

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

VICTREX CASE STUDY

At the start of 2020, as part of the UN's International Women & Girls in Science Day, aimed at breaking gender stereotypes and raising the profile of **Women in Science**, Victrex saw an opportunity to raise awareness with our employees on the importance of gender balance within the workforce.

As part of this we developed a campaign, with an internal team of women and men volunteers, to engage with employees, their families and our local school communities. This included: information on the history and importance of **Women & Girls in Science**, experiments aimed at different ages of young people to carry-out at home, dispelling some of the myths about science and showing how science can be fun; case studies from over **15 Victrex Women in Science**, their career path and aspirations with tips on how to get into a career in science as well as real life examples of what a typical working day of a scientist looks like and finally "**Victrex Young Scientist of the Year**" competition, to encourage employees children to take part in the initiative.

Why has it been put in place?

Women are typically unrepresented in science and other STEM careers and Victrex wanted to actively start raising awareness about this in the workplace.

We identified that we needed to apply innovative ways of thinking to raise the profile of this agenda and create engagement amongst the workforce.

This initiative was created to showcase some of our own Women in Science across the global Victrex locations, provide tools to help educate and support our employees in discussions about STEM careers with their families, as well as open up discussions amongst a range of stakeholders both internally and externally on the importance of a diverse workforce.

What impact has it had on the organisation and employees?

This initiative was the start of a much wider agenda. Resources, such as case studies and videos, have acted as tools to continue and support discussions around gender equality within the business as well as externally with our partnered organisations and schools.

The response and feedback from our employees following the initiative was extremely positive and built a strong platform for us to develop on for future activity.

The main focus was to start the discussion about the importance of women in Science. Creating a company led initiative has helped to spotlight this agenda and its importance as well as inspiring young people, particularly girls, to pursue careers within STEM.

Creating a difference starts with our employees and the more encouragement we can get from company led initiatives the easier it will become to create change. We have seen this more recently with a high intake of employees engaged within the SIP Ambassador programme, where several of our employees took part in virtual training to help strengthen their skills in engaging young people in STEM careers. The International Women & Girls in Science initiative helped to support the engagement in this agenda, and we saw a large intake of new employees joining the Ambassador programmes throughout 2020.

What impact has it had on the community?

Victrex have been supporting the local communities where we work for several years and have continued to build strong relationships with schools, organisations and charities to achieve this.

Running these types of initiatives helped us to open discussions with local schools on ways Victrex can influence as a local employer and in turn assist schools in meeting their Gatsby Benchmarks - a framework of eight guidelines built to establish careers within secondary schools.

Whilst COVID-19 has created numerous challenges our Victrex employees have still dedicated 126 hours to STEM education between October and December. This has been across a range of activities from Mock Interviews to Virtual Q&A Sessions with young students and we hope to increase this work throughout the rest of the year as we continue to develop new ways of thinking to positively impact young people, particularly girls, to pursue careers within STEM.



How do you see the initiative evolving in the future?

This agenda continues to grow larger and larger each year and we want to continue to make change, this time, by putting a bigger focus on the younger generations in communities where we work.

Our aim is to eliminate some of the myths associated to Women in STEM careers by continuing to showcase (albeit virtually) some of our own employees and their careers to help promote change with the next generation and influence more females to pursue careers within STEM.

In order to strengthen our approach to this ever-growing agenda, Victrex continues to engage with our internal employees, promoting the importance of STEM Education. In addition, we continue to partner with organisations such as SIP and STEM Learning, who like us, are all passionate about inspiring the next generation. Through this, we feel we can have a bigger impact on influencing change within the communities where we work.

Interview with Jessica Long, CSR Lead at Victrex PLC



What is your role in the initiative?

The STEM agenda has been a huge part of my role for over 12 months now and like many I am constantly looking for new ways to innovate and build engagement of the STEM agenda within the workforce. In mid-January I highlighted the UN's International Women & Girls in Science Day to some of our senior stakeholders to address whether it was something the company would support, and the response was extremely positive.

Following this it was agreed to pull together a working group, the group consisted of ten employees initially, from various areas of the business including, Research & Development, Marketing, Project Management, Administration, Learning & Development and Internal Communications. The working group evolved as we built more and more materials and we had over 30 employees from various Victrex locations all helping to raise the profile of Women in Science.

Why did you get involved? Why are you passionate about achieving ED&I?

Like myself, Victrex employees are passionate about innovation in order to grow a sustainable future, for ourselves, Victrex and the environment. In order to build innovation, we must ensure we have a diverse workforce in order to generate a variety of thoughts and ideas. It is vital that organisations adapt to global changes and generational shifts, those that do, and embrace diversity, can encourage positive innovation and change.

Inevitably, the next generation are the ones we need to start influencing. Any initiatives which give us a platform to do this will always get my full support.

How do you feel it has had an impact on your work / your colleagues and/or your organisation?

The work we did in 2020 was the start of a very long line of projects, initiatives and engagement strategies planned for 2021 and beyond. Victrex is committed to this agenda and intends on making a difference. To support this Victrex have made several investments and now have a dedicated resource focused on our overall Corporate Social Responsibility agenda with a key focus on ED&I.

The initiative was a great stepping stone to opening up conversations across the organisation and discussing the challenges within STEM. These conversations may not have happened without creating a global initiative such as this and we can only make improvements as we move forward into 2021.

What do you hope this initiative achieves in the future, in terms of ED&I?

The 2020 initiative was a great start; however, this agenda is an important agenda that needs continued focus. It is important to keep the momentum to ensure we embrace diversity and encourage positive innovation and change.

Our aim is to continue discussions internally with our workforce and build stronger relationships with our education and community partners.

In addition, the resources which have already been built will continue to act as a useful tool in our continued discussions with local schools and will be shared, where appropriate, to help raise the agenda.

Thank you to our contributor



Jessica Long,
CSR Lead at Victrex PLC

