

Case study: iRail - 5th March 2020

Client: Rail Forum Midlands

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.

With Derby as a historically influential hub for rail and boasting so many career opportunities for young people, the Rail Forum Midlands wanted to devise a programme that would debunk the myths around working in rail and tackle some of the above challenges. It would be the industry's opportunity to connect with its potential future workforce and inspire a generation.

Our challenge: how can we present the rail industry in a fun and engaging way so that it would appeal to young people as a future career option?

Our Solution

The **iRail** programme has been running in the Midlands for over 10 years, engaging students aged 13 to 18 to showcase the many career opportunities available in the rail industry.

The latest **iRail** event, held on 5 March 2020 at Derby Conference Centre, is the culmination of a series of in-school workshops run across the area throughout the academic year.

The format of the event followed previous years. Each school who took part in the workshops was invited to select a team of 4-6 year 9 or year 10 students to attend, based on their interest in rail careers or STEM in general. These students would have the opportunity to take part in site visits to local rail companies, interact with a range of employers, be mentored by STEM ambassadors and compete in the iRail Challenge to win prizes for their school. The employers present had been invited to sponsor various elements of the event. Running concurrently to the site visits was a careers-fair style drop-in session for post-16 students for them to also interact with the employers present.



Feedback

"Very informative. Pupils enjoyed it"
Teacher, Merrill Academy

"Students have been very engaged and thoroughly enjoyed their experience! I think change to one site visit from two has been more streamlined"

Teacher, Allestree Woodlands School

"Every member of LBD staff that I came across were incredibly pleasant. I can really see why you have those kinds of people working for you. Their enthusiasm was brilliant"

Employer, TUV Rheinland

"Enjoyable day!"
*Teacher,
Loughborough
High School*

"A number of students were really engaged and tuned into the event, which was brilliant"

Employer, RAIB

Positive feedback was collected from teachers and employers via a form handed out towards the end of the day. To summarise:

- All teachers said that the liaison and booking process was either 'excellent' or 'good'
- All teachers said that their students enjoyed the day, and that the site visits were informative
- All teachers said their school would be interested in taking part in another event, or similar activities, in the future
- All employers said that the event was useful to attend
- All employers enjoyed their experience in the exhibition space

Client Testimonial

"Working with **Learn by Design** was an obvious and great decision. Our objective was to raise the profile of the rail industry showcasing the broad range of opportunities at all levels available to young people. We wanted to bring both an educational and fun element to our schools engagement and **Learn by Design** have been able to do that through an integrated approach blending their in school workshops and the **iRail** STEM Challenge Day. Critically for us **Learn by Design** has provided the link between the industry and schools co-ordinating a programme of activity spread over the school year; they have brought an in-depth knowledge of education and the curriculum working alongside our industry experts to deliver inspiring and informative events."

Elaine Clark, Chief Executive Officer, Rail Forum Midlands

How does iRail hit the Gatsby Benchmarks?

The iRail event focuses on the following Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance:

▶ 2. Learning from career and labour market information

During the preliminary in-school workshops students had been introduced to 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 present at various stages throughout the day.

▶ 6. Experiences of workplaces

The site visits to Bombardier and Network Rail included a tour of the premises with a special focus on the different jobs being carried out there.

▶ 7. Encounters with further and higher education

Derby College and the University of Derby were also present in the employer area, showcasing further education and higher education routes into rail.