



Kingfisher



# RUNNING A YOUTH BOARD

A TOOLKIT FOR BUSINESSES

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# Introduction

B&Q recently embarked on a new adventure – the launch of our Youth Board. This brought together young people from around the UK to advise our business.

Running our Youth Board was a hugely valuable experience both for us and for the young people involved. It led to new ideas and gave us a different perspective on the contribution young people can make in business.

This toolkit is designed for other businesses who are considering launching their own Youth Board.

We hope it will provide both inspiration on the benefits, as well as insight into the practicalities involved.

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## Foreword

Young people have the greatest stake in the planet's future, and many of the best ideas for changing the way the world works. They are our future leaders, customers and employees. Yet young people's voices are often overlooked in business.

We launched the B&Q UK Youth Board to tap into this potential. The Youth Board brought together nine young people and was tasked with finding new solutions to some of B&Q's toughest sustainability challenges. The Youth Board members were given access to our most senior leaders and supported in their work by our partners at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

The experience was a hugely positive one for B&Q and Kingfisher, its parent company. The young people who worked with B&Q through the Youth Board brought completely fresh perspectives and exciting ideas to our company. It helped to broaden our outlook and led to new projects with real business potential that are now being developed within B&Q.

Being involved in the Youth Board reinforced to me what an important contribution young people can make when they are given the opportunity. We hope that by publishing this toolkit we will encourage others to tap into this potential.

Sir Ian Cheshire  
Group Chief Executive  
Kingfisher plc

Kingfisher







Being involved in the Youth Board was a once in a lifetime experience. No other opportunity in business offers such an interesting and open challenge.

We were all only 16-18, and just starting to think about our careers. The experience taught us about business and leadership, and led us to view the retail world in a new light. The one-to-one mentoring with a B&Q executive board member was one of the most beneficial aspects of the project, and the subject we focussed on was also fascinating and challenging – it took us out of our comfort zone into whole new ways of thinking. It has positively influenced how I see business and how I approach my studies at university.

Having a Youth Board isn't just about giving young people a helping hand – it benefits the business too. When you reach Board level in business you have 'made it' but your ideas can become a bit fixed. Young people have a different mind-set, we inject new perspectives and when we have a new idea we try to work towards it without ruling anything out.

Unfortunately it is rare for young people to be offered such an opportunity, and that means companies and young people are both missing out. I'd encourage any business to consider a Youth Board – it really is a win-win.

Jaideep Wasu,  
CEO of the B&Q Youth Board



## In practice – the B&Q Youth Board

How can B&Q flourish in a world of rising costs of energy, raw materials and waste disposal? This was the real business challenge we set for our Youth Board. Answering it was no easy task, but the end result completely exceeded our expectations.

B&Q UK has a longstanding commitment to sustainable business but we face some tough challenges. Top among these is how we can design out waste from our business and products. With a challenge of this size we knew we needed new approaches and ideas for completely different ways of doing things. We needed to look in new places for these ideas and that's how the idea of a Youth Board came about.

Working with our partners at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation we launched a nationwide competition to find our Youth Board members and recruited nine 16 to 18 year-olds who we could see had great potential. We didn't look for those with the highest school grades, but for young people with energy and intelligence who were willing to ask difficult questions and rise to a new challenge.

The Youth Board met several times during the year, making visits to B&Q's stores, head office and suppliers. Members also spent time with our most

senior executives. It was important to us that they came away having had an insight into business that they couldn't get elsewhere. Each participant was mentored by a member of the B&Q board, and met with their mentor several times during the year. They also worked closely with our partners at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation who provided ideas and inspiration on the specialist subjects that were central to the brief.

Together the Youth Board members developed a number of potential commercial solutions for B&Q to adopt and presented their findings and recommendations to the B&Q Board, Group Chief Executive, Sir Ian Cheshire, and Dame Ellen MacArthur in summer 2012. One of their ideas is now in commercial development within B&Q. Within Kingfisher, B&Q's parent company, the Youth Board's insights have been used to help shape targets on closed loop innovation which are part of the Group's Net Positive sustainable business approach.





“Being on the Youth Board was an amazing opportunity to gain an insight into how retail works and how it will need to evolve in the future. Working with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation was a really valuable part of the process and has sprung me into my product design degree with a greater and deeper knowledge into the holistic impact of a product’s lifecycle. Since the Youth Board finished I’ve been back to do an internship at B&Q. It’s great to see how our ideas are filtering into the business since the Youth Board.”

