



Pathway To
Your Future

Cisco Social Impact Report

2018



Foreword from Cisco

Cisco is a business committed to driving productivity in the UK through digital skills training. The 'Pathway To Your Future' (PTYF) work experience programme, launched in November 2014, is an important part of Cisco's strategy to digitally upskill an additional 250,000 people by 2020.

The PTYF programme aims to both raise young peoples' career aspirations and inspire them to pursue careers in IT. Building on the previous report from 2016, in this social impact report you will see that goal is consistently achieved across the cohorts. Specifically, the programme aims to improve the 'soft' skills often requested by employers, including confidence, motivation, teamwork and influencing skills.

But with finite resources, available places on our programmes are limited and as awareness of PTYF in local schools has improved, the number of young people applying for places has increased significantly. Where places are so restricted, we need to decide how best to target the offering to support our goals around improving local social mobility. Our policy has always been to accommodate close relatives of Cisco employees so we hold 25% of places for them. After that, we need to offer places to students who are keen to come to Cisco and who might not get other work experience opportunities – young people who really need our help. And as a recent signatory to the Social Mobility Pledge, Cisco is keen to ensure that we direct our programmes to where they have the greatest impact.

A recent report on social mobility from the Sutton Trust and Boston Consulting Group gave some insight into how we might support local young people in achieving the best outcomes. The report

states that the three key drivers of social mobility are 'economic opportunities, capability development, and fair access to opportunities (both job and education opportunities).' It further comments that 'access to education and job opportunities is an ongoing issue with continued evidence of opportunity "hoarding" through networks, information asymmetries, and social bias.' They also acknowledge what the IT industry has known for some time – that the future will see 'greater demand for technical skills, and an increased value of "soft" or "essential life" skills (such as confidence, motivation and communication).'

As a corporate organisation, Cisco doesn't have the data or skills to judge how best to find students with high need. So for the 2018 cohort, we've partnered with Speakers4Schools using their NextGen work experience platform to offer places. Through the platform they're able to gather data on the school and the student and calculate the 'need' of the individual student, enabling us to make decisions and effectively target our offerings to those with the greatest need.

As with all programmes for young people, it will take time to discover whether we have made a social impact, but we'll track this via the social impact report in 2020 and beyond.

Objectives of the programme

The 'Pathway To Your Future' (PTYF) work experience programme, launched in November 2014, is an important part of Cisco's strategy to digitally upskill an additional 250,000 people by 2020. Through the programme, Cisco offers work experience placements for students aged 14-18 and aims both to raise the young peoples' career aspirations and inspire them to pursue careers in IT. Specifically, the programme aims to increase participants':

- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Motivation
- ✓ Understanding
- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Aspiration

During the programme, Cisco organises a range of activities to introduce young people to the world of work and give them an understanding of the various opportunities in the IT sector. The activities provided increase participants' confidence and develop their skills, so they can successfully apply for jobs or further work experience placements within the IT sector.

Key findings

MyKindaFuture contacted **734** young people to complete surveys on PTYF (by email or telephone) resulting in **262** responses; a response rate of **36%**. This report is an addition to a previous social impact report. For more information on previous years, please see [here](#).

Cisco has created an extremely valuable, helpful and engaging work experience programme:

Honestly, this work experience changed my views about futures in IT. I would definitely recommend this and since I've returned, I have not stopped talking about it. I came into it with a very sceptical view for my future in IT but Cisco changed this. I definitely admire the careers more and consider these for my future. It was probably one of the best weeks of my life and my favourite work experience so far.

It has given me a better understanding of different career opportunities and given me a glimpse of what my potential career could look like.

It has definitely brought new ideas to me for example apprenticeships which I am considering at the moment. I also would say that it is a great way to develop your skills like teamwork or leadership. It was the best week I have ever had in work experience and definitely helped me for my future and made me aware of the jobs available.

Nearly every individual both enjoyed their work experience at Cisco and found it useful. Common benefits listed by individuals as being particularly helpful included helping prepare them for work; giving them experience and skills which they could list in future applications for jobs; and opening their eyes to the range of different careers within IT. Individuals also appreciated the times they spoke with Cisco staff; asking them questions, listening to the staff members' experiences and seeing business or technology in action. The combination of being around Cisco staff and their clients and the interactive style of work experience created an informative and engaging environment for the individuals who took part.

