Although construction sites can be dangerous and inaccessible, workplace locations that we might take for granted can provide a valuable insight to students. Do you visit your local planning office, or a client's facility? What about a completed project, or a site in the very early stages? Do you have partner businesses with unusual or aspirational offices?



Gatsby Benchmark 7

ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

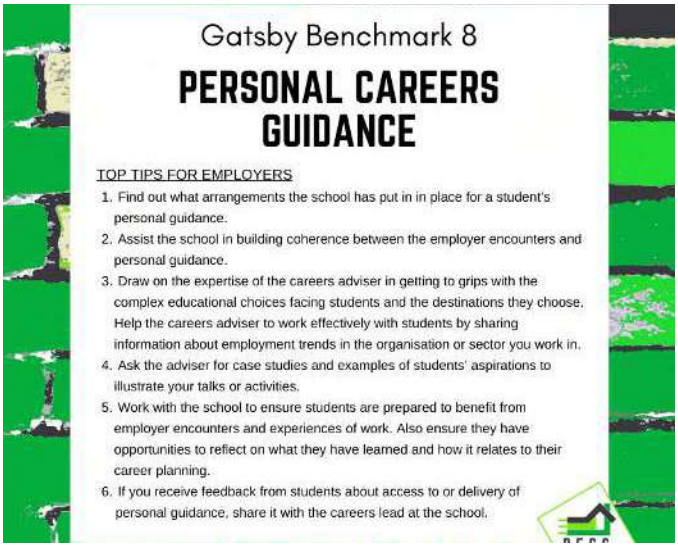
1. Outreach activities cannot be left to higher education institutions alone – employers can help tackle the deep-seated cultural and social reasons why young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are in danger of being left behind.
2. Highlight the significance of advanced further and higher education qualifications, including higher and degree level apprenticeships in your industry or sector.
3. Check with your professional body and/or HR department to ensure that you are passing on accurate and up-to-date information about the qualifications that are recognised in your industry and the wide range of entry points and routes.
4. Recognise that many parents still have an outmoded view of apprenticeships and may not have been to university or know how they have changed. Use your knowledge to bring them up to date.
5. Anticipate the kinds of questions students may ask you. Asking direct questions about salary is not unusual so you may want to come armed with generalised information about salary ranges!

Gatsby Benchmark 7

All students must now be given the opportunity to understand the full range of learning opportunities available to them in further or higher education. You can help schools by highlighting the education routes that your own employees have taken, and by explaining the academic or vocational qualifications you will be looking for in your future workforce. Also highlight qualifications endorsed by your trade body.

Be Conscious of Timescales

Most schools are planning activities and timetables for the next academic year. Although there may be opportunities to deliver something last-minute with a school in this academic year, it is always wise to think further ahead and give teachers plenty of notice. As a general rule of thumb, you should offer a clear term between your approach and the date of the activity, but keep the option to be flexible if schools show an interest in bringing things forward.



Gatsby Benchmark 8

PERSONAL CAREERS GUIDANCE

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Find out what arrangements the school has put in in place for a student's personal guidance.
2. Assist the school in building coherence between the employer encounters and personal guidance.
3. Draw on the expertise of the careers adviser in getting to grips with the complex educational choices facing students and the destinations they choose. Help the careers adviser to work effectively with students by sharing information about employment trends in the organisation or sector you work in.
4. Ask the adviser for case studies and examples of students' aspirations to illustrate your talks or activities.
5. Work with the school to ensure students are prepared to benefit from employer encounters and experiences of work. Also ensure they have opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how it relates to their career planning.
6. If you receive feedback from students about access to or delivery of personal guidance, share it with the careers lead at the school.

Gatsby Benchmark 8

All schools are required to have an identified Careers Lead in place with the energy and commitment to deliver the careers programme across all eight Gatsby Benchmarks. Careers Leads need the help and support of employers to understand the local labour market, career pathways, and salary expectations for their students, so do your homework and give them the information they need.

