

# EngineersWeek

## 4 - 10 March 2017

## WOMEN IN ENGINEERING EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

### I. GETTING STARTED

1. Begin by defining what a successful event would look like and work backwards from there. What is the desired outcome/goal of the event? E.g. is it to raise awareness of women in engineering in the community? To encourage second-level students to consider careers in engineering? To inspire the next generation of engineers?

#### A few pointers

- Ensure a mix of different kinds of people so that students can see there are many different ways into engineering careers, many different paths to follow, and many different types of people working in engineering.
  - Be prepared for questions around stereotyping and whether there are any particular challenges or barriers for women who choose engineering careers
  - Ask the event contributors to think about their own career journeys and what kind of advice to offer students who are interested in engineering careers
2. Decide on the target audience for your event. Is it primary school children, second-level students, parents, general public, etc?
  3. Decide on audience numbers - how many people can you accommodate? Will you run one session on one day, or multiple sessions all week?
  4. Choose a name for your event. If your event is invite-only, the name you pick will not make a huge difference. However, if your event is bookable or open to the public, try to pick a name that's both descriptive and attractive (e.g. 'The Secret Life of Engineers' is a much better title than 'Engineering talks').

5. Decide on the structure and format of the event. Will it be an interactive talk, a workshop, etc? Some suggested event formats are:

- A: A panel talk featuring women at different stages of their careers. Each person may make a 10 minute speech, followed by a moderated Q&A with a panel chair. Figure out a way to involve the audience in asking questions, e.g. ask for questions in advance, invite the audience to write questions on paper and hand them up during the speeches, invite individual questions from the floor (you may wish to incentivise questions by offering a small treat to anyone who asks a question).
- B: Roundtable discussions. Seat small groups of students at tables; leave one or two chairs unoccupied at each table. Over the course of an hour, have 3 different engineers visit each table to chat to students and field questions. Ensure a good mix of different types of engineers and people at various career stages, e.g. third level student, early career, mid-career.
- C: Incorporate interactive elements into the event. E.g. make a video – invite students to comment on what they liked about the event or to hold up hand-written signs with comments; have students write comments on different colour post-it notes and attach them to a wall or window; have paper tablecloths and invite students to draw or write relevant comments on them. (You may wish to give a prize for the best contribution.)
- D: Exhibition stands. Allow students to tour a hall with exhibitions from different engineering professionals.
- E: Hands-on workshops. Involve students in making or designing something creative.

6. Get buy-in from key personnel. Who will be involved in the event? You may need more people than you think at first.
7. Plan the logistics for your event. See the next section for a detailed breakdown of event logistics.

## 2. EVENT LOGISTICS

### Digging into the details

Successful event planning is all about the details. The following checklist is a guide to get you thinking in practical terms about your event. You may wish to add some points of your own or to delete ones that don't apply to you.

- Will your event incur any costs? Is there a budget for the event?
- Decide on a day and time for your event. If your target audience is schoolchildren, earlier in the week tends to work better, and mornings are generally better than afternoons.
- Choose a venue. Is security clearance needed? Are there any health & safety issues? Does insurance cover visitors to the site?
- Allow travel time for your audience to and from the venue, and think about how your audience will get to the venue. Are they within walking distance? If they need transport, who will provide (and pay for) this transport?
- Invite your audience. For a school audience, why not issue a direct invite to a teacher or principal in the local area?
- Review the Child Protection Policy on the STEPS website if you are inviting children to your event.
- Do you need to advertise your event? Share your event with as many of your own networks (both online and offline) as possible.
- Will you be taking bookings for the event? Will you have an online system or take bookings over the phone? Who is in charge of this? (Event Brite is a handy, free tool for taking event bookings.)
- Identify areas of responsibility and key tasks for personnel. It's better to overestimate the number of volunteers you will need. For an in-house event, don't forget you'll need people to greet and guide visitors through the building. If your audience is schoolchildren, choose your best communicators for talks and presentations.

- Do a practice run-through and time the event. Write down event start and end times and how long each part of the event lasts. Circulate the timeline to everyone involved. Build in extra time for delays.
- Are there any IT requirements on the day? If so, who is in charge of this?
- Confirm final numbers close to the event.

## 3. ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

1. Make sure all those involved have been briefed on the format and activities of the day.
2. Run through emergency procedures with site visitors, and issue security lanyards if necessary.
3. Note that teachers or authorised school personnel must accompany schoolchildren at all times.
4. Take photos or video at your event. Make sure to get parental consent first if you are taking photos of schoolchildren, and do not identify individual children in photos.
5. Talk about your event on your social media channels (abiding by the photo consent rules above).
6. Evaluate your event. Use feedback forms on the day, or distribute an online survey shortly after the event.

## COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR A STUDENT AUDIENCE

1 Dress casually

2 Aim for an informal, conversational tone

3 Be jargon-free and age-appropriate in your language

4 Relate your topic to the real world

5 Tell a story – make it personal

6 Use visuals where possible, or use metaphors