

Invisible Internet Zone

Schools outreach opportunity for data centres

May 2021

We all know that the future of our sector depends on adequate skills, and that the industry is facing both immediate and long-term skills shortages.

Addressing our long-term skills gap depends on two things:

- Firstly, enough children need to opt for STEM subjects at school to ensure that we can meet our technical skills needs with domestic talent.
- Secondly we need to position our sector as a career destination of choice, which includes explaining what data centres are and what they do.

This autumn we want to partner with [I'm an Engineer](#). They run online outreach activities to enable children in schools to talk to engineers and technicians working in the real world. The objective is to bridge the disconnect between the high level of interest in science among children but the comparatively low level of aspiration to work in science or engineering disciplines. If children cannot see a compelling career path and don't opt for sciences at school then we will continue to struggle for STEM qualified individuals to work in our sector.

This outreach is organised via a series of text chatrooms where a panel of engineers or scientists is on hand to answer questions from children. The questions tend to be very mixed – ranging from “can we be carbon neutral?” to “do you like cheese?”, but this supports the objective which is to demonstrate that engineers are normal people who drink coffee and go mountain biking, but also happen to do amazing things – like making the internet work.

The chats are organised into sector or topic specific “zones” each of which runs over about a four week period. There are lots of different zones covering engineering across different disciplines: [Food Zone](#), [Energy Zone](#), [Aerospace Zone](#) etc. Currently the Candela zone is running <https://candela21.imanengineer.org.uk/>

To run our [Internet Zone](#) later this year we need engineers working within the sector to volunteer a couple of hours of time. Each volunteer needs to provide a short profile and then be able to dedicate at least two hours of their time during the period that the zone is active to answer questions.

We also need to cover the cost of the activity. techUK is making a contribution but we need a modest amount of funding from the companies involved – probably about £500 per company.

How to get involved

Please get in touch with emma.fryer@techuk.org to register your interest, either at individual or company level. In the meantime have a look at some of the links below, which explain the philosophy behind the activity and give access to more information and resources.

- <https://about.imascientist.org.uk/about/philosophy/>
- [Professor Louise Archer and her ASPIRES research.](#)
- [A video explainer](#) of Science Capital.
- [How I'm a Scientist/Engineer supports science capital.](#)
- [Example of a Zone Report.](#)

Contacts



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