Be Where They Are

Having a website is just the beginning of your online presence when it comes to schools. Be where they are, be part of the conversations they're having about careers and qualifications, and partner with other organisations to promote, like and share each other's content. As a foundation, you should have a presence on LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Consider Social Mobility

A recent CIOB report into social mobility and the construction sector highlighted that social mobility in the UK is at its lowest level for 40 years. Students are aware of this, and they know that their job prospects are different to their parent's and grandparent's. Construction is fairly unique in that it provides opportunities for every background and attainment level, but also because it is the sector that creates the very infrastructure of housing and transport.

Create Teacher Briefings

A simple briefing for teachers about the kind of activity you're going to provide, the Key Stage it relates to, the parts of the curriculum it supports, and the Gatsby benchmarks it helps to deliver will bump you straight to the top of the Christmas card list! It also means that your commitment of time and effort doesn't get forgotten over the passage of time – teachers can refer back to the briefing and refresh their memory.

03 IDEAS TO HELP YOU PROMPT

Can you spin a good story and take children on an adventure of heroes and villains in construction? Do you know why local context matters in your presentations? How do you handle those tricky questions from students? Which piece of built environment is guaranteed to resonate with pupils?

Join The A-Team

There is plenty happening in the careers space between employers and educators, and one of the fastest ways to shortcut your schools engagement learning curve is to partner with others and use their networks and expertise. Make yourself known to your regional Enterprise Coordinators, the National Careers Service, Prospects, and your Chamber of Commerce or Local Enterprise Partnership.

Build A Referral System

We've all got day jobs we need to focus on, and not every school opportunity is going to be right for you. Having a proper referral system in place means that you can pass opportunities onto other businesses and they can do the same for you, without risking any opportunities falling between the gaps. You could try Salesforce.com or a simple spreadsheet.

Remember The Context

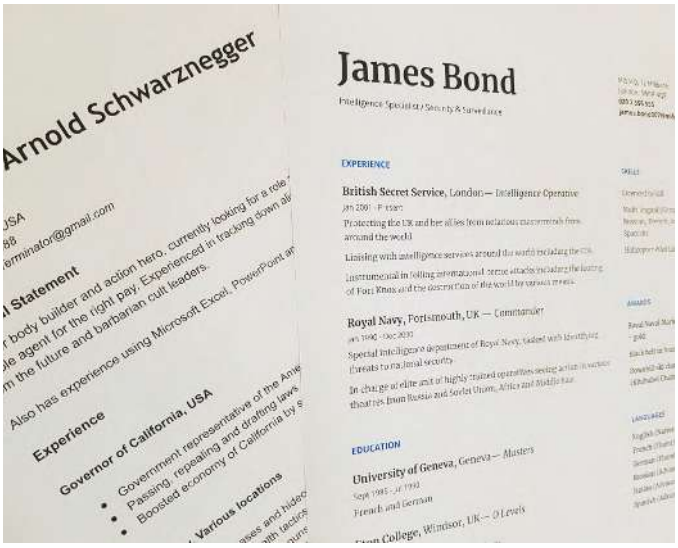
Children are trying to make big choices about their futures, often based on limited information. Their understanding of the world will be different from yours, so try to put yourself in their place. And remember that pupils will also be getting careers presentations from other sectors like banking and finance, who might have a completely different take on high wages, bonuses or employee benefits.

Use The School As A Canvas

The spectrum of work in construction is broad and daunting to an outsider. Just because its something you do all day, be careful that you pitch the information at the right level. The average reading age in the UK is 9, and concepts should be described for children younger than those you're presenting to. If you can use the building they spend hours in every day it helps to embed your information, and makes it more vivid for children who learn kinaesthetically.

Be Daring, Be Different

When you get the opportunity to engage with school children, don't waste it by being bland, or forgettable, or overly-complicated. Make sure that your engagement is a good use of their time and yours, by delivering something memorable and impactful. After you've gone back to the office, what do you want students to remember about your presentation or activity?



