

MEDIA RELEASE

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HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND BUSINESS LEADERS JOIN FORCES TO TRANSFORM WORK EXPERIENCE INTO WORK INSPIRATION

On September 15th, 100 chief executives, representing most of the FTSE 100, will meet with 100 young people. They will pledge to improve dramatically the work experience their companies offer over half a million young people every year.

The Work Inspiration campaign (www.workinspiration.com) is spearheaded by Sir Stuart Rose, the chair of Business in the Community (BITC). The event on 15th September, called the Big Conversation, marks the start of a business-led movement of employers across the UK pledging more and better work experience.

Sir Stuart Rose said: "Our success as a nation is dependent on the future workforce. This is the start of a national business-led movement to get employers across the country to improve the work experience they offer. The calibre of the CEOs attending is testament to how important an issue this is."

In the two way dialogue, which takes place at Old Spitalfields Market, young people from around the country, between ages 16 – 19, will urge business leaders to up their game when it comes to providing that critical first experience of work.

"Employers have a responsibility to make sure young people have a great first experience of work," said one of the key facilitators on the day, Huda Al Bander, aged 20, from the Edge Learner Forum. "Young people need to get an inspired and realistic understanding of work and be given feedback to help them build on their skills and passions."

A number of young people have been on Work Inspiration placements this summer with companies including BT, McDonalds and Marks & Spencer. The feedback from participating young people has been encouraging –

"I learned about roles I didn't know existed and I was helped to see skills I didn't realise I had."

"The placement opened my mind. There are lots of different ways in to work. I have more respect for business now I've seen what's involved in running one."

“The companies benefited too because they now have a better understanding of young people and our aspirations.”

Positive experiences of work can demonstrate to young people there are many paths to success, enhancing their life and career aspirations. Businesses also benefit from an increase in future recruits with greater business awareness, and, at the same time, develop the leadership and management skills of their staff. To learn more, go to www.workinspiration.com.

The campaign is spearheaded by BITC in partnership with the independent education foundation Edge and the Talent and Enterprise Taskforce. Our corporate supporters are: Accenture, Ballymore, BT, Chime Communications, Logistik, Marks & Spencer, McDonald's, National Grid, Royal Mail and Serco.

It has been developed, supported and endorsed by a range of partners. These include: Arrival Education, British Council, Career Academies UK, Council for Social Action, City and Guilds, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Enterprise Insight, Harris Federation, Institute for Education Business Excellence, Merlin, Mosaic, National Council for Work Experience, National Education & Employer Partnership Taskforce, NESTA, Talent & Enterprise Taskforce, The Prince's Trust, Teach First; Trident from Edexcel, UK Commission for Employment & Skills, WorldSkills 2011, and Young Enterprise.

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Notes to Editors

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The website www.workinspiration.com will be live from the 15th September

1. Background to the Work Inspiration campaign – why now?

Business in the Community has spent 18 months researching senior business leaders' ideas on how to tackle the skills and talent deficit in the UK.

One of the key issues identified through Business in the Community's Talent Debates, attended by 2,000 business leaders in 2008-2009, was the gap between young people's expectations of the world of work and what business expected from those new recruits.

There is also a knowledge gap between the world of work and young people: young people are leaving education with little understanding of how to progress with a career; the range of

jobs and opportunities available for them; and how to make their first steps in the world of work.

This gap poses a critical issue to business: if young people don't know what jobs are out there and how to get into them, this could lead to a serious lack of applicant and/or appropriately skilled applicants in future. By raising awareness among the corporate sector, we will use businesses as a catalyst for positive change to the way work experience is provided for young people.

The gap also highlights a critical social need to better equip young people with a more transparent and inspirational picture of the world of work, so that they are better able to make decisions about their future career paths on leaving school or university.

2. Backing Young Britain

The Big Conversation is part of Backing Young Britain, a campaign launched to ensure that every young person receives the help they need to find a job or to get training or work skills and experience. Backing Young Britain has identified seven ways for businesses, charities and the Government to take action and back young Britain. One way is to provide work experience placements. Businesses interested in this element will be directed to the Work Inspiration website – workinspiration.com – to help them provide more work experience opportunities to young people.

For more information on Backing Young Britain, you can visit www.hmg.gov.uk/backingyoungbritain

3. Quotes from sponsors and supporters

David Thomlinson, UK Managing Director, Accenture:

“To attract the right talent for your business in the future, companies need to act now to help young people build the right skills and capabilities to enter the workforce. This is especially important because a large percentage of mature workforces are due to retire in the near future and a huge amount of highly mobile talent is emerging. Strategically equipping, encouraging, nurturing and placing these new entrants to the workforce demands an innovative approach. The Big Conversation will help us all take a fresh look at work experience and will highlight the business benefits of turning it into work inspiration.”

Caroline Waters, director, people and policy, BT: "The Big Conversation is an excellent way to create opportunities to engage young people not just with BT but with the wider world of work. We are supporting this project because it offers us a way to help young people discover that the things they are learning really do translate into work place skills. A really good work experience placement can help young people get inspired about how their passions and interests will play an important role in the business of the future - businesses just like BT."

Stephen Howard, Business in the Community: “Business in the Community is delighted to be convening the Big Conversation to launch the Work Inspiration campaign. We need to act now to prevent more and more young people from leaving education without the necessary knowledge, skills or confidence to make their first steps in the world of work. Now is the time to get work experience working and turn it into a work inspiration.”

Chris Satterthwaite, Chief Executive, Chime Communications: “This campaign is so simple – it’s about taking something that we already do and making it really work – inspiring for the young person and motivating for our staff - we will certainly want to be a Work Inspiration Company.”

Andy Powell, Chief Executive of Edge: "Edge is calling for a revolution in the education system where young people have greater choice and practical and vocational learning sits alongside academic study. Young people need an exciting and meaningful experience of the workplace, which helps nurture their talent and unleash their aspirations. High-quality work experience will develop a workforce of the future that is more confident and job-ready, benefiting business and society alike."

Steve Easterbrook, CEO & President, McDonald's UK & Northern Europe: "Work experience acts as a vital link between young people and the world of business, so it is my firm belief that employers should play their part to ensure young people's first experience of work is both challenging and rewarding. The Big Conversation will kick start a crucial dialogue between young people and business, and in doing so will help business to better understand how they can meet the ambitions of young people, and provide the best possible work experience."

Steve Holliday, Chief Executive of National Grid: "Inspiring young people and promoting the career opportunities available to them, is extremely important to National Grid. This is why we are working with the Royal Academy of Engineering to develop and implement a blue print for showing what good work experience looks like. We fully support the work inspiration campaign. Engaging young people through valuable and meaningful work experience is vital if we are to inspire the people we need for the future, today."

Adam Crozier, Chief Executive of Royal Mail Group, said: "One of the best ways to help any young person to improve their life and prospects is to offer them a positive experience of work. At Royal Mail Group, we are delighted to support the Big Conversation initiative and we are aiming to unlock talent by making more than 100 work placements available to young people from Barnardo's community based projects across the UK over the next 12 months."

Chris Hyman, CEO of Serco Group plc said: "In Serco the skills and commitment of our people are fundamental to the quality and efficiency of the essential services that we deliver. We are a people-led business and are absolutely committed to developing and nurturing young talent and to providing young people with stimulating, relevant and rewarding experiences of work. We are delighted to support the Big Conversation and join with other businesses in the drive to inspire the young people of tomorrow."