

Establishing links in the first place:

Management

- Make forming new links a performance management target and you are likely to put more time and effort into it
- Allow plenty of time for planning, both before and after the links are formed
- Gain support and help from other members of your department
- Only develop links that can be maintained long term
- Have time to 'brainstorm' and discuss ideas in a small group and then involve others.
- Attend meetings
- Be prepared to be persistent
- Don't rush or expect people from industry to do everything for you. Plan very well in advance for coursework for example.
- Keep minutes and paperwork

Approach style

- Be friendly and approachable
- Be confident and positive
- Try linking to an established organisation for your first link
- Be enthusiastic, persistent and creative
- Do not rely on the telephone or email for all your contact- try and have some meetings face to face to talk over ideas and outcomes
- Make a visit to the link before you decide to establish it fully, as it may not be suitable.
- Use any contacts you might have to find links. These may include parents of the pupils at school, your own personal contacts, friends, family, church, other geography departments. Networking is key and people may be able to recommend possible links to you.
- Ensure the link person at school has good interpersonal skills
- Build a good rapport with the link organisation. This is normally best done by finding a named individual to approach or deal with.
- Phone calls often provide a faster response to queries and requests than email.
- Do some research into possible links before you approach organisations. This may include contacting education advisors, local education and business partnerships, LEAs, local colleges and Universities.
- Ensure you respond to any posted information or replies from companies who sound interested in establishing links.
- Get information and ideas from teachers who have already established links
- Be patient- it is hard work to establish a link but most organisations are keen to help where they can.

Expectations

- Ensure that the professionals are aware that they are being used to give pupils an idea of life in the 'real' world
- Be sure of what the purpose of the link is before you start to look for it.
- Explain clearly what is required from the link, so that both parties are aware of the expected outcomes
- Ensure the level of knowledge and skills is relevant
- Be flexible, cooperative and ensure that both sides benefit from the link
- Stress the mutual benefits
- Be realistic! Don't expect too much too quickly.

- Try to ensure entitlement for all is targeted at rather than selecting small groups- then it motivates everyone and not just some.
- Have a clear focus and task and prepared needs
- Highlight what you can offer them – parent’s newsletter information, photos, work experience students etc.

Pupils

- Create a sixth form committee with the responsibility of approaching companies about establishing links, inviting speakers to school and providing staff with ideas and information.

Maintaining links once established:

Contact

- Be as flexible as possible with your link organisations
- Be prepared to offer feedback to your link organisations about how their service could be improved in the future
- Keep your requests to a minimum unless you are dealing with someone whose job is specifically to maintain links with the education sector.
- Send thank you notes to maintain good relationships and ensure the link can be used again
- If you use the links regularly, make sure they are aware of the details well in advance.
- Keep regular contact with the links to ensure both sides are aware of developments which may affect the link.
- Make sure you make contact at least 2 months before you want to use the link
- Plan meetings well ahead
- Good communication is vital, with quick responses to queries etc.
- Let them know what you’ve done via a school news letter.

Expectations

- Have a clear understanding between both parties of the expectations associated with the link
- Make sure you can offer something to the organisation so that they receive something in return
- Let the organisations see any worksheets you intend to use beforehand
- Send companies involved samples of the pupils’ work and photographs to show how you have benefited from their help.
- Remember that some people have not had positive experiences of education or may not have been inside a classroom for 25 years. If someone is to lead a session with pupils clarify standards/expectations and content in advance. Teachers work to bells – 'normal' people may not have the presentation or time-management skills!

Management

- Establish one project per year to keep everything going Develop schemes of work to integrate links fully into your units
- Ensure that the emphasis of the link is the geography- not the business.
- Put aside dedicated planning time for the use of links
- Try and keep costs as low as possible. Becoming a member of certain organisations can help with this.
- Where possible, involve people (school careers staff, other members of the department, other departments, parents)
- Provide a positive feedback and follow up
- Encourage publicity for the link in local press (with permission from the link).

What to avoid doing:

Communication

- Avoid being vague about the aims and objectives of the link
- Avoid having contact with too many different people at the organisation- keep it to one or two named contacts
- Do not over use the links- remember they have their own projects and work to do
- Make sure you keep links up to date with any changes to dates and programmes as soon as you become aware of them
- Try not to do nothing for long periods of time, as you may lose links and therefore opportunities
- Avoid taking links for granted and being pushy or inconsiderate
- Try not to send out too many open ended letters asking companies and organisations to become links- keep the contact focused with recommended links or ones you have thoroughly researched
- Sending difficult staff to work with your links!
- Being ungrateful or disorganised.

Management

- Think about how much support you have or will need before you set up any links
- Avoid getting stuck with hidden costs by researching and asking the relevant questions before you agree to the link
- Do not set up links you are incapable of maintaining
- Do not assume that external contact will work for you, your pupils or your schemes of work
- Avoid going into the link without research
- Try to avoid too many changes to your syllabus specifications and schemes of work as this leads to broken or unused links
- Do not make a link just for the sake of it- make sure it provides a relevant and useful experience for your pupils
- Do not expect the links to be the same every year- companies and organisations evolve just as schools and schemes do
- Do not overcomplicate links- simple is best. This is less of a burden on the staff and companies involved
- Avoid expecting teachers to have lots of flexible time for extra meetings etc.
- Failing to repeat good practice during the next year.
- Relying on in-house materials
- Developing a narrow focus
- Avoid lectures from those whose skills are PowerPoint only
- Try not to force one's own agenda
- Being half hearted
- Expecting open-ended commitment; staff turnover is often higher in industry than in schools.
- Never leave speakers alone with group.

Pupils

- Avoid letting pupils contact institutions individually
- Allowing students to contact links when not properly briefed.

Location

- Think carefully about the location of the link before it is established.
- There may be hidden problems such as transport costs, traffic issues, health and safety factors etc- remember your risk assessment!!

Education Department

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