Tell Me About Your Strengths

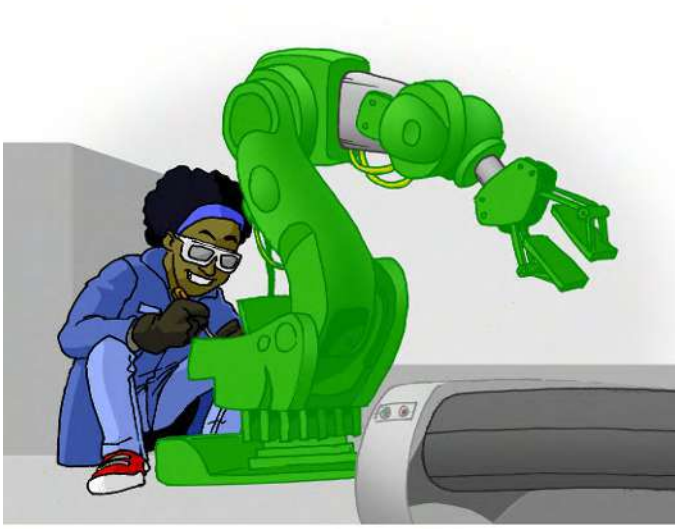
If you're not quite ready to present your life story to 60 pupils, or create your own classroom challenges, there are still ways that your knowledge and experience can be invaluable to schools. CV-writing workshops and mock-interview panels are a great way for students to practice for the real thing in a safe, supportive environment.

Tell Good Stories

Storytelling is one of the most powerful human skills, and we've perfected it over centuries. By telling stories you create an emotional connection with your audience, allowing them to understand and experience the world you're creating. When you present, always try to tell stories that give students an understanding of the whys and the hows, not just the whats. Add a hero and a villain, an unexpected twist, a sense of urgency,

Host An Open Day

Workplaces are an exciting unknown for many children, so let them come in and experience your world. Let them sit at a desk, or walk around your boardroom, or visit your staff restaurant. If you host an open day, it's also a great opportunity to showcase details of your projects, and you might be surprised by the uptake from schools. Make sure that you provide transport and hot food if possible.



Technical Wizardry

The majority of schoolchildren are digital natives and they instinctively understand technology. Remember that any construction technology you showcase isn't the story by itself, its just the hook to get attention and engagement. Make sure you talk about the curriculum subjects that the technology uses, and the skills required to interpret the software or outputs.

Keep It Local

Some children never travel further than 5 miles from their family home during their time in education, so their understanding of major cities, landmarks and transport networks may be limited. It's really important to localise your message to streets and landmarks that they recognise, particularly around their school, if you want to stay relevant to them.

Buddy Up On Work Experience

Work experience is a perennial and effective way for students to learn more about the world of work. It's also a difficult and time-consuming activity for employers, and a maze of red-tape and legalities for schools if the pupils are under 16. If you offer work experience, make sure you tell schools clearly what's available so they're aware of it well in advance.

Endorse Someone Else

Who do you know that's doing great things in careers engagement and inspiring the next generation of construction? Who's always at careers fairs and assembly talks? Who's come up with innovative ways to inspire pupils? Who's supporting teachers and creating fantastic curriculum content? Then give them a shout-out. Let them know you respect and admire their commitment, and you take their efforts as seriously as they do.

Stand For Something

Bland and beige just won't cut it when it comes to careers guidance for Generation Z. Have an opinion – speak up about the future of homes and an ageing population. Or automation and robotics. Or the circular economy and environmental responsibilities. Or renewable energy. Or diversity and mental health in the construction workforce. Tell students about the challenges we face, and the opportunities it provides for them to become part of the solution.