Individuals in the 2017 cohort reported developing teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills during the programme. The most memorable part of their work experience was working together on a

project and giving a presentation, with the 'Dragons' Den' style pitch explicitly mentioned numerous times. Individuals also reported enjoying meeting people and making friends, often at the same time as their project or group work.

Of those individuals who participated in PTYF's previous cohorts, 83% are still in education, either studying for GCSEs (or equivalent) or A-levels, or studying IT-based subjects at college or sixth form. The remainder are undertaking degrees, apprenticeships, other study, a work placement or other full-time work.

The 16- to 18-year-old all-female cohorts' responses were nearly identical to those received from the main programme, except for the statement 'I used my work experience when applying for jobs, further study or work experience', for which the proportion of positive responses received was three percentage points higher among the older group.



Hari Vajja grows her knowledge

Stream: **Technical**

Year group: 13 | Work experience year: 2014

What are you doing at the moment?

I am currently studying A-levels in Mathematics, Biology and Philosophy & Ethics.

What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact this?

My early ambitions were always rooted in joining the IT sector and after doing work experience at Cisco, it affirmed my choice just by observing the work environment and the limitless opportunities available for me.

What are your future ambitions? Where do you see yourself in five years?

In five years I hope to have graduated in a Computer Science degree and work somewhere where I'll have opportunities to develop my skills, take on interesting projects and meet innovative thinkers in the industry.

What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience and what impact if any did it have on your confidence and career aspirations?

I acquired knowledge of various features of the multi-industry organisation, including the

roles of people working in the Technical stream and what difficulties the industry faces in the modern world. The highlight of this period was when I had to work with a team to program a Raspberry Pi that can be used to control a motorised buggy and then be presented to a panel of executives. In addition to improving my project management skills, I thoroughly enjoyed learning to implement and manipulate intricate data structures so an efficient program is created, while budgeting for time.

What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience, e.g. on CVs or application forms?

I have used my work experience to demonstrate my interest for Computer Science on my university application.

"I thoroughly enjoyed learning to implement and manipulate intricate data structures so an efficient program is created"

About Pathway To Your Future

Throughout the PTYF programme, participants attend:

- ✓ Presentations from Cisco employees about the day-to-day activities and challenges they face in their work. These aim to expand students' understanding of the interesting, varied and highly skilled nature of the work carried out in the IT sector.
- ✓ Mock interviews, which help them to improve their interview skills.
- ✓ Workshops, where they design and pitch a product within a 'Dragons' Den' environment.
- ✓ Group-work activities, where they can collaborate with their peers and network with Cisco employees.
- ✓ Practical sessions, where they gain hands-on experience of taking computers apart. This teaches them about the complexities of IT hardware.
- ✓ Walking tours around the Cisco offices, to better understand what office life entails.

The programme has been running since November 2014 at two Cisco offices: Green Park, Reading and Bedfont Lakes, Feltham. At each location, two different activity programmes are offered to the students: a Technical stream and a Business stream. The first focuses on introducing the students to technical activities performed by staff in the IT sector, and the second focuses on giving students an understanding of all the other roles that are necessary for Cisco to be a successful business. The week-long activities are targeted to the relevant stream.



Adam Bellman shares his aspirations

Stream: **Business**

Year group: 12 | Work experience year: 2016

“The real value for me was hearing Cisco professionals talk enthusiastically about their day jobs. This showed me that the world of business is an exciting and interesting area to work in”

What are you doing at the moment?

After a false start last year, studying law, psychology and maths at the Henley College, I have decided to retake the year and study maths, business and economics, with a view to following this up with a BSc in Marketing at Southampton University.

What are your future ambitions? Where do you see yourself in five years?

Once I've achieved my Masters degree, I would see myself working in a large, multinational, technology-based corporation. I believe that this would offer me the opportunity to gain a large range of business and marketing experience, possibly internationally. I currently plan to go to university to do a BSc in Marketing, hoping to follow this up with a possible Masters in Digital Marketing.

What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience and what impact if any did it have on your confidence and career aspirations?

