

Reinventing the Chemical Industry and our future workforce



The impact of the STEM skills gap is clearly very pertinent to the UK's chemical industry. Chemical manufacturers and suppliers require a workforce with varying levels of STEM skills not just to cope, but to innovate.

The UK chemicals sector is a key enabler for achieving Net-Zero. The sector provides many of the technologies needed to transition to a low carbon economy, and our highly skilled, technically advanced workforce can play a leading role in the charge for industrial decarbonisation.

Net zero and the introduction of new digital technologies, to name a few, are the leading trends altering the day-to-day operations of chemical businesses. There is a clear need to maintain and grow the sector's competitive position in global markets. However, the rapidly evolving nature of net zero and new digital technologies means that there is still so much unknown, and companies will need time and support to adjust and prepare for the world ahead. This is especially true given the hugely disruptive impacts of Brexit, COVID-19, the cost of living and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

These challenges mean reinventing our current technologies, adapting and upskilling or reskilling the workforce. However, they also represent an opportunity to reinvent the sector and engage with the next generation of highly skilled workers.

Steve Elliott, Chief Executive of the Chemical Industries Association (CIA) said: *"We must recognise the move toward Net-Zero and Industry 4.0 as an attraction and perception opportunity. Now more than ever, it is important that chemical companies live up to the standards and expectations of the modern workforce. This also means a solid commitment to ED&I and a proactive approach to promoting the breadth of rewarding career pathways available in the sector"*.

While it is true the chemical industry has an important part to play in the achievement of net zero targets for the UK, for a long time it has been known as the primary contributor to toxic pollution, climate change and other problems that threaten our health. This certainly presents a challenge in terms of undermining the industry's contributions and to the industry's ability to attract new talent.

CHEMTALENT - Future talent changing the face of the chemical industry.

CIA's ChemTalent is working to shape perceptions and be part of exciting initiatives solving society's everyday challenges.

ChemTalent is a network of people working in chemical and pharmaceutical businesses located in the UK. Members are either at the start of their career or keen to broaden their skills and voice their opinions on behalf of the UK chemical industry.

This group aims to be a coveted platform to inspire, to debate and to transform the future of our industry.

It recognises the importance of supporting STEM education, to continue advocating for apprenticeships, recent graduates or those working towards a chemical engineering related degree, as well as early careerists in our industry. For that reason part our work has been delivering of the network's four pillars (Sustainability, ED&I, Mental Health & Wellbeing and Innovation) as well as promoting STEM education and inspiring the next generation of young people in science.

As a result, the network has put together a STEM Guide which contains useful information for organisations and schools who need help to start their own STEM programme and activities. The guide highlights key information such as how to become a STEM ambassador, links to useful websites with further training/ activities and case studies from multiple companies on what they do for STEM.

It does not end there. We understand most graduates come into the workplace with only academic knowledge unaware of the skills necessary for most job roles in industry. The network's aim is to help students and early careerists better understand our sector and upskill graduates to ensure a smoother transition from university to work. Therefore, with the help of the young ambassador and influencers ChemTalent plans to host a series of interactive workshops focusing on various useful topics. We hope to confirm workshop dates soon.

Do you want to join? The network provides the opportunity to broaden your horizons and understanding of the chemical industry beyond just your own job, enable you to contribute to the industry's policy and positions on key issues and allow you to be involved in building the reputation of the industry by being a key role model and by engaging with our stakeholders.

It's time to shape the industry! if you would like to find out more about our work or how to join please email chemtalent@cia.org.uk