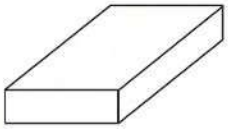
Remote Engagement

Project targets and deadlines. Meetings. Reports for your boss. Family. Hobbies. The pressure on your time is no laughing matter. And teachers are in much the same situation. Often physically travelling to and from meetings can take up a disproportionate amount of time. By using a virtual meeting platform like Zoom.com, you can keep in regular touch with teachers, and you can even present to students without ever leaving your desk.

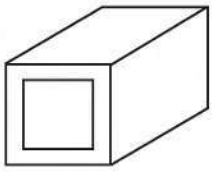
BRIDGE BUILDING - Bridges are made of all kinds of **materials**, wood, stone, steel, bamboo or concrete. The best material is the one that is cheaply available, and which will perform its required function.

The simplest bridge is a plank that spans the distance to be crossed. A box girder bridge is made from a long beam in a box shape instead of simply a plank, and the box shape makes the beam much stiffer.

Bridge



Plank



Box girder

Fillet weld

Welding your chocolate box girder bridge

You can use welding to make a chocolate box girder bridge from single bars. The heat source we use is hot water (from a kettle) in a bottle.

1. Hold the edges of your chocolate bars against the bottle of hot water until they melt slightly.
2. Press the melted edges together in a right angle, and leave to cool. This is half the box section. Make another half-section in the same way.
3. When the half sections have cooled, melt the remaining long edges and press them together to form the box section. Leave to cool for at least

Keep Yourself Informed

Have you seen the latest classroom activities from the trade and professional bodies in construction? You don't have to reinvent the wheel, and their information might spark ideas for you to adapt and tailor the activities to your organisation or to your school. Get onto the websites of STEM, the CIOB, BESS, GoConstruct and others, and download all their ready-made activities and student handouts.

GIVE AN HOUR

...MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Give Your Support

Construction has many, many professional and trade bodies, covering every conceivable skill and discipline. And pretty much all of them have an ambassador programme or a mentor scheme. These have the distinct advantage of strength in numbers and consistency of schools engagement. Give them your support, and help schools by representing your discipline as well as your organisation.

Talk About Others

As a sector, construction is a holistic ecosystem – we all rely on others to provide their expertise before and after us in the process. We depend on materials, and products, and software, and innovations, all of which were created by someone at some point. When you talk to students about your own work, remember to give it context by talking about these other things that allow you to play your part.

Share The Stage

One of the easiest and simplest ways to overcome reluctance for schools engagement in your colleagues and acquaintances is to take them with you when you visit a school. They're not in the hot-seat, but they can experience what's involved in effective schools engagement. Look at the pile of business cards you picked up at your last networking event, and extend the invitation to a couple of them.

Don't Know Is OK

Being asked a question that you can't answer can strike fear in your heart. Saying you don't know is OK. Sometimes their questions might move the conversation too far away from your topic, or they might cause you to speculate to get answers, or they might simply be details of disciplines you aren't sure about. What a great reason to pick up the phone to another business and encourage them to support the school and pick up the conversation.

04 IDEAS TO HELP YOU PROGRESS

What happens when your presentation is finished and you're back at your desk? Which of the existing ambassador programmes and mentor schemes in the industry have you committed to support? How do you share your experiences and insights to inspire other businesses to follow your lead?

Spread The Word

Construction has a long way to go when it comes to employers engaging with schools. In fact, CITB estimate that only 10% of companies commit to careers outreach. So whenever you engage with schools, make sure you capture your experiences – not just the highs and the successes, but also the lows and the learning curves – and share those with other businesses. With your colleagues, your friends, your boss, and your employees. Adding your stories to your website, or newsletter, or social media, could help to inspire and inform the other 90% of shy employers.