Mark Buckley, Youth Board member, subsequently came runner up in the Young Designer of the Year competition for his sustainable and stylish design for a garden shredder. The competition was run by Elle Decoration magazine. See [www.markbuckleydesign.co.uk](http://www.markbuckleydesign.co.uk)



“ I previously wouldn't have seen retail as an interesting career path but being on the B&Q Youth Board completely altered my view. I've now switched my degree to one in Retail Management. I'd advise any young person to get involved if they see an opportunity like this. Even just taking part in the application process opened my eyes to new opportunities. I came away with a better understanding and more positive perception of business, and a great network of contacts. ”

Since his time on the B&Q Youth Board Jamie Taylor has completed an internship with the business. He is now a member of Kingfisher's prestigious Advisory Council, a group of external experts who advise the business on sustainability. He is studying for a degree in Retail Management at Loughborough University.

# STEP BY STEP

These are some of the many practical lessons we learnt from running our Youth Board.

## Planning

### Be clear about your aims and objectives

Is the goal of your Youth Board to provide a sounding board for the business? Or is there a specific idea you want them to explore and develop? Why will a young person's perspective be beneficial? Being clear about your goals will help you to recruit the right people, to set a clear framework for them and to secure the backing you need internally. At B&Q we brought our Youth Board together to tackle a challenge that needed a completely fresh approach and we tasked them with finding solutions to a specific problem. Having this clear brief made life easier for the Youth Board members themselves, and for people in the business to understand why a Youth Board had been created and the benefits it could bring.

We received a lot of requests from within B&Q for the Youth Board members to get involved in different internal projects but the Youth Board had only limited time to give. Having a clear objective made it easier to prioritise their time and to keep focussed.

### Find the right partner

Working with an external partner can make for a more successful Youth Board. They bring expertise on relevant topics and help to give the Youth Board members a balanced and objective perspective. This broader view is essential if your Youth Board is there to challenge 'business as usual' thinking. At B&Q we worked with our partners at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation – experts in the Circular Economy who help us to develop closed-loop innovation in our business. They nominated a key point of contact who was available and involved throughout the project. He was able to share expertise with the Youth Board members, to answer questions and to stimulate their thinking with examples from other businesses and organisations.



## Get buy-in

You will need your senior leaders to devote time to the project, so getting their buy-in up front is essential. Develop a clear project plan that outlines the time and budget requirements, and make sure this is reviewed and signed off by the senior leaders.

## Appoint a project manager

You will need someone internally to oversee the Youth Board, to organise the logistics and manage the relationship with the Youth Board members, your partner organisation and within the business. Be realistic about how much time is involved and dedicate enough resource to enable the project to run smoothly.

## Plan your Youth Board

This involves a number of decisions:

### > How many members?

You need enough to bring a broad range of perspectives but not too many or it will be hard for everyone to contribute equally. The more Board members, the greater the administration involved for your project manager and others in the business involved with the project.

At B&Q it was important to us that every Youth Board member was assigned their own senior-level mentor within the business. We recruited nine members to match the nine members on the B&Q executive team.

### > What ages?

We recruited Youth Board members who were 16-18 years old. This age group was mature enough to understand the topic but was not well served by other business-led initiatives. It allowed for a diversity of ages, but not such a big gap that the

oldest would dominate the debate. We set a clear cut-off date in our recruitment information, so anyone applying had to be over the minimum age and below the maximum on a specified date.

Remember that working with anyone under 18 creates a legal duty-of-care and you will need to plan accordingly, see below. Meetings will need to be scheduled during school holidays to prevent them needing to spend time away from school/college.

### > How often will they meet?

Be clear about the level of commitment involved before recruiting the Youth Board members. Key considerations are how often they will need to meet, and when and where meetings will take place. It makes sense to specify this up front so that you don't end up recruiting people who can't meet the required commitment. At B&Q we included these dates on the website used in the recruitment process and specified them in the contracts with every Youth Board member.

Make sure that all planned meetings are held in senior leaders' diaries.

### > Budgeting

Allocate enough budget for project management, travel and accommodation expenses. Members of the B&Q Youth Board also received a small honorarium at the end of the project. This was dependent on attendance at all sessions.



“Project managing the Youth Board has been one of the highlights of my career. It’s exceptionally rewarding and demanding in equal measure and offers an amazing development opportunity for someone looking to progress their career. Overseeing the Youth Board led me into the Circular Economy agenda – something I knew nothing about. This opened the door to my managing our partnership with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and to using my expertise to advance our policy work and communications in this area. Strong bonds were formed during the Youth’s Board’s tenure and both myself and my counterpart from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation remain in regular contact with them all.”

