The Beginner's Guide to Virtual Work Experience for Employers

Students have expressed that traditional work experience is **hard to travel to**, **difficult to find online** and only available for a **limited number of students**.

Virtual work experience solves these pain points as it is accessible to students wherever they live and scalable to any cohort size. By using an Early Career's network like Springpod, students can meet an employer's team and learn about career paths and entry routes through workshops, training and project work.
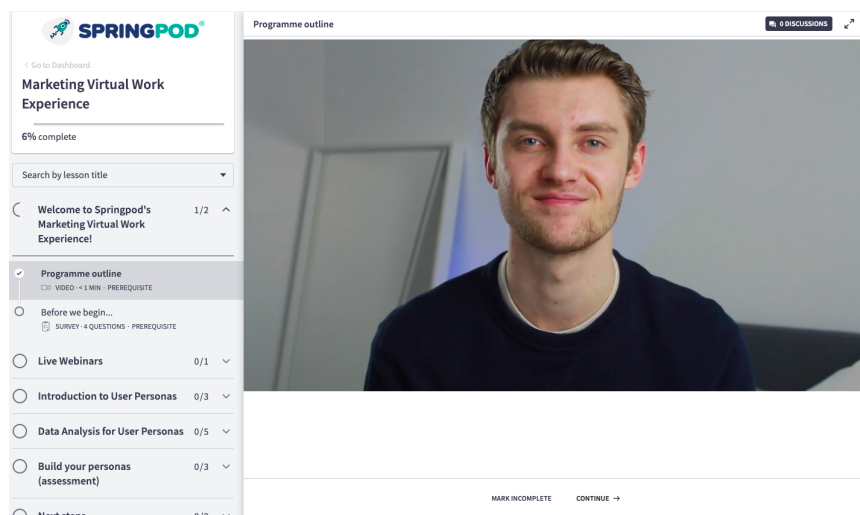

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How Did Employers Generally Receive the Idea of VWEX?

Understandably, employers were sceptical that virtual work experience could offer the same level of experience and in-depth knowledge compared to experience on-site.

Airbus' Early Careers Manager, Leighton Johnson, said: "**When I first heard that some companies were running Virtual Work Experience programmes, I was not convinced and did not see how this would work and I thought that not being able to visit our manufacturing plants would not give the students a very worthwhile experience**."

Known as an international pioneer in the aerospace sector, Airbus ran 5 in-person work experience programmes every year. Each programme attracted 100 - 200 applicants from students, however, just 30 were able to participate and needed the ability to travel to Airbus' plants in the North or South West of the UK.

After the announcement of a national lockdown, Airbus needed to bring their operation online to continue to offer the same exceptional work experience to continue to educate students and grow their future talent pool.

They partnered with an Early Careers Network to help them create a virtual work experience programme that could still combine practical, real-world learning opportunities with insightful career advice from industry professionals to:

- Boost social mobility
- Lay the groundwork to building an engaged and informed talent pool of future cohorts
- Power brand and industry awareness through activities that mirror your workplace scenarios
- Increase diversity

"[After partnering with an Early Careers Network] I was still sceptical but I could not have been more surprised. The [Virtual Work Experience] was beyond anything I could have hoped for. Live webinars with Airbus employees were organised and presented expertly, the layout of the programme allowed students to work at their own pace, [and we] used existing Airbus online activities to help participants understand Airbus and give them a feel for our company."

The programme scored 8.8 out of 10 from the students who also expressed that they now have a better understanding of the aerospace industry and what it'd be like working at Airbus as an apprentice. Some went on to say that they're now considering the option of moving on to higher education within the field.

What Employers Need to Include in Their VWEX Programmes

By including the following, you're on the right path to a successful virtual work experience programme for your business as well as for students seeking virtual work experiences:

- Include an overview of your business
- Emphasise your mission statement
- Run a 'meet the team' session to showcase the roles within your organisation
- Focus on the career paths and entry routes to your business
- Create workshops, training or project work

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Final Thoughts

If done correctly, Virtual Work Experience can still provide students with the opportunity to explore pathways and gain meaning experiences that will help them secure their next steps after school. And by partnering with an Early Career's Network, you will be set up for success from the get-go

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