Become An Enterprise Advisor

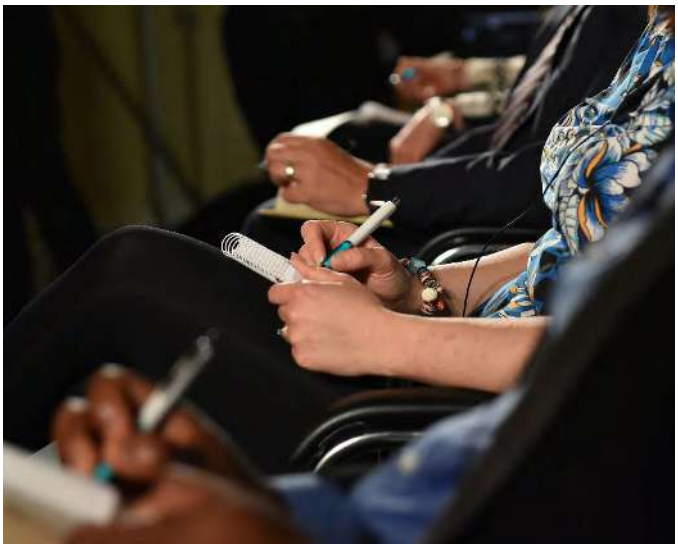
Over 2000 volunteers from industry are currently partnered with schools, working as Enterprise Advisors. This role involves supporting the senior leadership team of a school with their careers strategy, providing a commercially-minded eye to careers spend, and connecting the school to the volunteer's network of colleagues and businesses. By becoming an Enterprise Advisor, you could also work closely with a local school to promote opportunities in the construction sector and help inspire the next generation through your strategic advice.

Happy Teachers Give Gold Stars

Just like everybody else, teachers like to read recommendations from people who are like them. But they may not know anything about your organisation, so whenever you've done any schools engagement, try to collect quotes and testimonials from the teachers so that you can share your good news stories with your new 'prospects'.

Tell Others About Your Work

Commercial business development and schools engagement really aren't that different as processes. When you get out and network, make sure that you're talking about the schools engagement work that you do. Share your good news with other businesses, and promote your commitment to inspiring the next generation of your discipline or specialism. You never know where these great conversations could lead.



Host A Seminar

If you're ready to start championing the work you do in schools engagement, and learning from other organisations, it could be time to start attending or hosting seminars. One of the easiest sites to find out about opportunities, and promote your own events, is Eventbrite where you can share details of your events, manage attendee lists, distribute emails and book yourself directly onto events hosted by others.

Be Part Of A Competition

The current education landscape is full of competitions and awards, taking place in schools up and down the country. Starting your own competition from scratch can be an investment of time and resources, but even with a more modest budget you can still be involved and spread the word about careers in construction. Add a theme or a challenge to someone else's existing award or commit to become part of the judging panel.

What Happens Next?

Don't be a one-hit wonder! Once you've been into schools and run an activity, make sure you leave behind lots of information for those who are interested, or shy, or who still have more questions. This information could take the shape of videos on your YouTube channel, posters or flyers that go into more detail about your presentation, or classroom activities for teachers to run at a later date.

Become A Media Darling

Pick up any of the myriad of construction industry publications, and you'll find at least one article about the skills shortage. It's time to move on to stories that feature solutions and strategies, partnerships and collaborations. You can become a media spokesperson by having an clear opinion, being outspoken, and sharing your experiences. The construction media will know that they can come to you for comment on careers-related stories.

Give Away Your Secrets

What sets you apart in construction? What tips and tricks has your business developed over the years to get the best results for your clients? Is it the way you train and support your staff; the fantastic software you use; your rare and valuable skills; or the partnerships you have with other like-minded businesses? Talk to students about how you fit into the whole story.

Get Your Name In Print

If you fancy sharing your experiences, your knowledge, and your expertise with other employers or teachers or clients, you can create professional looking reports quickly with a website like Lucidpress. You don't even need to be much of a graphic designer – just put your words into one of their templates, and your reports could be paving the way for others to commit to careers guidance and schools engagement.

