

Using VIEW Retail as part of the preparation for work experience.

Many young people across the UK go out into work experience for the first time during Year 10 or 11. For most this will be their first extended period away from school in a real working environment. Bells will not ring when lessons change, they will not get homework and they will have work colleagues not classmates!

It is difficult to prepare young people effectively for this experience from within a classroom. It is not practical to arrange 'practice' visits or bring all the employers into the classroom to answer questions. Many schools and colleges do an excellent job in engaging students in activities that address the issues that they may find in the real workplace, but many also find this difficult and employers sometimes express concern for the 'lack of preparation'. VIEW can act alongside the teacher and existing resources and help with the preparation process.

VIEW is the virtual interactive employer's workplace. The objective behind the development of the resource was to provide access to a real workplace, in other words an accessibility tool for both student and teacher. It is there to help schools and colleges who face the problems of accessing real working environments because of timetable pressures, health and safety concerns, confidentiality, geography or simply the weight of numbers of students that need to visit a workplace.

- **VIEW is an accessibility tool**

VIEW is not an alternative text book, case study or video – it is a learning tool not a teaching tool. The resource enables the student or teacher to be in a workplace within the limits of the technology involved. Once there, the user is exposed to the real workplace and can explore it and locate work based evidence. The workplace is arranged as it really is and the evidence found is really there – no ideals, made up graphics or pretend employees.

- **VIEW visits need an objective**

When a student enters a real workplace they require a focus for their learning experience, otherwise they will 'wander', miss key areas and fail to learn as much from the experience - compared to someone with a clear learning objective. VIEW is no different in that the user – student or teacher, should have an objective in mind, something they are looking for and clear criteria for what is relevant to their exploration and what is not.

- **VIEW keeps it real**

The real world of work is not laid out like a textbook. VIEW reflects the real world as a substitute for a real experience. Work based evidence is found where it is actually used and it is the user that needs to apply skills to decide whether the evidence is relevant and how it connects to other evidence found elsewhere.

Students going out on work experience (and soon to a real job), do not have a teacher alongside them, a workplace organised by the headings in a course specification, someone

organising what they see and don't see. They enter the workplace without a search engine, glossary or text book to look things up. Their ability to handle the real world requires them to begin to develop real world skills to help manage the 'raw' information that they will be confronted with. VIEW helps that process by exposing them to a real working environment from the safety of the classroom – an important stepping stone to success when they must stand on their own two feet and survive.

- **VIEW lets you practice**

VIEW can be usefully deployed to help the teacher better prepare young people for their work experience. It can provoke discussion and activity that will enable the student to practice their approach and their experience that is to come. It will not provide a taste of every experience they might have but together with the teacher and traditional approaches to work experience preparation, VIEW can help motivate young people into making more of their placements.

If you use VIEW as a resource for the preparation for work experience please be clear about the objectives for the 'virtual visit'. Never present VIEW to young people and simply let them explore without a purpose – they will waste their time!

- **VIEW has help and support**

The downloadable tasks in this section of the website, provides ideas for you to use with young people. There are some very basic guides to help introduce the concept – the student guide in the introductory section. Most students will manage the interface with VIEW with little help – it mimics what is found on the web and experience has shown us that young people quickly learn how to move around and find things. Some students will need help with locating a few 'out of the way' places – just like the real thing! You can help considerably yourself as the teacher by touring the site previously and having some ideas yourself so as to direct some students when needed. You will find downloadable descriptions of where everything can be found in this resource on the website.

The materials include some simple quizzes etc that make learning about VIEW a little more fun – learning the controls but with a purpose. Other tasks relate to work experience issues – like planning to get to the work place on time. But with these ideas and some of your own you can develop the use of the resource and the student's familiarity with the VIEW application, building upon the tasks with more demanding requirements. Please feel free to modify, adapt and construct your own tasks to meet the needs of your students. If you wish you can send ideas to us and we will post them on the web as downloads for others to use.

- **VIEW users take what they want**

Some of the material found in VIEW and the narrative especially may be too difficult for some young people to read and benefit from. In most cases this doesn't matter. They can still move around and use their eyes to spot evidence and meet the objectives set for them. VIEW is self selective – as you move around you pick up only that what you want, discarding the rest – again, just like the real thing. In the real workplace students will be confronted with material far too difficult for their understanding and a skill they need to develop is not to be diverted but to work 'around' the problem, locating alternative information to meet their need.

It is helpful to provide the students with the 'maps' to help them work out where they can move to. A simple map helps orientation and it is worth spending a little time thinking through the basic workplace layout. Using a map or plan to locate your way around a large

workplace is a useful skill. The students should keep their maps, noting their 'finds' for future reference.

- **VIEW offers levels of access**

The VIEW application can be accessed at different levels;

Exploration – moving around the geography of the workplace and simply 'looking'.

Finding employees to interview – there are 21 in the House of Fraser willing to answer lots of questions. This develops skills with listening and again selecting what is relevant and what is not. It may also provoke students to consider what questions they might ask when they are on work experience.

Finding documents to read – these are real and sometimes, (not always) difficult to read. They can act to challenge students to identify what they are and what they might be telling us.

Image sequences are sometimes found that tell a story, perhaps a process.

Always encourage students to note down what they find. It may not be what they are expecting but they need to note the location of something potentially useful for later and remain focused on what they are trying to find. If students work in teams they quickly communicate where things can be found and share their exploration with each other.

The interviews need sound capability on the PC. Some employees are softly spoken and the student will need to listen carefully. The best approach is to provide headphones or some speakers for the PC. Most PC internal sound systems are poor for listening to speech. The audio interviews are all with real employees and are a rich source of perspective on a real working environment. They are typical of the people that the students will meet on work experience – some better than others at explaining and communicating with young people.

- **VIEW is a single and multi-user resource**

VIEW can be used as a single resource in the corner of the classroom. You may allocate small groups of students to undertake a task as part of a 'circus' of activities. Once the students are familiar with how VIEW works then they should not need too much attention – just making sure they are on target and not wandering aimlessly!

VIEW works well as a single user class demonstration tool, displayed through a projector for everyone to see. The teacher or student volunteers can operate the single PC with the class joining in with spotting evidence and making decisions about where to go next.

VIEW will work well over a Smartboard. The ability to put your hand onto the board and push the panoramic images left and right is excellent.

A single user licence was provided free for all schools in the UK care of Skillsmart, the Sector Skills Council for Retail. If you have purchased a multi-user licence then VIEW can be installed onto many PCs or networks within your school or college and enjoyed by whole class groups.

- **VIEW can be used across year groups**

VIEW has been tested on year 8 and year 9 students. Most students can manage to explore a working environment without too much difficulty. It is useful to introduce VIEW early to ensure students can manage the interface and explore the workplace before meeting any serious curriculum need. You could use some of the introductory material in the summer term of Year 9 and then revisit the virtual tour closer to the period in which preparation for work experience takes place in Year 10 or 11.

VIEW could also be used after work experience has taken place to provoke some thoughts about comparing the student's actual experience to what they find elsewhere. The example tasks provided also indicate that VIEW can contribute to the wider needs of Work Related Learning within specific Key Stage 4 subjects and Enterprise, Careers Education and Applied GCSE Business. Once the students have mastered the controls for VIEW and begin to get familiar with the layout of the House of Fraser then it is worth applying the skill to as many curriculum areas as possible.

VIEW Retail focuses on the retail environment which will be appropriate for many students out on work experience in similar, sometimes smaller stores and shops. However many of the issues will apply to all working environments. For those who wish to explore other workplaces after VIEW Retail, look at the FutureVu website, www.futurevu.com for more VIEW resources.