Enabling employees to volunteer as STEM Ambassadors can bring real benefits to STEM employers: from improving individuals’ skillsets to helping employees derive more satisfaction from their jobs; while also contributing to organisational Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) targets and having a positive impact on recruitment.

Employers frequently cite improved presentation, communication, organisation, leadership and mentoring skills amongst employees who have worked as a STEM Ambassador.

One employer, referring to an employee’s mentoring activities with some school students, reported that not only did his staff develop new skills, they also benefited from working with young people:

“The range of activities means that staff get to build a different skillset. We’re managing their development, so staff gain some mentoring and leadership skills and problem solving abilities, and sometimes the placement student thinks of a problem you haven’t thought of, so it’s a two-way learning process.”

Employer, engineering sector

Employers also report that their staff return to work more motivated and enthused, and seem to derive more satisfaction from their job. Employees enjoy working with young people, talking about the work that they do, and helping young people to consider a career in a STEM industry. They get satisfaction from ‘giving something back’ and contributing to young people’s learning experiences, especially when they are able to encourage them to get more involved in STEM subjects.

“It makes them feel good as well, they’re all incredibly proud of what they do. That has a real knock-on effect back in the workplace.”

Employer, engineering sector

Working with schools, colleges and youth groups not only makes teachers and young people aware that their organisation exists, but also allows employers to showcase the range of roles that are used in their businesses, and the skills that young people need to do those jobs in the future. They demonstrate a positive image of their industry by exposing young people directly to what they do, either by going into schools or by inviting students to visit them.

“Positive engagement of young people by STEM Ambassadors can also lead to improvements in local recruitment by STEM employers. The programme offers businesses the chance to work with young people who otherwise may not have applied to them, had those organisations not been actively involved in the STEM Ambassadors programme. One employer described their experience as, “…a way to help us to build a supply chain of future employees.”

Employer, engineering sector

Lesson two: impact on employers

STEM Ambassadors have a positive impact on their own organisations, bringing back new skills and experiences, while also raising the profile of their industry and promoting positive images of STEM at work.
Case study

Dale Power Solutions is one of the UK’s leading and largest providers of secure power service and solutions.

As a company, there are multiple benefits. We are based in Scarborough - people don’t tend to pass through this area very often. That means we need to recruit our apprentices locally, so it is important for us to be part of our community and give something back. We don’t do any advertising for our apprenticeship programme any more. Applicants come through word of mouth, and now we get between 50 and 80 a year – compared to only 16 back in 2006. Importantly, we now have a steady stream of girls applying for apprenticeships, thanks to our work supporting women in engineering events across the region. Our staff have developed new skills – their confidence has improved and they can talk in front of large groups – being a STEM Ambassador really does benefit their overall employability.

For other companies who think it is hard to recruit apprentices: you have to go out and engage with your local schools – you can’t do it all in one go, but one step at a time, you’ll reap the rewards!

www.dalepowersolutions.com

Employer benefits to participating in the programme:

- Impact on CSR targets
- More motivated employees
- Increased communication and presentation skills
- Improved local recruitment
- Positive brand awareness

Dale Power Solutions, Scarborough

Most, if not all, of our apprentices will go on to become a STEM Ambassador – they make up nearly 10% of our workforce – they go into detail with students about how they got into engineering, and what’s involved in their work for us.

Our STEM Ambassadors do a range of things in local schools: careers events; supporting young people with things like interview skills or CV writing; one-to-one mentoring of students who might be underperforming and would benefit from someone completely independent helping to motivate them and explore how to become more employable; and events for teachers showing them what we do as a business and helping them to get their students more involved in STEM subjects.