The real value for me was hearing Cisco professionals talk enthusiastically about their day jobs. This showed me that the world of business is an exciting

and interesting area to work in. However cheesy this may sound, the moment I got home I told my parents that if I could get a job at Cisco, following my GCSEs, that I would want to start immediately.

What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience, e.g. on CVs or application forms?

I was not yet 15 when I completed my work experience, so I knew very little about how businesses worked. The way the week was structured gave me a good insight into how a global business operates. I have used this in my personal statement for university and on my CV, including how it helped develop my communication skills, my interview etiquette and my presentation techniques.

Is there anything you would like to add about taking part in the Cisco work experience?

It is a shame that it was only a week long. I am sure that there were many more interesting areas that could have been covered, such as research and development, international marketing and digital. Apart from that, it was a great and very motivating experience.



Why work experience is important

Work experience can benefit young people, employers and society and provide young people with routes to further study, apprenticeships or paid employment.

Young people

Work experience benefits young people in numerous ways:

- It helps them prepare for their future, by experiencing what the world of work is like.
- They learn that they can be productive and valuable members of the workforce.
- They gain confidence and motivation as they work alongside employees in successful businesses.
- They develop work-relevant skills, making them more likely to get a job in the future.

Young people learn about the recruitment process within the sector that they have worked in. This is crucial to breaking the cycle of unemployment, as without work experience programmes many young people would be deprived of this crucial information and would lack the skills and experience needed to

get a job.

Employers

Work experience programmes are also beneficial for employers. The placements are good for recruitment, as employers view work experience as crucial for developing a talent pipeline for their business. They are also good for the development of the current workforce, as working with young people helps develop employees' management skills, increases staff engagement and helps businesses connect with the local community.

Society

Society also benefits from the provision of work experience programmes for young people. Placements can help 'tackle some of the issues around deprivation and youth unemployment'* within communities, which leads to the development of local economies as the increased spending power of local people is translated into increased revenue for local businesses.

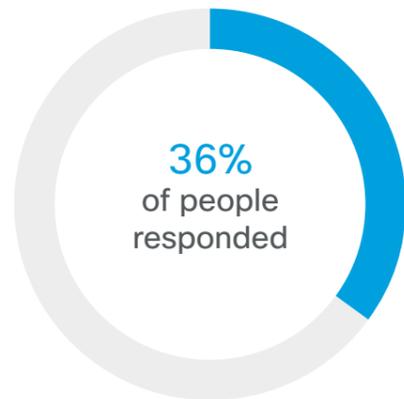
* CIPD, (2012), Work Experience Placements That Work: An Updated Guide for Employers, https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/work-experience-placements-that-work_2012_tcm18-10941.pdf

Who responded?

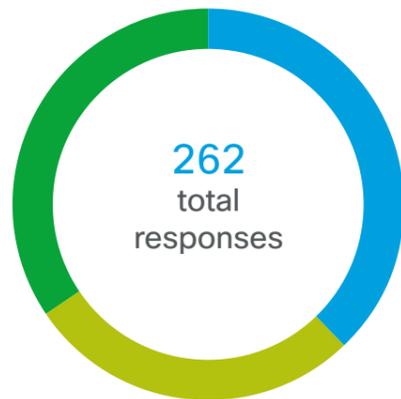
MyKindaFuture surveyed three groups of young people who had recently attended the PTYF programme, or had been on the programme in previous years.

Each group was emailed a bespoke survey. To boost response rates, the survey was followed up with telephone calls. This ensured an even spread of respondents from varying year groups, sites and streams.

- ✓ 14- to 16-year-olds who attended PTYF previously in either the 2014, 2015 or 2016 cohorts
- ✓ 14- to 16-year-olds who attended PTYF in 2017
- ✓ 14- to 16-year-olds females who attended PTYF in the 2016, 2017 or 2018 cohorts



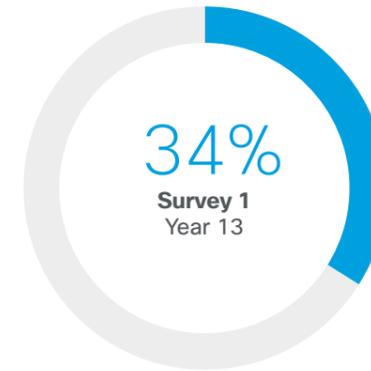
A total of 734 young people were contacted for the survey (by email or telephone), resulting in 262 responses; a response rate of **36%**. This is a four-percentage-point increase from the last survey, where 420 students were contacted and 134 responded; a response rate of 32%.



