

Tips for Talking to Young People

Whether you are working with 100 young people for a full day workshop or just for a one hour session, here are a few tips that may make communication easier, more effective and more FUN!

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Take young people seriously!

Like many business people, young people report that not being taken seriously or respected is one of their greatest frustrations. So...

- talk to them like an adult (don't talk down to them)
- be sincere (they can tell when you aren't & quickly lose respect)
- ask them for opinions on specific topics
- ask specific questions about their experiences and interests.

Find out about their interests!

This will help you generate conversation and a positive relationship. Affirm their choices and interests and make connections about how they link to the world of business and work. Probe for interests such as: sports; music & the arts; computers, internet & mobile phones; fashion & shopping; reading & creative writing; what would he/she change in the world?!

Use humour where possible to engage, diffuse & encourage participation.

Listen, listen, listen!

- Maintain eye contact – show you are listening by keeping your attention focused on the person.
- Give them space to respond. Don't be afraid of a little silence

- Show you are listening by providing verbal & non-verbal feedback.
- Clarify by respectfully reflecting their opinion e.g. "it sounds like you really enjoy netball what was it that made you start up?"
- Ask open ended questions to encourage dialogue (not yes or no answers)
- Young people are hungry for respectful attention from adults. Keep your stories and wisdom to a minimum - let them talk. When you get to know each other, then share your story.
- Think about what is useful information e.g. "When I study I find that I work best when I take time out to go walking" rather than "When I was studying I had no computer, used an encyclopaedia and handwrote my essays". The first example is much more useful!

Be specific in praise & affirmation. Young people see right through generalised compliments.