Alex Duff, Kingfisher’s Corporate Affairs Manager and former Youth Board Project Manager



Veronique Laury, current CEO of Kingfisher company Castorama France, was a mentor to Mark Buckley

# Recruitment Recruitment

## Recruitment

### Create a candidate brief

Think about the type of people you want to recruit and the characteristics they need to have. We were looking for bright, confident and motivated young people from a range of backgrounds. The quality of their ideas was more important than their school grades so we took the decision not to ask them about their academic achievements during the recruitment process.

### Advertise widely

We advertised the Youth Board in the local and national press, through customer emails and on Facebook and the B&Q website. We received far more applications from male candidates than female ones and, as a result, our final Youth Board had just one female member. With hindsight we believe we could have done more to reach out through our advertising to young women to ensure a better balance between male and female members.

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# Recruitment

## Recruitment

### Agree a shortlisting process

We used a three stage application process to identify the best applicants:

- Stage 1 – a written application, including a 500 word essay.
- Stage 2 – the 50 best applicants were asked to submit a two minute video in response to a business-related question. The video could be shot on any camera, including on a mobile phone, and uploaded to YouTube.
- Stage 3 – we invited 18 final applicants to a day assessment centre, where they were given three challenges to solve in groups.

Senior managers and executive board members from B&Q attended the final recruitment day and assessed how well the candidates worked and behaved in small and large teams. Each staff member was allocated two candidates to observe and at the end of the day they shared their views to ensure we selected a group with the right balance of skills and personality types.

It was important to us that all candidates who took the time to attend the final stage gained something from the experience. The B&Q CEO informed the unsuccessful candidates face-to-face and took time to provide them with constructive feedback and reflect on how attending the day's session was useful experience. We also sent individual detailed follow-up feedback to everyone involved.

### Draw on internal talent

The purpose of the Youth Board at B&Q was to bring new perspectives and to challenge existing ways of doing things. We felt it was important that the group was also able to draw on knowledge of how the business worked.

Our Youth Board was widely advertised within B&Q and our goal was to fill at least one spot with an existing employee. In fact the quality of applicants internally was so high we ended up recruiting two to the final Youth Board.

Their knowledge of the business proved invaluable at the early meetings in bringing others up to speed.

### Get the legalities right

The Youth Board members may have access to potentially sensitive information and all B&Q Youth Board members were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, which covered communication with the press and use of social media.

As our Youth Board included under 18s we got signed consent forms from their guardians before they travelled and for any photography. A counter-signature from their guardian was also required on their contract/confidentiality agreement. We found it was necessary for the Youth Board to attend some meetings during term time, as school holidays differed between the different UK regions,

although we kept this to a minimum. On each occasion the Youth Board members were asked to obtain written consent from their school/college.

Make sure that anyone who could spend time alone with the young people has been CRB checked. If your Youth Board is mixed gender and will be making overnight visits you will need both a male and female chaperone to accompany them.

“Successful businesses are built on innovation, but a ‘business as usual’ mindset can stifle innovation, especially when it comes to tackling sustainability challenges. Young people aren’t constrained by decades of business experience, they take new ideas in their stride and they have the ability to think in different ways and to breakdown seemingly impossible challenges.”

Matt Sexton  
CSR Director B&Q UK





“The great thing about the Youth Board is that you come at the business from a different angle. When you’re that age you see the possibilities, and have an invincible confidence in the future – but also ask some tough questions that maybe people in the business have stopped asking.”

Damian McGloughlin, Retail Director B&Q UK and Ireland, and a Youth Board mentor

# KICK-OFF KICK-OFF

## Kick-off

### Build a team spirit

As your Youth Board gets going, you will need all its members to feel confident about sharing ideas and challenging each other’s thinking. Taking the time to build a good team spirit will enable your Youth Board to work more effectively and collaboratively.

At the start of our project, we held an away weekend for the Youth Board members where they could get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere and take part in a number of team building exercises. This enabled them to build a good rapport that contributed to successful team working later on.

### Elect a CEO

It is useful to have a chair or CEO who can facilitate discussions and represent the whole Youth Board when necessary.

The B&Q Youth Board members elected their CEO on the recruitment day, with each one given the opportunity to stand for CEO and to vote for another team member. Whilst this turned out well for our Youth Board, in other situations it might be better to hold the election later on when the Youth Board members have had more time to get to know each other.

Your CEO may need additional support to develop the skills for this role.

# KICK-OFF

## Introduce the challenge

We set a clear challenge for the B&Q Youth Board that reflected our aims and objectives but gave them the freedom to explore different approaches and solutions. We avoided being over prescriptive so they could follow their own ideas and insights.