The breakdown of responses was as follows:

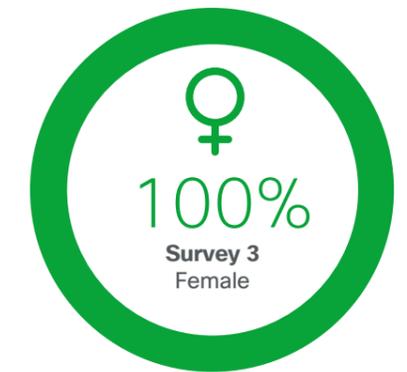
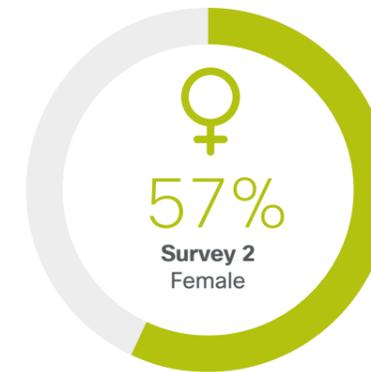
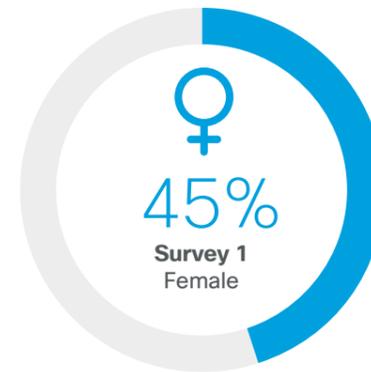
- 99 responses for survey one (previous cohorts on PTYF)
- 73 responses for survey two (14-16 year olds who attended PTYF in 2017)
- 90 responses for survey three (16-18 year old females who attended PTYF in 2016, 2017 or 2018)

MyKindaFuture also telephoned individuals for more detailed information to use for case studies.



Year group

Overall, respondents were mostly from year 12 (29%) or year 13 (23%). Looking at the individual surveys, survey one's largest group of respondents was year 13 with 34%. Survey two's largest group was year 10, with 40%, and survey three's largest group was year 12 with 35%.



Gender

Slightly over half (55%) of the responses to survey one were from males. The second survey was answered by a slightly higher proportion of females (57%) than males. The third survey was shared with a female-only cohort so all responses were from females.

Ethnicity

- White or White British (50%)
- Asian or Asian British (34%)
- Black or Black British (6%)
- Other (5%)
- Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (4%)



Results

“Nearly two-thirds of respondents said their work experience with Cisco’s Pathway To Your Future inspired them to pursue a career in IT”

Please note that these results build on results in the previous Cisco Social Impact Report (2014-2016).

Young people were very positive about their experience on Pathway To Your Future.

Nearly every person (96%) who responded to any of the three surveys enjoyed their work experience with Cisco. A high proportion (90-91%) felt their work experience opened their eyes to different career opportunities available to them in IT, helped them feel better prepared for the world of work and provided them with skills and experience they could use when applying for jobs, further studies or work experience. These results strongly demonstrate the value of the Pathway To Your Future programme.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents said their work experience

with Cisco’s Pathway To Your Future inspired them to pursue a career in IT, and half said that their work experience influenced what they are doing today. It is hypothesised that respondents might have already known they wanted to pursue a career in IT or business before the start of the programme and were instead using the placement at Cisco to gain more experience and confirm their decision. If this hypothesis is correct, it explains why a third of respondents were not inspired to pursue a career in IT by the programme specifically and means that the impact of the programme could be even more positive than these survey results indicate.

Overall, the programme shows very positive results for the young people involved.

Which skills have you developed because of your work experience with Cisco?

Young people from both the 2017 and all-female cohorts were asked which skills they have developed because of their work experience with Cisco. The most commonly reported skill was teamwork, followed by communication and problem solving.



What was the most memorable part of your work experience?

