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# SCHOOL LEAVERS GET TASTE FOR FOOD AND CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRY THROUGH VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME



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THIS AUGUST, IGD DELIVERED A VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS, PROVIDING A TASTE OF WORKING LIFE IN THE FOOD AND CONSUMERS GOODS INDUSTRY. SARAH MCCARTHY, EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMES MANAGER AT IGD, REVEALS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE WORLD OF WORK AND HOW THE PROGRAMME BROUGHT TOGETHER A WIDE RANGE OF COMPANIES AND BRANDS TO DELIVER AN EXPERIENCE THAT WILL HELP SET THE PARTICIPANTS UP FOR SUCCESS.

Young people are set to be amongst the worst affected by the COVID-19 crisis from a skills and employability perspective. Many young peoples' progression plans after leaving school this summer were disrupted by the pandemic, with many left feeling uncertain and worried about what is next. We know that the number of 18-24-year-olds not in education, employment or training could surge higher than the 2009 financial crisis.

Against this backdrop, we were determined to do something to help. And as the UK's largest private sector employer, the food and consumer goods industry recognises its responsibility to help young people and support the community in these challenging times. We also have a great story to tell young people about the exciting range of skilled careers available in FMCG – a sector that has been vitally important during the pandemic.

IGD has a strong heritage in helping young people develop the skills they need in the workplace. Since 2015, we've been running Feeding Britain's Future, which runs workshops in schools up and down the country, providing insight into the variety of roles within the industry along with training in the skills needed to succeed in the world of work.

Building on this work, the plan for our activity this summer was to respond to the immediate needs of Year 13s, most of whom haven't had access to the careers advice or traditional work experience programmes they usually would.

We knew we had the skills, experience, and network in place to deliver an impactful programme, but we needed the help of our industry to make this a reality. Therefore, we worked collaboratively with some of the industry's biggest retailers and brands to deliver an interactive week of learning, knowledge and skills development to help build the confidence of the young people taking part while also bringing to life the breadth of careers available in FMCG.

Some 80 school leavers participated in the work experience programme, taking part in a whole range of interactive live workshops and hands-on projects which ran across the week. Participants were able to select individual masterclasses in areas that interested them, including marketing and sales, engineering, IT and digital. They heard from 23 industry professionals from 14 major brands and retailers and had the chance to take on a project with guidance from industry insiders and to get personalised feedback, develop their skills and add to their CV.

Alongside the workshops, the participants were encouraged to work on a project, choosing from three that incorporated industry challenges on health, sustainability, and technology. The projects proved popular as it provided the participants the opportunity to apply learnings from the workshops, they could access IGD's latest research in these areas and explore their strengths and weaknesses.

Some 97% of participants fed back that the programme helped them to develop their understanding of the skills used in the world of work, and there was some great anecdotal feedback too, with many citing the interactive sessions, ability to learn soft skills and explore their strengths as really valuable.

Engineering & sustainability project winner, Shira Wulwick is completing A Levels in maths and science and had not previously considered a career in FMCG. Shira commented that: "I had a brilliant experience on the virtual work experience programme. I really felt that all the webinars and projects briefs were made with so much love and effort. The trophy is beautiful- such a great surprise!"

We have been so thrilled with the results of our first work experience programme that we're now exploring how we can collaborate with industry to deliver the programme at scale. The next round of activity is happening 09-13 November where we will be welcoming a new cohort of young, unemployed people to develop their employability skills, learn about the food and consumer goods industry and kick-start their career. If you'd like more information about the programme or would like to get involved please do get in touch by emailing [volunteering@igd.com](mailto:volunteering@igd.com). We are particularly looking for industry volunteers who work in marketing, sales, engineering, or technology roles.

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