

Work Inspiration Case Study: Foundation for Young Australians

1. Pilot Name and Location

The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) conducted two pilot programs in the first half of 2013. Both were located within the FYA headquarters in Melbourne (CBD).

2. Lead Employers and their Purpose

FYA is a national partner in the leadership of the WI initiative in Australia. With The Smith Family, it shares the ownership of the WI trademark and logo in Australia. FYA was keen to 'walk the talk' of piloting WI as both a lead non-profit employer, and as a national partner encouraging others to take the initiative. FYA's expertise and commitment to youth development could also test and inform the WI initiative for future use.

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3. Students and Schools Involved

Four year 10 students participated in the two pilot programs. In the first pilot, one Cranbourne Secondary College student, who is an Afghan refugee, participated, whilst in the second pilot, three young women who had previously participated in FYA's Worlds Of Work program were involved. These three students came from Gilmore Girls College Footscray and Cranbourne Secondary College, schools with a multi-cultural student population.

4. Partnership Brokers and Evaluator

FYA acted as both the host employer and the evaluator. FYA coordinated the program and took responsibility for gathering evaluative data from students. The case study is also informed by the experiences and views of the Work Inspiration coordinator within FYA, Aidan McLaren.

5. Pilot Summary

Whilst the initial pilot occurred over four days and involved one male young person, the second pilot took three days and involved three female students. However, both pilots followed a similar format which covered the Three Insights of WI; a creative mix of orientation, a work site tour, administration tasks, a site visit, conversations with FYA staff members, including senior management, and undertaking a special student-led project. The students were able to interact with 10 – 15 FYA staff members and they also visited two nearby businesses – a cafe and a travel agency – learning about these businesses and their employees' careers.

The character of the special project reflected both the interests of the students and the youth advocacy and research mission of FYA. For the student-led projects, student one presented on the topic 'the young refugee experience in Australia,' his own experience, whilst the three young women researched and presented on the topic 'what makes a great work experience program'. These projects were presented to more than 10 FYA staff members at the conclusion of the students Work Inspiration placement.

6. Key Successes and Success Factors

- ▶ The evaluation results (from three of the four students) indicated that the students agreed or strongly agreed that all the following outcomes had been achieved – learning about options, how careers happen, clarifying aspirations and goals, and gaining motivation to learn back at school

The students enjoyed their experience. "I loved it feeling free but serious at the same time" was an enthusiastic comment made upon one student evaluation survey. The combination of doing the personality survey, meeting new people, learning about their work and careers within an informal conversation, and being trusted to manage their own project were key success factors.

"Presenting our ideas as students and being out in the city were the best things", "It was fun doing the surveys and it helped me care about myself".

- ▶ The FYA employee evaluation supported the views of the young people – the contribution of the Three Insights and the engagement of FYA staff not only with the students, but with each other, across roles were especially noted. FYA, a national partner in WI, made a commitment to trial the WI frame and approach and to learn from the experience.

7. Key Learnings

For next time: local application

- ▶ FYA will continue to engage nearby businesses in their WI programs. This added to the variety of interactions for the students, plus it further developed the relationships between FYA and its neighbours.
- ▶ FYA will continue to exploit the synergy between their mission and expertise and the potential of students to research their own developmental project. By giving students access to staff involved in research, programs and marketing, FYA was able to resource their special projects. It was noted by FYA that this can be achieved to a greater extent if students are able to work in a team, giving them the ability to bounce ideas and build peer support. The final day presentations become even more poignant when students not only presented a career board to an FYA staff member, but offered their own perspective through this special project. The two pilots have now generated a network of FYA staff who are ready and able to facilitate future programs – a resource that can sustain WI at FYA.

For next time: national application

- ▶ The view of the FYA staff members is that although the Three Insights framework is very useful, the type of language used in the materials and questions was confusing. Whether for the staff member or for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students, the language need to be simplified and more clearly set out – a serious suggestion for the content of the forthcoming Australian WI website.

8. Special Feature

- ▶ The special project added fun and poignancy to the WI pilot. In the second pilot, the group of students were able to articulate what they saw as the future for work experience. They recommended hands-on activities, two way conversations with staff, visits to worksites and projects, getting involved in a job or task and learning in a workplace culture that enjoys young people. A very helpful template for the future of WI!

The students' presentation slides are available from FYA or on http://prezi.com/ybxz1klayri_/what-makes-a-great-work-experience/

9. Recommendations to National Partners

- ▶ Review the language that is currently used in the UK resource materials for the Three Insights. Value the career development framework, but redesign some of the questions and instructions.
- ▶ Place the student led project at the heart of WI in Australia. At least five of the fourteen pilots have found this concept helpful and it appears to be a natural and appealing progression for others. How overtly or subtly it is introduced will vary based on industry and lead employer.

10. Reflecting Upon the Evaluation

Value the pair small group approach to WI delivery, review the materials language but cherish the WI framework. Distinguish between dialogue between young people and employees and talks by employers to student groups/classes, the difference between 'talking with' and 'talking at'. The former is seen as much more of a hands-on experience than the latter.

This rich evaluative report may have been further enhanced by an independent critical partner drawing out key learnings. The Partnership Broker contribution which was present in most of the WI pilots, was not available to FYA, however the writing of this case study represents a post-event effort to do so.