“The Dragons’ Den type of exercise was most memorable as it combined lots of skills needed in the workplace such as teamwork and good communication, that are valuable skills needed in your career”

All young people from the 2017 and female-only cohorts were asked about the most memorable part of their work experience on PTYF. The most popular response to this question was working together on a project and giving a presentation (31 mentions). In addition to these 31 responses, the ‘Dragons’ Den’ style pitch was explicitly mentioned 26 times.

The Dragons’ Den type of exercise was most memorable as it combined lots of skills needed in the workplace such as teamwork and good communication, that are valuable skills needed in your career. The presentation, although taking me out of my comfort zone, made me more confident in speaking in front of a group of people.

I most enjoyed making new friends and bouncing ideas off each other so eventually we came up with an innovative and creative concept for the dragons which we were all extremely proud of. I loved learning how to work a Raspberry Pi and racing the cars too. I won’t forget the pitch we made to the dragons showing how passionate we all were about our cityscreens concept.

Young people reported enjoying meeting people and making friends, often at the same time as their project or group work.

I most enjoyed being able to work in groups from mixed schools to work towards one final project at the end of the week. It taught us to be independent and think on our feet. It covered an array of skills like teamwork, problem-solving, public speaking, presenting and lots more.

The interactive style of work experience and being around Cisco employees and their clients created an engaging and very informative environment for those who took part.

My most memorable part of my work experience was sitting in meetings that my host was having with clients. It gave a real insight into the everyday goings on within such a large corporation and how different challenges [could] be handled.

I enjoyed having a chance to plan an event with my placement host, as it gave me chance to actually apply the skills I had been told were needed for that sort of situation and showed me that I would be quite good at doing something in a similar field.

The young people really enjoyed being able to learn more about the world of work and what their careers might look like. They also enjoyed talking to Cisco staff and hearing their stories, and the opportunity to see technology or business in action.

My most memorable part of my work experience was when we talked to some graduates who are relatively

new to Cisco and gave insightful perspectives on working at Cisco/other IT companies and the work needed to get a job at somewhere like Cisco.

I really enjoyed the interactive experience gained from listening to professionals in the sales and marketing departments because it gave me an insight on what that career holds and helped me to assess whether it was what I wanted to do in the future or not.

A long list of memorable parts of the work experience programme were mentioned by respondents to the survey; the most commonly occurring areas are shown below.

The qualitative responses were positive and enthusiastic in nature, without any negativity at all. This is very impressive.

All of it was amazing!

What was the most memorable part of your work experience?



If you were to recommend this work experience to a friend based on how it has helped you/influenced your career plans what would you say?

“It has given me a better understanding of different career opportunities and given me a glimpse of what my potential career could look like”

Out of the 163 people who completed PTYF this year, 125 gave positive qualitative feedback. The huge proportion of positive and enthusiastic comments contained within the survey responses means that Cisco can be reassured that they have created an extremely valuable, helpful and engaging work experience programme. The following are a selection of the qualitative comments shared.

The interviews have massively helped me in preparation for interviews I have had since. The interview skills have scored me jobs and awards.

Cisco is a great IT company that will help you massively during work experience. It helps you a lot in the world of work, and the people at Cisco are friendly and very welcoming. You will certainly enjoy it.



“Go for it! It is definitely worth it!”

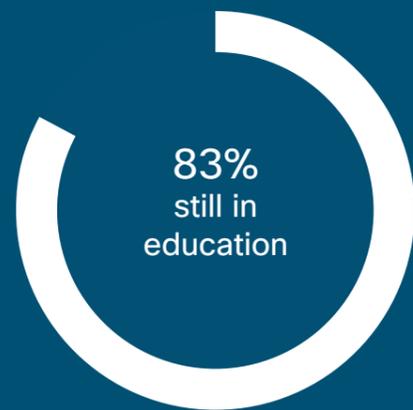
It was so much fun because it actually helped me learn about all the different technology and opportunities and also it gave us such brilliant insight into the world of work. I was learning something new every day and I know that sounds a lot like school but at Cisco, you were learning something that you would actually use in the future. All in all, I absolutely loved my experience at Cisco and I think it was so beneficial.

I would highly recommend it as it helped me understand, in depth, careers in IT and the level of technological development we can aspire to create.

It was extremely useful and I would really recommend it!

It's a really fantastic opportunity to gain an insight into working in the tech/IT industry, you get to see what responsibilities are in this industry and how many different opportunities there are. This work experience really helped me to improve my soft skills and prepare me for the world of work.

