



Fletcher Building & Girl Boss NZ TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE FINALIST



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THE STORY

Motivated by the idea that “you cannot be what you cannot see”, an innovative partnership was formed to show young women exactly what’s on offer in a career in technology, innovation and STEM.

Just three per cent of high school girls are interested in a career in technology, and only 18 per cent of Fletcher Building’s staff are female. Determined to grow and nurture talent for the future, the company joined forces with Girl Boss NZ, an organisation founded by Alexia Hilbertidou to close the gender gap in science, technology, engineering, maths, entrepreneurship and leadership.

The GirlBoss Advantage programme gave 28 young women the chance to spend a week not just hearing about STEM, but actively participating and contributing. They undertook site visits to see the latest Fletcher Building projects, learned about personal branding and networking, and took part in a Dragon’s Den-style challenge, designed by the Fletcher Building Innovation team. The interns were invited to design the house of 2030, giving them a context to gather information during the week. They presented to senior leaders at the end of the week.

Programme participant Tufou, aged 17, says the internship gave her the confidence to start making some decisions about her future.

“Prior to the GirlBoss Advantage Programme I lacked confidence in myself. On the first day, I didn’t speak up in group discussions, but as the week progressed, being around 27 other intelligent girls who shared my interest in STEM and the supportive staff created such an empowering, welcoming and inclusive environment. By the graduation, I was able to confidently

speak to Fletcher's employees to help me work towards my goal of becoming a civil engineer," she says.

"This was something I wouldn't have been able to do before this programme. To be surrounded by girls who have the same passions as myself allowed me to understand that I am not the only one. The STEM industry can be quite daunting as it is so male-dominated, but the Girl Boss and Fletcher teams constantly reminded us that we are just as credible as any male. They all did an amazing job of creating a safe space for myself and the girls to unapologetically share our passions and aspirations."

Fletcher Building GM Sustainability Helen Jenkins says the programme acted as a welcome sign to the industry for young women.

"For any business that wants to thrive, having an open door for the most talented and determined new employees is vital. Our industry has in the past not been seen as having an open door for women to the same extent as for men, which means that women and girls are missing out on amazing careers where they would excel, and we are missing out on great people. Technology, innovation and STEM areas are the foundation of what we do, which is why programmes like GirlBoss are so important," she says.

"They are a big 'welcome' sign on the door into non-traditional fields for young women and girls. As a female engineer I know how important this kind of encouragement is and I hope we conveyed that while hosting the Girl Boss cohort. We had leaders from all across the business involved throughout the week and the consistent feedback was that they felt energised and inspired by the [girls'] fresh ideas and hands on approach. We were so impressed that we offered a paid summer internship to five students on the day."

Following the success of the programme, other companies have contacted Girl Boss to secure the programme in their workplaces.

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THE CHALLENGE

Only three per cent of high school girls are interested in a career in technology, and less than a quarter of engineering undergraduates are women.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Fletcher Building and Girl Boss NZ partnered together to deliver the GirlBoss Advantage Programme, a one-week internship for female high school students about to make crucial career decisions
- Participants were involved with site visits, personal branding, professional networking, and innovation exercises, to give an idea of what's on offer in STEM, building, construction, and property sectors
- More than 60 Fletcher Building staff were involved as mentors across the week



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- While the programme is about future gains in terms of recruitment, its 28 participants gave universally positive feedback
 - 93 per cent described it as life-changing
 - At the programme's start 60 per cent of participants were interested in pursuing a career in STEM; at the end 100 per cent were interested
 - Confidence in professional networking skills climbed from 36 per cent before the programme to 100 per cent afterwards
 - Before the programme, 37 per cent of participants described themselves as lacking confidence in public speaking; by the end 100 per cent described themselves as confident
 - The programme lifted awareness of diversity and inclusion at Fletcher Building showing it's not just about politically correct statements, but pragmatic actions

KEY LEARNING

For any business to thrive, having an open door for the most talented and determined new employees is vital.

DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.

Visit diversityworks.nz or call 0800 DIVERSITY (0800 348 377)