

LIVITY: GOOGLE DIGITAL EXPERTS

Date	2011-2012
Region	London
Number of trainees	12
Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd role	We evaluated the pilot
Methodology	Conceptualisation, interviews of trainees, follow up survey of trainees, surveys of mentors and employers.

Background

Livity is a socially responsible youth communications agency that works directly with young people every day to produce co-created campaigns and content for brands, broadcasters, charities and local and central government that achieve client objectives whilst improving the lives of young people.

The Google Digital Experts was a pilot programme that consisted of digital marketing course, which aimed to give young people who were already digital natives the organisational skills and experience to meet business needs. The pilot programme took place over six week in June to July 2011 with 12 trainees. Trainees were 18–24 year olds from across London, and were drawn from what Livity called ‘opportunity-poor’ backgrounds.

Description

The programme consisted of:

- Lecturing about theory and practice.
- Group work, with a practical application of creating a pop-up digital agency for Livity.
- Visits to employers and talks from senior managers in Google and other digital companies.
- Group discussion and presentations.
- One-to-one mentoring from Google and Livity.
- An optional apprenticeship element with Livity partners such as The Guardian, Unilever, Barclays (two), TalkTalk PLC and ASOS.

The course element took place over six weeks.

Impact

Trainees were extremely positive about the course. The practical style of training was seen as uniquely credible and useful, with several trainees saying that they learnt more in six weeks than in the totality of their previous education. The link with Google was

exceptionally positive for trainees and was directly tracked to increased confidence and aspiration.

“It was great going to the Google building. There are people who would kill to go there, to see the magic that is their head office.”

“The course was much more valuable than university, we have moved to the digital age. It made me realise how out of date the university was.”

“The speakers were passionate about their work, you could feel their passion. At schools and college teachers don’t feel the same, they want to get the teaching out the way and go home and do their own things.”

“It was good to go to different places and see the working environments, and to be able to speak to experts about their field, on a more informal level, compared to university where you are lectured rather than interacting.”

“Because our task was to set up an agency, it felt as if we were professionals.”

“I had trouble at school because I have a short attention span and was seen as disruptive. Now I can see how much was due to me. I felt different on the course, more relaxed and more engaged.”

“It makes me feel like I have the ability to do what I want to do, there are so many jobs you are not aware of; you don’t know where digital media can take you.”

“Hearing about the speakers’ backgrounds is important. It is hard to imagine yourself in a place of power, if you don’t know anyone in that position.” “I feel a lot more positive, the course had such positive vibes it was unreal.”

All trainees said they feel more confident about finding a job because of this course.

Five of the six employers who took apprentices said that the apprentice had met or mainly met their expectations in terms of technical skills. Four of the respondents said that the apprentice had met or mainly met their expectations in terms of personal skills, which shows the importance – and difficulty - of ensuring progress in this area.

Good practices

Google Digital Experts was explicitly designed to increase trainees’ employability. These are some good practices illustrated by this pilot project:

- **Embodying a professional, but still youth-friendly environment.** Livity has an open-plan office that has a strong buzz.
- **Identifying a gap in the jobs market.** The course was targeted at a function that was known to have job vacancies even in the depth of the recession.
- **Building on trainees’ strengths.** Trainees were selected because of their strong digital skills. Digital marketing was an excellent choice because young people already have an advantage in this area.

- **Developing trainees' CVs.** All trainees felt confident talking about their experience because of the prestige of being on the course.
- **Helping trainees to network.** Some trainees explicitly set out to sell themselves to individuals who came to speak to the course.
- **Giving role models.** Some of the speakers came from similar backgrounds to the trainees, which gave them a highly positive message about what was possible for them.
- **Increasing commitment.** Several trainees that they have previously been unmotivated by school or university because of concerns that the learning was not relevant or useful. The link to Google meant that trainees were absolutely clear that they were receiving the most up-to-date information.
- **Ensuring mentors also benefit.** Eight of nine of the mentors were surveyed said they had found mentoring personally satisfying.

"I gained confidence. Apparently what I do can impress someone."

- **Having a relatively short training period.** The intensive and concentrated nature of the course emphasised the importance of punctuality, which was a serious weakness for some of the trainees, and continued to be a weakness for some during the apprenticeship period.
- **Real world learning.** The pop-up digital agency that trainees formed together was visible on Livity's website. Trainees could see that their project work was serious.