Updates to previous results



MyKindaFuture sent this year's survey to earlier cohorts (those from survey one), asking them the same questions they were asked originally, to try and compare their answers over time. The previous survey had 134 respondents, and 22% of those same individuals then responded to the survey for a second time this year. The responses they gave were generally similar, but as the number of respondents was lower than anticipated, we have analysed the data in other

ways to identify other, more robust patterns.

When asked what they were doing now, 82 of the 99 respondents (83%) from the earlier cohorts said they were still in education, either studying for GCSEs (or equivalent) or A-levels, or studying one or more IT-based subjects at college or sixth form. The remainder were doing degrees, apprenticeships, other study, a work placement or other full-time work.

How did the Cisco work experience programme influence what you are doing today?

"It inspired me to pursue a career in business management"

The earlier cohorts (those from survey one) were also asked whether their work experience with Cisco influenced what they are doing today. 53% said yes, and 47% said no. The lower-than-expected figure of 53% may be partially explained by the fact that some participants may have already known what they wanted to do before they took part in the work experience with Cisco. Alternatively, with more time having passed since the programme took place, earlier cohorts may have changed their plans since they were asked last time.

Forty-five of the fifty respondents who said in survey one that the programme had influenced them gave us more information about how the programme influenced what they are doing today.

The most frequently occurring theme was that the work experience programme had influenced their career choice, with 20 mentions.

I was motivated to pick Computer Science as an A-level, and I am now an offer holder to study Computer Science and Business at the University of Bath. I knew straight after I finished work experience that it was definitely the industry I wanted to work in, seeing it in real time changed my misconceptions about it.

My career plans in IT are based on what I experienced at Cisco. The Cisco programme was structured superbly, it allowed me to get a feel of the sub-sectors in the IT industry. This allowed me to narrow down my plans because I was able to find out what area I liked the most and which areas weren't for me.

One respondent stated that it 'showed that I didn't want to work in IT'. This is still a positive development: the programme enabled this young person to make the right choice for their future career.

The PTYF work experience programme also influenced young people's subsequent subject choices at school, college or sixth form. Seventeen young people reported pursuing or changing to subjects that could further their careers in IT or business.

I have taken Computer Science as a subject in my sixth form studies and I'm planning to pursue computer science as a major subject in my degree courses.

I am now pursuing a degree in Business Management and Economics at Exeter University - hoping to start work with a large firm, such as Cisco, when I graduate.

The programme encouraged me to carry on doing business onto A levels as my work experience was based on the business side of Cisco.

Learning more about the industry (whether IT or business) was helpful for the young people. Before the programme, many of them had misconceptions about the sector. Working alongside employees at Cisco informed the students about the realities of working in IT or business and showed them what a future career could look like. It also provided them with the knowledge they needed to make an informed choice about what type of career they would like to pursue. This expanded understanding of careers in IT and business was reflected in the responses to the survey, with young people reporting that the work experience was a very informative opportunity (13 mentions).

Before I went to Cisco I knew I wanted to do something in the IT/Computer Science sector, I just wasn't sure what. One of the activities at Cisco (coding in Python) influenced what I want to be in the future; this being a software developer.

It was the first I learnt of what programming entailed despite knowing a bit about it beforehand. It was also the first I learnt of ethical hacking and binary and this influenced me to go to university to study Computing though I'm hoping to change to Computer Forensics as that is where my interests were piqued from the Cisco work experience.

PTYF also influenced young people's degree choices, with many young people choosing a subject related to what they had seen at Cisco (eight mentions).

I'm looking more into IT-related careers.

The programme pushed me to take on computing further in my A-levels and has made computing and business my main choice of subject for university.

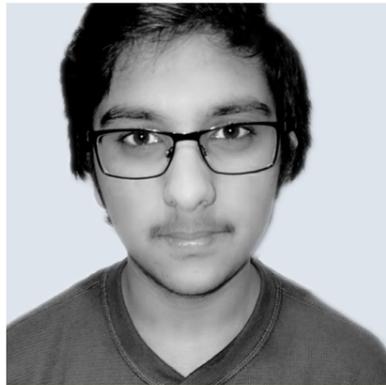
Hearing from young people who have been on PTYF in earlier cohorts gives valuable insight as to the longer-term impact of their experiences. With nearly half of respondents (20 out of 45) saying the programme had influenced their career choice, and with nearly all of these being in IT or business-related areas, Cisco can be reassured that the PTYF programme is inspiring the next generation to pursue a career in the IT industry.