Post-Match Analysis

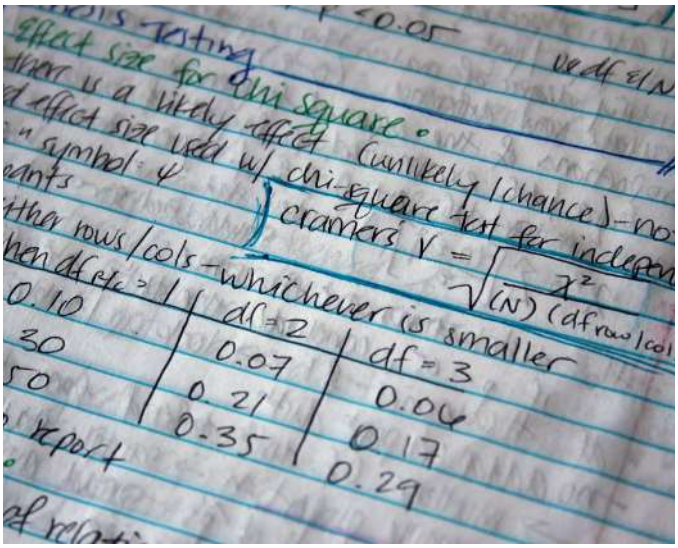
You've collected all your feedback from teachers and students, so now its time to do some internal reflection too. What age group and demographic were you talking to? What responses did you get? Did you make all the points you wanted to make? Did you find you assumed the knowledge that pupils might have about the world around them? Were you surprised by anything? Could you answer all their questions? Asking yourself questions like these can help you with constant improvement in your schools engagement.

Construction, Assemble!

I bet you know some fantastic businesses! The clients you build for, the professional advisers you work with, the specialist disciplines that own their niche. Forming alliances with them and delivering careers activity together not only tells a better story for pupils, it will be so much more fun for you.

Write A Book

When you've worked on a fantastic project or been part of an amazing initiative, don't save the glossy promotion just for commercial prospects. Publishing a book with Lulu.com gives you the opportunity to pull together photographs, quotes, interviews with staff, stories, and information that you can leave with schools for students to refer to and absorb and at their own speed.



Track Your Progress

You've committed to the impacts and outcomes, you've trained up your staff, and you've partnered with other organisations in the careers space, so now it's time to start tracking your progress. Do you have enough time and resources to deliver what's being asked of you? Are you delivering the calibre of activities you'd expected, in the right number of schools? Have you impacted preconceptions of construction with your target audiences?

Use The Power of PR

Powerful public relations isn't just for the big companies. You can generate coverage and profile for your great careers activity, and position your organisation as a leader in schools engagement which will draw people to you. Don't automatically opt just for the construction press – what about telling the education press? Or your regional news outlets? Or the publications that your clients and prospects read?

Feedback and Improvement

Whenever you're involved in any schools engagement, you should always look to get feedback so you can develop and improve your activities to get the best results for students. Using a simple feedback form means that you're always asking consistent questions, and you never miss an opportunity. Design something internally with your colleagues to make sure that it captures all the feedback that you need.

Challenge Yourself

Are you serious about your schools engagement activity? Are you someone who's mastered the art of the careers fair? Have you perfected the most engaging work experience placements? Then you should be recognised and rewarded! Pull together your dream team for the BESS 5-Day Schools Engagement Challenge, celebrating businesses and individuals who have made their schools engagement into a thing of beauty.

Feature Your Schools

Schools love to get profile and recognition for the careers activity that they do, because they're competing against each other for students, for budgets and for staff, as well as trying to gather evidence for their OFSTED inspections. You can feature the schools that you work with in case studies, in your newsletters and your press releases, on your social media channels and in the reports you publish.

