perceptions changed. skills shared. young women empowered.

the challenge

64% of 17 - 21 year olds believe that employers prefer to hire men over women. She Can Be... aims to change this perception and empower young women to make informed decisions about their careers to see the City as not only a viable, but an exciting option for them.

our solution

Changing perceptions. Sharing skills to inspire the future workforce.

She Can Be... is a one day event providing young women, aged 14-18, with the opportunity to immerse themselves in what it means to work in the City. Throughout the day, which took place in February this year, 180 young women from Place2Be, Teach First, The Girls’ Network, and Young Enterprise networks were encouraged to use their communication, initiative and problem-solving skills in real life settings to build their confidence in the prospect of thriving in a City role.

To do this, the young women were paired, in small groups, with City businesses to increase awareness and understanding of how those organisations operate and to show the young women the vast array of opportunities available to them. This year, over 25 businesses took part, highlighting their commitment to targeting the barriers that contribute to the skills crisis.

The day is split into two parts, with the morning hosted by participating organisations. The afternoon saw the groups come together at East Wintergarden to practise the skills that they’d harnessed during the morning session.

objectives

Bust myths around women in the city by bringing young women together to:

- provide the platform to challenge the City and tell us what needs to change
- meet inspiring role models who can spark ambition to explore careers in the City
- see how their skills are transferable to the workplace.

Give companies the opportunity to:

- understand the actions they need to take and the barriers to remove to engage with young women
- gain a greater understanding of the importance of gender equality in the workplace
- promote the work that they are doing to create inclusive working environments.
- build strong links to a huge diverse network of the next generation of young women.

Feedback from young women

88% of young women felt empowered to make decisions about their careers after She Can Be...

86% of young women would consider a career in the City after the event

Feedback from employees

90% of employees felt more confident about the tangible action they can take to empower women in the workplace

The afternoon sessions scored averages of 3.9 stars out of 5

what the City said...

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At a time when 64% of 17 - 21 year olds believed that employers prefer to hire men over women (Girlguiding Girls’ Attitudes Survey 2016), and 10 girls to every 1 boy believe that they will face discrimination at some point during their career (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors 2016), we knew we needed to act.

In February 2019, She Can Be... empowered young women to make decisions about their future careers. We decided to measure the extent to which their perceptions change by asking participants to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements below before the event, immediately afterwards, and again one month later to ascertain what She Can Be... meant to them.

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changing perceptions

what the young women said...

“Never to give up and follow my dreams no matter what,” and “to be more open-minded about the careers I can do” because “I can be whatever I want to be.”

“What stuck with me was that it is important to be confident with your skills when choosing a job.”

51%
15%
8%
88%
66%
61%
82%
72%
31%
31%
60%
64%
88%
64%
47%
82%
60%
64%
48%
74%
64%

A career in the City is more for boys than girls
I would consider a career in the City
I have a good understanding of the different City careers available
I understand the pathways into a City career and the skills required
I feel empowered to make decisions about my future career
I feel confident in my abilities
City careers are more for boys

Half of the young women surveyed before She Can Be... believed that careers in the City were more for boys than girls. After the event, this fell to an extraordinary 15% - showing the benefit of participating in days like She Can Be... This percentage sunk further, to 8% one month later, showing that young women's belief in the City as an equal place not only changed after the event, but grew.

Before She Can Be..., 66% of young women would have considered a career in the City and immediately after the event, this rose to a brilliant 86% with one young woman stating that ‘talking to professionals in their industry and [finding out] how they got where they are today’ was a highlight. Interestingly, one month after the event, opinions returned back to 61%. This dip from an initial 66% to 61% post-event may reflect that the day provided a better understanding of the careers available to them but, despite this, they remain focused on a more vocational path.

I’d like to work in the City

Just over a quarter of respondents felt that they had a good understanding of the different City careers available before attending She Can Be... This rose to an enormous three quarters immediately after the event and was sustained one month later, with a key highlight being that the vast array of opportunities they were exposed to taught them that ‘women can work in the City, just like men’ and ‘all women are able to decide to have a career.’

understanding the opportunities

what the young women said...

“I pledge to have confidence in my abilities and remember to take every opportunity”

“I really thought that people that worked in investment were mostly men, but it was all women that we worked alongside.”

"Talking to professionals in their industry and [finding out] how they got where they are today’ was a highlight."
Before She Can Be…, less than a third of the attendees felt that they understood the different pathways into the City and the skills required. After the event, this increased enormously to over four fifths of the attendees, but one month later fell to just below half of participants. Interestingly, 39% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed when we followed up with them one month later which may illuminate that the initial increase in their understanding of the multitude of pathways now needs support to be properly implemented so they have therefore have put a neutral answer.

Before She Can Be…, 60% of young women felt empowered to make decisions about their careers. This grew to 88% by the end of the day, with one young woman stating that the thing that stuck with her most was “how determined everyone was and how hard they have worked.” However, this feeling of empowerment fell again to 64% one month after the event. Although a percentage increase persists from the first measurement to the last, this evidences our need to consider how we sustain that feeling of empowerment for the young women on a more long-term basis.

Sadly, under half of the participants felt confident in their abilities ahead of She Can Be…, but this increased to almost three-quarters immediately after the event. Anecdotal feedback tells us that so many of the young women were ‘motivated’ and ‘inspired’ as a result of the event, valuing ‘meeting people who have different backgrounds and [learning] that there are so many open pathways’. One month after the event, this fell to 64% but still shows a sustained uplift and marked improvement in confidence - a key skill that was profiled during the day. It is worth us considering how we can nurture that confidence after the event.