Results for the female-only cohorts

There were also female-only cohorts of 16- to 18-year-olds who attended in 2016, 2017 or 2018.

The female-only cohorts were given survey three, with identical questions to those asked of the main 2017 cohort in survey two. From this group, 90 responses were received, which were very similar to the 73 responses from the main cohort of 14- to 16-year-olds in 2017. The 16- to 18-year-old female cohorts' responses were one percentage point above or below the main programme, except in the category 'I used my work experience when applying for jobs, further study or work experience'. The proportion of positive responses to this question was three percentage points higher than in the main programme, which could be expected given the difference in age.



Lakshay Talwar describes his motivation

Stream: **Technical**

Year group: 10 | Work experience year: 2017

“As a whole, the Cisco work experience was immensely enjoyable but the most favourable aspect of it all was to work on a product or service with a group of people and pitch our idea to actual sales and marketing executives at the end of the week”

What are you doing at the moment?

Currently, I am studying at Herschel Grammar School and will be completing my GCSEs next academic year. Apart from the core, compulsory subjects, I am additionally taking Spanish, Geography, Religious Studies and Business Studies. Outside of school, I partake in a variety of sports including karate, which I have been doing for the last six years and cricket, in which I play for county. I am also in the midst of completing the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award, having done volunteering for six months.

What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact them?

Having grown up in a family full of entrepreneurs, I have always been business minded and the drive to cultivate desire into success motivates me. Since childhood, I have loved to attend my parents' business premises and ask customers what they would be looking for. On days like Sport Relief in primary school, I would always set up a stall where children could pay to play a fun game that they wouldn't have played before and help to raise

money for charity. It was when I transitioned into secondary school that I realised that I possessed these entrepreneurial traits and began to develop them further. The Cisco work experience programme definitely had a positive impact on this as it gave me an insight into what the world of business was actually like. Speaking to people who are currently in the positions that I may want to take up in the future really benefited me as it enabled me to assess whether this field is what I want to pursue.

What are your future ambitions? Where do you see yourself in five years?

After completing my GCSEs, I want to take A-levels in Maths and Economics. Taking that I pass them, I would want to study a degree in a course related to Finance and Economics at university level. Once I have completed this stage, I would like to join a company as a post-graduate and gain experience in the business field. Ultimately, once I believe I have the experience and knowledge to do this successfully, I would like to become an entrepreneur and start my own venture.

What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience and what impact if any did it have on your confidence and career aspirations?

As a whole, the Cisco work experience was immensely enjoyable but the most favourable aspect of it all was to work on a product or service with a group of people and pitch our idea to actual sales and marketing executives at the end of the week. This activity helped me to develop my leadership, teamwork and communication skills, all of which are extremely valuable to an entrepreneur. As the project manager, I led a team of peers, delegated roles, listened to all of their contributions and combined them, along with mine, to present the best possible product that we could. What I also loved was that this product or service had to solve a global issue and be digital, relating it to the ever-changing and advancing world of today. Being able to lead a pitch in front of all of the other students and the employees definitely built my confidence and career aspirations.

What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience, e.g. on CVs or application forms?

When I applied for this work experience placement, I just wanted to fulfil my curiosity as to what the potential job that

I want to pursue is actually like and gain as much knowledge and experience out of the programme as I could. I learnt a lot during the week, including what the roles of working in the Human Resources, Sales, and Marketing departments entail. I have used my knowledge of this when I applied for work experience at British Airways. I constantly use the skills that I further developed at Cisco in my everyday life and continue to refine them.

Is there anything you would like to add about taking part in the Cisco work experience?

Overall, it was an amazing experience for me as I learnt about a field of work that I was interested in and it helped me to decide whether I want to continue to pursue this path. The atmosphere was brilliant as the employees were all relaxed and friendly in comparison to the seriousness that I expected. The open, distinctive building intrigued me because of the way it promoted a creative work space and encouraged a positive approach towards working.

