



## **How can YOU get the most from YOUR work experience?**

**A little bit of time and effort on your part could have very positive results for your future.**

Every year several hundred young people from the island secondary schools are offered the chance to go out on work experience. If you are one of these students this year and are wondering what it's all about and what work experience can do for you – read on:

- ❖ Work experience is a chance for young people to experience working life while they are at school
- ❖ You will be able to develop and practise a whole new range of skills
- ❖ You will gain more confidence as you use these skills in a 'proper' workplace
- ❖ You will be able to think a bit more clearly about your future
- ❖ You will begin to realise how you will use what you are learning at school in the workplace

The key skills you are learning at school (despite what you may think sometimes!) will be of great use to you when you finally get a 'real' job. How? – Let's look at the connection between the skills you learn at school and how they are used in the outside world:

### **Communication**

Listening • speaking clearly • asking and responding to questions • discussing matters • using the telephone • reading and responding to written material • producing written materials, including the use of diagrams

### **Application of Number**

Using numbers • collecting and recording data • understanding and presenting data • handling money accurately • measuring • estimating

### **Information Technology**

Using a fax machine • using computers to search, select, explore and prepare information  
• processing, developing and presenting information

### **Working with others**

Getting along with others • working in a team • taking responsibility • working co-operatively with work colleagues

## **Improving own learning and performance**

Target setting • action planning • managing time • learning from others • working to a planned programme • developing confidence • reviewing and evaluating progress

## **Problem solving**

Recognising and describing problems • seeking the right information • making decisions • selecting and carrying out appropriate solutions

As you can see from the above list the 'school' key skills look rather different when you place them in the work place. This is what work experience is all about, helping you understand the connection.

## **Right what's next? – How do you go about finding this work experience placement?**

### **Several ways:**

- Look on WexBox, the GWEx database where almost 1000 work experience opportunities are available to you. Either type in a key word or use the organisation drop-down menu to list the employers in alphabetical order.
- Discuss your work experience with your parents/guardians, ask their advice, what do they think about your choices? (don't forget they have known you for a long time and perhaps see skills and qualities in you that you don't)
- Chat to your friends, relatives, see what they think, they may have some good suggestions. We do NOT recommend that you opt to work with Dad or Mum or Brother/Sister just because it is easier to arrange and you know them! In fact neither the GWEx Office nor the Head of Careers should knowingly place you in such a situation because it has in the past raised issues with regard to health & safety.
- Talk it over with your tutor or Head of Careers, don't forget they may have been teaching you for some years now and see a side of you that is different to the one you see. They may also be able to see how the subjects you are studying for would work better in some careers rather than others.

## **What happens when you are ready to go on work experience?**

Remember this is the golden opportunity for you to see what the 'working world' is all about, don't waste it. When you have finally made your choices and been allocated a placement read the job description carefully, what does it tell you? How does it help you? –

- Key tasks (main areas of work) that you may be able to get involved in
- What will be required of you – such as the sort of clothes you will be expected (and not expected) to wear. Please take note of all special conditions such as – no jewellery – these are not included just to be petty, - there is a reason for it ( usually hygiene, or health and safety reasons)
- Your working hours, will you be able to get there on time? If mum/dad have to give you a lift and you may be late, phone the placement before you start to tell them that. You

may be able to negotiate a later start time and earlier finish if it helps with lifts. Don't be afraid to ask. Will you need a packed lunch? If the job description doesn't say so, do you think it might be best on the first day to take one?

- Is an interview required? If so you MUST phone and arrange to pop and see the main contact (at the top right hand corner of the job description). This is not a formal suit and tie effort, but merely a chance for you and the employer to get together before you start and have a chat about what you will do. Much better for you, because before you start you will know people and have a better idea of what it looks like etc.
- The employers Health & Safety Risk Assessment. Please read this carefully, any issues raised by the GWEx Representative on their visits will be here. You must take note of any item in this section of the job description and follow any instructions to the letter!

## **Finally you are there! – What happens?**

Well, the first thing that should happen is that the employer/supervisor/main contact for your placement will give you a tour of the work place. Whilst looking around you will be told about any health & safety issues and you will be able to complete the induction form you should have been given at school.

Your school will give you a 'Be Safe' booklet that covers basic health & safety in the workplace before you start work experience so that you will know something about it.

**Remember – health & safety in the workplace is just as much your responsibility as it is the Boss of the Company**

**Don't be afraid to ask questions,** believe it or not employers actually prefer (some insist) students ask questions. If there is anything at all you don't understand – perhaps somebody has told you to do something and you are unsure of what they want exactly ASK! If something interests you and you'd like to know more ASK! If you would like to try a different area of work to see what it is like ASK! (You may not be able to do it straight away, but most employers are happy to give you a chance).

The more interest you take in your placement, the more responsibility you will be given and the more you will get out of it.

The rest really is UP TO YOU!

**GOOD LUCK AND ENJOY YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE**