

DIPLOMAS GO TO WORK

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

THE BASICS

To find out how work-experience placements are created for Diploma learners, Education Watch spoke to Education for Enterprise MD, Roger House

One of the most exciting elements of the Diploma curriculum is the access it will provide for young people to high-quality work experience. However, this new approach poses a number of challenges.

To help all those delivering Diplomas – and those planning to start offering them in 2009 – Education Watch has spoken to Education for Enterprise, which is working closely with Consortia in Kent and the South East to coordinate structured work placements for Diploma students in the area. Education for Enterprise will focus initially on the Creative & Media Diploma.

RELIEVING THE PRESSURE

A valuable resource for Consortia delivering Diplomas for the first time, organisations such as Education for Enterprise can provide support and useful links between Consortia and business. Thanks to its direct access to local businesses, it can free up teachers' time to focus on delivering the breadth of the new curriculum in the classroom, while Education for Enterprise looks after the potentially time-consuming task of finding relevant businesses to work with.



Roger House, Managing Director of Education for Enterprise CIC, has more than 30 years' business experience. He says: 'Approaching employers about work experience can be intimidating for some teachers, and coordinating the approach can be very time-consuming – just as they are familiarising themselves with the broad content of the new Diploma curriculum. Many teachers are looking for help to recognise which businesses have the qualities to work with Consortia. They want advice on how to use the businesses' time to make sure the partnerships are sustainable.'

As Regional Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Kent and Policy Chairman for South East England, Roger knows what's needed to get employers to engage with Consortia.

ADDING VALUE FOR ALL

With around 90 per cent of UK businesses comprising Micro or Small Enterprises (MSEs), this army of entrepreneurs can offer young people a vital insight.

'The vast majority of UK enterprise is made up of small businesses rather than large multinational organisations, and

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ROGER HOUSE
MD, Education for Enterprise CIC

it's important that we engage effectively with the small business community. This requires improved communication from schools and an understanding of the costs involved for the businesses that engage with Diplomas,' says Roger.

'We hope that the Diploma curriculum will give young people a clear understanding of a typical workplace in action,' he continues. 'Well-structured work placements will help young people start building a strong work ethic – and that is good news for business.'

Roger believes the key challenges of work-placement elements of the Diploma curriculum lie in making the interaction between business and young people valuable for all parties. But he says: 'Many young people who haven't visited businesses will feel unsure about how they can add value during placements.'

To help prepare young people for work experience, organisations such as Education for Enterprise host workshops in schools. 'We aim to help young people start thinking about how to make the most of work-experience placements before they arrive,' says Roger. 'They appreciate being given tips on how to add value to the places they visit.'

THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Roger believes that Diplomas could change the way employers recruit, and create parity on the value of academic and vocational qualifications. However, he adds: 'These are exciting times, but Diplomas won't automatically change perceptions or alter employers' approach to recruitment. We need to work together to communicate the value of Diplomas and work-experience placements to business. The sign of success will be employers participating year after year. We hope to see other benefits, such as employers taking on more apprentices.'

To find out more, visit www.smallbusinessambassadors.co.uk or send an email to info@smallbusinessambassadors.co.uk