



Company Name: Cicero Group
Nature of business: Corporate communications and market research
Number of employees: 65

A little about the organisation:

We were created in 2000 as a public affairs company and have diversified into broader corporate communications including lobbying and advocacy campaigns, media relations, market research, graphic design and social media. We now employ 65 people with offices in London, Dublin and Brussels.

Does the organisation have an agreed policy and programme for the provision of work-related learning/employability opportunities to school students?

Cicero has put in place a programme to improve employability among school leavers. This forms part of our wider workplace diversity programme which looks at how Cicero can help to raise the profile of our industry among those groups who are typically under-represented, in particular people from the BME community and low-income families. We have worked with organisations like the Taylor Bennett Foundation as well as working directly with schools and colleges. Cicero is also one of the founding signatories of the UK Government's Women in Finance initiative. One of our targets is to inspire future generations of women, to think about careers in agencies like Cicero and we are looking for new avenues to access future generations and have begun discussions to set up a partnership with an organisation called 'Uptree' to help facilitate such access. We also encourage our employees to consider becoming school governors to build a better their understanding of how schools work and the way in which they can contribute towards improving employability. During 2017 we had three employees who were working as school governors. We also sought contact with SGOSS to explore ways to build networks with other employers on what best practice could look like. We're keen to know what other businesses are doing particularly within the SME sector.

Does the organisation work solely with primary or secondary aged children? Or do you have different programmes and work with both?

We work purely with secondary schools and sixth form students.

How many students is the organisation able to provide opportunities for per year either via school-based workshops or hosting students internally.

Varies from year-to-year but we have the ambitious to build our outreach year-on-year. This year we will host 3-4 workshops at Cicero and will for the first time undertake school visits with three workshops scheduled in March. The workshops tend to include 12-15 students each, so we should reach around 100 young people through the workshops during the 2017-18 academic year. In addition, we also offer internships at Cicero to sixth form students during school work experience week as well as throughout the summer.

Does the organisation have a dedicated employee/team whose job it is to engage with schools either in communities local to the school or across the region/country as a whole?



Not a dedicated person, given the size of our work force, but we do have a number of employees involved in this work as part of their day job. This includes having appointed one of our executive directors as the senior partner leading on this issue.

How is the opportunity to deliver workshops, host work placements etc. received by your colleagues? Are people keen to engage with these projects?

Colleagues are very supportive. Around one-third of our workforce has been involved in delivering elements of employability workshops at Cicero. This includes most of our senior executive team who lead by example. This requires them to give presentations about their business areas explaining to students what a profession in media relations, public affairs, market research or graphic design involve and what a career path might look like. We also run practical workshops helping the students to understand how they might go about running a corporate communications campaign and how they might pitch campaign ideas.

Do staff report back positively on their experiences working on employability initiatives with schools/students? Would you say offering staff these opportunities has a positive effect on workplace morale?

Employees are very supportive. We have a very strong culture of valuing the individual irrespective of their background. Our work with young people is very much part of the wider diversity agenda which is very popular across the workforce. It helps to make all people at Cicero feel valued and respected.

Complete the sentence:

Employers offering work-related learning opportunities to school students is important because whenever people have been fortunate to enjoy success in life – in particular at work – they should always try to ‘pass it on’ to the next generation. Giving a young person a good start in life, or a helping hand on the career ladder, is about changing lives for the better.

Complete the sentence:

We value our work engaging students with employability opportunities because it helps young people navigate a difficult stage in their lives and helps them reach their full potential. It also makes employees at Cicero value their own career more and take more pride in their employee. It’s a win-win for all involved.

Is there any other advice you would offer any organisations seeking to establish or further embed their own employability school engagement programmes?

You don’t have to think big. If every business in Britain (5 million) reached out to just two students each, we would reach every school child in the country (8 million). Even by making a small commitment, you can make a big difference.