Responding to the challenge required the Youth Board to get to grips with some complex topics relating to the Circular Economy. None of the Youth Board members had prior knowledge of the topic or the implications for business. We made sure they had plenty of opportunities to meet with experts at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in this early stage who could answer their questions and help them to develop their thinking.

## Involve the business

To get the most value from the Youth Board you need the members to get to know the business and to expose people at every level of your business to the ideas and energy of the Youth Board.

At B&Q each member of the Youth Board was supported by a member of the B&Q executive board. These executive mentors played an active role, meeting regularly with the person they were mentoring to answer questions on the business, to give advice and to hear their ideas.

These relationships proved very successful and made a significant contribution to the overall success of the Youth Board. Many of the Youth Board members remain in touch with their mentors since the board finished and even when the executives involved have moved on in their careers.

We also encouraged the Youth Board to meet with subject matter experts throughout the business during the project.

## Maintaining momentum

Make sure you allow enough time for the Youth Board to meet and to build a good working relationship. We found that one-day meetings were too short and that two days with an overnight stay worked better.

“Being on the Youth Board was a unique opportunity and interesting challenge. It has built my confidence and challenged me to do things I’d never have done before. It’s changed my perspective on business and given me a great advantage in developing my career. I learnt a lot from my mentor who is a great role model and we are still in touch today. It’s really important for young people to interact with business and to think about what the future of business should be. So many of my friends now ask me for advice when they are applying for jobs and internships. I feel privileged to have had this experience and insight into what a good business should be.”

Carys Jones-William is a former Youth Board member who has since spent time gaining experience in B&Q’s marketing department and with the business’s external PR agency. She is now studying for a degree in Psychology at Durham University.




# COMMUNICATE COMMUNICATE

## Communicate the results

Give your Youth Board the challenge and opportunity of presenting their findings to the business. This is a great development opportunity for the Youth Board members and a chance to showcase the ideas they have developed to the business.

The B&Q Youth Board was given a two-hour slot to present their findings to the B&Q executive board, Kingfisher's Group Chief Executive (B&Q's parent company) and Dame Ellen MacArthur. The Project Manager played a key role in helping them prepare for this opportunity.



"A Youth Board brings a welcome fresh perspective to a business – both from a customer point of view but also from a commercial point of view where bright individuals tackle a business issue without any of the restrictions colleagues already in a business will put on themselves.

Young people can make a massive impact on a business. They represent the customers of the future and are particularly adept in the digital world. They are unforgiving but have unwavering optimism and unfettered thinking as they challenge anything. And last but not least they are our leaders of the future – secure them into business early to harness the best talent!"

Katherine Paterson, from Hobbycraft, is the former Marketing Director at B&Q and Youth Board mentor

"Lack of experience can sometimes be a good thing. It brings greater optimism and a willingness to innovate and challenge conventional thinking. That's precisely the outlook we need if we are going to solve the many challenges our society is facing. We were expecting great things from the B&Q Youth Board but none of us predicted just how rigorous and realistic their final study would be. The experience showed them that business can be a driver for broad and significant economic change, and reminded us never to underestimate young people."

Joe Iles, at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, supported the Youth Board members throughout their work at B&Q. His expert advice and insights on the Circular Economy enabled the Youth Board members to respond to the brief they were set.



# WIDENING THE IMPACT

## Widening the impact

Launching a Youth Board can change attitudes within your business and among young people and it is worth seeking out opportunities to widen this positive impact beyond just those individuals directly involved. For the B&Q Youth Board this included:

- > School visits - The B&Q executive mentors each visited the young people they were mentoring in their home town. Where possible this included making a presentation at their school/college and answering questions from other students about the project, B&Q and business more widely.
- > External events - We found an opportunity for the B&Q Youth Board to present to delegates at the UK's Retail Week conference, which brings together leading figures in the retail world. The Youth Board members shared their perspectives on the challenges facing young people and attitudes to careers in retail.
- > Media coverage - Coverage in the local and national media raised awareness of the Youth Board, and has proved invaluable in helping to build a portfolio for each of the Youth Board members.

# FOLLOW UP

## Follow up and legacy

Look for opportunities to keep in touch and to continue benefiting from the skills and talents of your Youth Board members. At B&Q we have provided work placements for several former Youth Board members and we hold annual reunions to keep in touch with the group as they finish their education and launch their careers.

These sessions are a useful opportunity for them to review our progress at implementing the ideas they helped develop and to continue to challenge our thinking.



Dame Ellen MacArthur with the Youth Board



If you're considering a Youth Board for your business and would like to discuss any of the ideas in this toolkit, contact:

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