Tweet It

Social media is a great tool to build a likeminded network, and start sharing your thoughts. Regular posts about your schools engagement activity will put you into the hearts and minds of teachers, schools and careers organisations, and let them know that you're delivering your commitment. If it's tough to find the time every day, schedule your posts in advance with Hootsuite.com.

Embrace Critical Friends

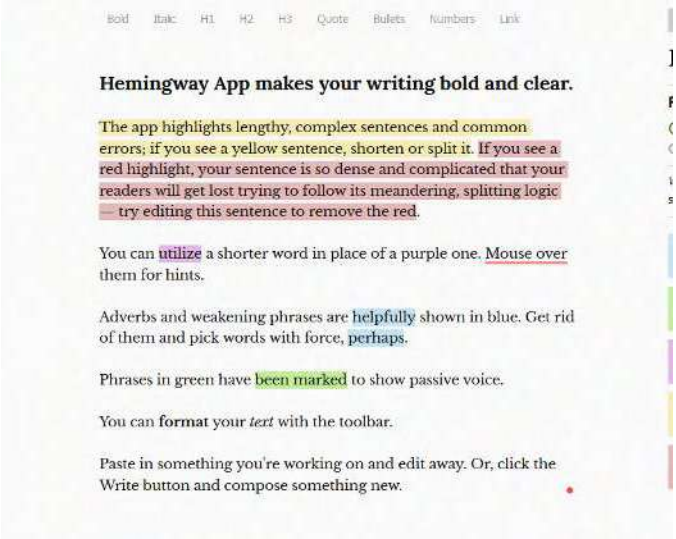
Who knows better about the impact of certain words and messages designed for students, than the students themselves? If you want to create effective schools engagement, asking pupils and teachers to be part of your internal review team could provide you with valuable constructive criticism and a whole world of new ideas. Be clear on your expectations of a critical friend, and ensure you respect their time.

Try Some Academic Research

Much research already exists to understand the construction skills shortage, and why children don't consider construction careers to be an appealing option. Now it's time to look at research that moves us forward – what kind of activity, what levels of engagement, what types of employer investment are required to move us into a new space where we're measuring progress, perception impact, and outcomes?

Build On What Works

The Careers & Enterprise company has done research into the different types of activities that work in careers advice, and they've measured the evidence of impact. Careers programmes can make a difference to economic, social and educational outcomes, including improving young people's ability to make career decisions and increasing their average earnings after they finish their education.



Create Case Studies

Do you produce case studies about the fabulous business projects you're involved in? Of course you do. Well, now its time to do the same thing for your schools engagement. You can add data, stats and facts about the Gatsby benchmarks you supported and the curriculum learning you helped to embed, as well as your internal processes for generating ideas and the support you provided for your staff to help them deliver effectively.

The 8-Second Website Test

Believe it or not, this is the most valuable real estate in the world. But you've got to fight for a place on people's smartphones. If you're adding content, video, podcasts, and downloads to your website, how do you know which ones are impressing your audience? You don't need an expensive analytics tool to see how visitors access your site and where they go, you can use a straightforward system like Statcounter.com and instantly see all the data about visitor journeys, downloads and average visit lengths.

Give 'Em More Than They Expect

All the tools, ideas, templates, downloads and examples mentioned here are available from beskillsinschools.co.uk, but you can also access much, much more. You can complete our schools engagement scorecard for tailored advice, you can sign up for one of our regular webinars, and you can listen to the latest episode of the #BuildBetterStuff podcast. If you've got something to say about buildings, places and spaces, you could even apply to be a guest on a future episode.

B.E.S.S.
Built Environment Skills in Schools

BESSprogramme
Built Environment Skills in Schools
Built Environment Skills in Schools
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BESSprogramme

Built Environment Skills in Schools

BUILD THE THINGS THAT BUILD MORE THINGS

SCHOOLS

Empowering students as active citizens of the built environment

APPRENTICES

Empowering apprentices to challenge industry aspirations and beliefs

EMPLOYERS

Empowering employers to change perceptions of the industry