Overview and next steps

‘Pathway To Your Future’ is an important part of Cisco’s strategy to digitally upskill an additional 250,000 people by 2020. Through the work experience programme, Cisco aims both to raise young peoples’ career aspirations and inspire them to pursue careers in IT.

MyKindaFuture contacted 734 young people for the survey (by email or telephone) resulting in 262 responses; a response rate of 36%. It shared three surveys with different groups of participants:

1. 14- to 16-year-olds who attended PTYF in either the 2014, 2015 or 2016 cohorts
2. 14- to 16-year-olds who attended PTYF in 2017
3. 16- to 18-year-old females who attended PTYF in the 2016, 2017 or 2018 cohorts.

The PTYF work experience programme is clearly benefitting the young people it works with.

Nearly every participant enjoyed their work experience with Cisco. Participants learned about the different career opportunities available within IT, gained experience and skills to use for future job applications and felt better prepared for the world of work.

The participants really enjoyed being able to learn more about the world of work and what their careers might look like. They also enjoyed talking to Cisco staff and hearing their stories, and the opportunity to see technology or business in action. The interactive style of work experience and being around Cisco employees and their clients created an engaging and very informative environment for those who took part.

Individuals in the 2017 cohort reported developing teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills during the programme. The most memorable part of their work experience was working together on a project and giving a presentation, with the ‘Dragons’ Den’ style pitch explicitly mentioned numerous times. Individuals also reported enjoying meeting people and making friends, often at the same time as their project or group work.

Of those individuals who participated in PTYF’s previous cohorts, 83% are currently still in education, studying for either GCSEs (or equivalent) or A-levels, or studying IT-based subjects at college or sixth form. The remainder are undertaking degrees, apprenticeships, other study, a work placement or other full-time work.

The 16- to 18-year-old all-female cohorts’ responses were nearly identical to those of the main programme, except in the category ‘I used my work experience when applying for jobs, further study or work experience’, for which the proportion of positive responses received were three percentage points higher among the older group.

Next steps

The PTYF programme aims to both raise young peoples’ career aspirations and inspire them to pursue careers in IT. Building on the previous report from 2016, in this social impact report you will have seen that these goals are consistently achieved across the cohorts. Specifically, the programme aims to increase the ‘soft’ skills often requested by employers, including confidence, motivation, teamwork and influencing skills.

As new T-levels begin to roll out, we continue to evolve the programmes to ensure we address the needs of the new cohort of learners as well as continuing to drive forward with our aims to improve social mobility.

As with all programmes for young people, it will take time to discover whether we continue to make a social impact, but we’ll track this via a social impact report in 2020 and beyond.



Hiba Dada tells us where she is now

Work experience year: 2016

What are you doing at the moment?

I’m currently a technology apprentice at M&G Prudential. I work in IT Operations (Enterprise Service) within the Environments and Deployments team. In environments, we check and maintain the integrity of all environments to ensure they mimic production. Whereas, in deployments it’s mainly based around code and database changes including promoting and configuring coding whilst maintaining the sanctity of the environment.

What were your early career ambitions and did the Cisco work experience impact them?

I was always interested in technology but was unsure in what area of IT I would like to work. Taking part in the Cisco programme showed me how diverse an IT role can be and how most people tend to associate technology with the hardware aspect, when there’s a lot of software that is used as well. This experience gave me a small perception of how technology plays a huge role in any business.

What are your future ambitions? Where do you see yourself in five years?

I’d like to see myself working with an employer in an increasingly

responsible position, that allows me to utilise my skill set and work closely with my colleagues in solving important issues, whilst taking on new and exciting challenges.

What did you enjoy most about the Cisco work experience and what impact if any did it have on your confidence and career aspirations?

I personally found the speed-interviews based on future career-styled questions extremely useful, as they help you understand the types of questions you might be asked in an interview and how to answer them effectively. Knowing these little tips and tricks helped improve my confidence greatly in a real interview.

What did you hope to achieve on the Cisco work experience programme and have you used it when applying for jobs, further study or work experience, e.g. on CVs or application forms?

I wanted to get a greater understanding of the technological world and gain an insight into the business perspective of how an IT business works on a larger scale and whilst seeing some technology used in action. I used my experience from Cisco to apply for the role I am currently in.



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