

Suggestions for a Successful Technovation Field Trip

The following suggestions can help companies plan a successful field trip for Technovation participants. The goal of the field trip is to give girls an insider's view of a company—for them to see exactly what goes on, who works there, and what they do. Companies can apply these tips to create an experience that is inspiring and educational for girls.

1. Start with an ice-breaker.

Since girls may be coming from different schools, let them take a few minutes to get to know each other at the start of the field trip. Encourage them to talk to girls they have not met yet and learn something about them. If you need a simple idea for an ice breaker, you can use the Technovation Bingo Game in the appendix. (P.26)

2. Give a tour.

Show off your space! Take the girls on a tour through your offices, showing them everything from the cubicles to the conference room to the recreation room. Show them that engineers have fun, too, and that working in a company is a social job with many opportunities for collaboration.

Along the tour, you can stop by various departments and introduce the girls to real engineers. Perhaps ask employees to stop working for 3 minutes and briefly talk to the girls about what they are doing, why they enjoy doing it, and what their favorite part of their job is.

3. Ask for feedback on your products.

Show the girls the products you work on and ask them for feedback. They can be your usability testers for the day, ask them to tell you what they like about it and what they would improve. If you use their suggestions down the road, tell them about it!

4. Make it hands-on.

Let the girls play a game, do an activity, design a product, do research for you, or shadow an engineer and help her with her work for an hour.

5. Feed them.

If the girls will be visiting on a school day, they will need to eat lunch during the field trip. If your budget allows, it would be wonderful if the girls could eat in your cafeteria and taste

the gourmet offerings you have. If you do not have a cafeteria or funding to feed the girls, make sure to tell students to bring a bag lunch.

6. Introduce them to high-level women.

At some point during the day, introduce the girls to a panel of top-level women executives from each department to talk with the girls. If you do not have enough top-level women, you can include men as well. If possible, invite your CEO to come and say a few words to kick things off.

These are some topics panelists can discuss:

- What do computer scientists do? What does your typical day look like? What does your job entail?
- What struggles did you face on the journey to your current job and how did you overcome them? Be sure to highlight any shortcomings you had, bad grades you got, and mistakes you made in your academic or professional career. This information will help girls feel they can relate to you and empowers them to overcome challenges just as you did.
- What do you love about working in tech? What makes you excited to come to work each day?
- What problems are you trying to solve?
- What advice do you have for the girls?

Keep each speaker's time short (2-3 minutes) to allow plenty of time for questions, while keeping the total time of the panel to approximately 30 minutes. Students will start to lose focus and get bored from sitting and listening for too long.

Panelists can bring something tangible that represents their job to pass around as they talk to keep the girls engaged and give them a visual. It can be a photograph, a design notebook, or a product they created.

7. Encourage questions.

Pass out post-it notes and pens for girls to write questions for the panelists during the panel (and throughout the field trip). Even if all the questions are not answered, the process of writing questions will keep the girls focused and might spark their curiosity to pursue the answers later.

Once each panelist has spoken for 2-3 minutes, ask the girls to turn to a partner and share the questions that came up for them. After 30 seconds or so, allow girls to raise their hands and share their questions with the panel. This will help shy students formulate their question and practice asking it with a partner before having to raise their hand and share it with the group.

Often, the adults in the room (teachers and mentors) will be more enthusiastic about asking questions during a panel than students will. Try to encourage questions from the girls instead.

8. Give them advice and encouragement.

Throughout the day, make a point of interacting with the students individually and offering them encouragement to consider a career in STEM. This field trip may be their first exposure to this industry, and we want them to feel welcome in it. Hearing directly from speakers that they love their careers and enjoy what they do will go a long way for them to believe they can do it to.