

Introduction

Mistral developed a 10-year partnership with Bicester Village – an out-of-town 'Chic Shopping Outlet' – to increase awareness of the outlet as a good employer and to emphasise its position as an organisation that supports the local community.

As part of this partnership Mistral helped Bicester Village initiate *Going for It* – an annual interactive careers presentation and workshop aimed at 13 to 14 year-olds. Each year the event gives 400+ young people the opportunity to discover the skills needed for different types of careers – from beauty, building and music to journalism, accounting and law – while also giving plenty of useful and user-friendly information on further and higher education and apprenticeship schemes.

Run in conjunction with local schools and the Bicester Chamber of Commerce, the main purpose of the event is to stimulate and motivate the students to think about their future in a positive way, and inspire them to make the right educational choices.

Objectives

- Create a fun, inspirational and interactive careers event that gets the students excited and positive about their futures
- Inspire 13-14 year-olds to make the right GCSE option choices
- Encourage local businesses and organisations to take part by exhibiting at the event

- Ensure a wide range of career options are represented and the stands are interactive
- Raise the profile of the event
- Strengthen the relationship between schools and local businesses and organisations for future partnership work, such as the provision of work experience placements
- Find and contact an inspirational speaker for the opening presentation

Strategy

Working alongside the schools, Bicester Village and Bicester Chamber of Commerce Mistral developed a list of ideal career options and contacted relevant businesses and organisations to encourage participation. This was backed up by a local media campaign to build awareness of the event. A newsletter was produced for the students and exhibitors, and tasks and competitions were set for students to ensure they engaged with the exhibitors. The event started with an inspirational talk to get the students excited and engaged in the day ahead.

Results

Over the past five years, the event has shown that by encouraging students to find out about the world of work, training and further and higher education they become more confident to ask questions and find their own answers. The event differs from the usual careers event as it provides a 'hands on experience', which creates a great buzz of enthusiasm. Students get to build walls, design websites, strip down machinery, look at all aspects of care work and carry out scientific

experiments. Inspirational speakers at the event have included motorbike rally champion, Tamsin Jones, Olympic medal winners Catherine Grainger and Sarah Winckless, and singers Dax and Fil Straughan.

The event is highly regarded by the Learning Skills Council and Aim Higher Programme, and has built up the support of more than 50 local businesses and organisations, who see it as an important education/business initiative and one that provides an excellent opportunity to meet their possible future workforce and forge useful links with schools.

Local media involvement has progressed from extensive coverage, to also having representatives from local media involved in exhibiting on the day to promote journalism as a career option.

