



The businessdynamics programme aims to inspire young people about the world of business.

# Bringing business to life

The Enterprise Education Trust is a national charity that inspires 14 to 19 year olds about the world of business, and helps them see the career opportunities available to them. *mine* found out more about the charity's businessdynamics programme, and spoke to a Rio Tinto Alcan employee who volunteers for the charity in his local community.

In the 30 years that the Enterprise Education Trust, a UK based charity, has been operating, it has helped over one million 14 to 19 year olds through its business education programmes.

The Enterprise Education Trust aims to empower young people, offer them real life business experiences, raise their aspirations and build their self confidence. The businessdynamics programme uses business volunteers as role models to inspire young people and bring business to life for them. The volunteers run seminars to improve young people's skills and their understanding of business, which brings them closer to the world of work.



Bruce Sharratt, process development manager at Lochaber, has been involved with businessdynamics for four years.

## Inspiring Lochaber's next generation

Bruce Sharratt, process development manager at the Rio Tinto Alcan smelter in Lochaber, Scotland, has been involved with the businessdynamics programme for four years. Through his seminars to local school children, he teaches them about how aluminium is produced at the smelter, and aims to inspire them about the opportunities available to them if they choose to pursue a career in the resource and process industries.

Originally from New Zealand, Bruce has worked in Lochaber for over ten years. When businessdynamics

approached the company looking for volunteers, Bruce was happy to get involved. He had been enjoying teaching Alcan's continuous improvement programme to colleagues in the company, and thought that businessdynamics would be a good way to combine his enjoyment of teaching with giving something back to his local community.

Bruce has now run several businessdynamics seminars, most recently in June. Students from the nearby Kinlochleven and Lochaber high schools attended a two day programme at the local council chambers. They received a number of seminars from local businesspeople, including Bruce, who ran a two hour session to a group of A level students.

Bruce's seminar focused on the operational aspects of Rio Tinto Alcan's aluminium business. He presented a brief history of the Lochaber plant and an overview of the aluminium industry, then talked about the smelting process and continuous improvement practices. The businessdynamics programmes are organised to give students a flavour of a number of business areas, so volunteers from other companies may look at areas such as marketing, IT or finance.

All seminars include an interactive session, giving young people hands on experience of business skills. In Bruce's seminar, the practical session looked at procurement, manufacturing and sales. The students' mission was to buy materials to manufacture a water container, and then negotiate a price to sell their finished product with Bruce. The team that made the most profit won the competition.

"The best way to learn is through practice," said Bruce. "Having fun and competing promotes learning. At the start, the students can be reserved, but they soon get into it, haggling over the price. Some of them are brilliant negotiators. At the end, we look at how they could have done things differently to get a better result."

Rio Tinto Alcan is a big part of the Fort William and Lochaber

community. The smelter employs 180 people, and the children attending the businessdynamics programme often know somebody who works at the plant.

Bruce feels our involvement in the programme helps the next generation understand more about our business and role in the community, and the opportunities open to them in our industry. The seminars can encourage students to consider studying science and engineering at university, the skills needed to follow a career path such as his. "If I can inspire some students to think about these subjects, then I've succeeded." Bruce said. "They always seem to have fun. They're laughing, involved and active."

### Developing skills and awareness

businessdynamics has two main programme areas: a key/core skills programme and a business awareness programme. The key/core skills programme is geared towards younger students, 14 to 16 years old, and teaches transferable skills such as communication, presentation and teamwork.

The business awareness programme, focused on the 16 to 19 age group, raises awareness of the different industries and companies that exist, and the different key areas within those, in which young people might

choose to pursue careers. This programme also supports the National Curriculum, as it counts towards students' five days of business enterprise education required every year. "We find that it is very important for students to learn earlier and earlier about the business world as it gets more and more competitive out there," said Marie-Pierre Darneau, business development manager with the Enterprise Education Trust.

The Enterprise Education Trust provides training for all volunteers before their seminar. The charity's network of programme managers arranges the programmes and assigns volunteers to sessions local to their home or work.

businessdynamics gives students insight into a variety of industries and careers, and takes volunteers with a wide range of skills and experience. Bruce Sharratt would encourage others to have a go on the programme: "It's a good thing to do. It doesn't take much of your time, and the feedback is excellent. It's good for the company, too. I'm more than happy to go back every year."

**If you are interested in finding out more about the businessdynamics programme, please contact Sue Brooks on [suzanne.brooks@riotinto.com](mailto:suzanne.brooks@riotinto.com), and visit [www.enterprise-education.org.uk](http://www.enterprise-education.org.uk).**



Many of the students on Bruce Sharratt's seminars know people who work at the Lochaber smelter.