

Case study: Destination Rail - 25th June 2019

Client: Greater Manchester Higher (NCOP)

The Challenge

In 2016, the Department for Transport's 'Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy' highlighted these statistics:

- Fewer than one fifth of employees in the rail industry are under 30, with nearly half over 45
- Only 2.5% of all employed 16-24 year-olds in the UK work within the transport industry
- Women represent just 20% of the rail industry as a whole, and only 4.4% of rail engineering

Despite a lot of investment in the rail industry in the last decade through exciting new projects such as Crossrail and High Speed 2, the government has forecast a skills shortage of 55,000 workers by 2020.

Greater Manchester Higher has been working as part of NCOP (National Collaborative Outreach Programme) since 2017 with the aim of increasing the number of young people from underrepresented groups who go into higher education, through offering schools and colleges a menu of aspirational programmes and workshops for targeted students.

They wanted to deliver a programme that would debunk the myths around working in the rail industry and tackle some of the above challenges.

Our challenge: how can we present the rail industry and the routes into rail careers in a fun and engaging way so such careers will appeal to young people?

Our Solution

Destination Rail event that was designed to follow a similar format to **iRail**, which ran successfully in the Midlands for over 10 years. Schools selected by Great Manchester Higher were invited to bring a team of up to eight year 9 or year 10 students, based on NCOP funding criteria as well as their interest in rail or STEM.

Throughout the event, held at the **University of Salford**, students had the opportunity to take part in two employer-led workshops, interact with a range of employers and other exhibitors, be 'mentored' by university student ambassadors, and compete in the Destination Rail Challenge to win prizes for their school.

The event day saw student teams from 11 schools arrive at the University of Salford in the morning for a welcome talk and an interactive 'introduction to rail' quiz in the main event space.

The cohort was then split into two groups for the employer-led workshops: a coding and track design activity delivered by Network Rail volunteers and an investigation task by RAIB (the Rail Accident Investigation Branch). After 40 minutes, the two groups swapped so that all students got to take part in both workshops.

All students then returned to the main space where they received the Destination Rail 'Bridge the Gap' Challenge brief, followed by a 'working lunch'. In their teams, they were tasked with constructing a bridge that could hold a model train without collapsing as well as allow another train to pass underneath it with adequate clearance. The challenge had been designed by volunteers from Derby Railway Engineering Society (DRES).

Feedback

Feedback was collected from the students through a form handed out at the end of the day. The questions had been prescribed by Greater Manchester Higher and asked about students' attitudes towards their future education and career choices before and after the event. To summarise:

Before the event	Less than half of the students (46%) were considering university/higher education
After the event	69% were considering university/higher education
After the event	67% said they were more aware of the opportunities in rail
After the event	49% said they were more aware of the benefits that university/higher education offers in terms of future career options

Client Testimonial

“We worked together with **Learn by Design** on the **Destination Rail event 2019** which was hosted at the **University of Salford**.

This was a fantastic event, and all the young people were very enthusiastic about the various projects they worked on throughout the day. It was great for the learners to have a variety of projects to work on throughout the day and working with different employers who are in the rail sector. The competition to create the railway bridge was a very popular activity, which saw the learners work together and become really competitive (they wanted to beat the other schools!)

There was an exciting buzz all day.

The Learn By Design team were great to work with in the build up to the event and on the day. They were clear in what was needed on the day, and their communications were always very clear. They are a great company to work with, very friendly and approachable. Hopefully we will work with them again soon!

Hannah Barton, Outreach & Widening Participation Officer, University of Salford

How does Destination Rail hit the Gatsby Benchmarks?

Destination Rail adhered to the following Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance:

▶ **2. Learning from career and labour market information**

During the 'Introduction to Rail' quiz, students learnt about the rail skills gap and the reasons behind promoting rail careers.

▶ **5. Encounters with employers and employees**

All students had the opportunity to interact with employers through workshops and during the Bridge the Gap Challenge.

▶ **7. Encounters with further and higher education**

Not only did the students get to experience a University campus, they were mentored by undergraduate student ambassadors for the whole day. Further education and higher education were also represented in the exhibition space: Salford Degree Apprenticeship Team and the National College for High Speed Rail.