

Get a Grip – Scientific Communication of Human Factors to the Next Generation

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SUMMARY

The Get a Grip Ambassador programme, trained seven Human Factors (HF) professionals in public engagement and creative communication, enabling them to design and deliver inclusive workshops to school groups underrepresented in engineering. These workshops introduced nearly 300 students to HF through hands-on design challenges, significantly increasing awareness and interest in the discipline among students and teachers. Evaluation showed strong ambassador skill development, high student enjoyment, and positive teacher feedback, highlighting the programme's success in inspiring future ergonomists and fostering outreach best practices.

KEYWORDS

Education, Communication, Design

Introduction

A creative public engagement project supported HF professionals on the 'Get a Grip Ambassador' programme. The aim was to develop skills in public engagement, creative communication methods and to give opportunity, reflective framework, and support to develop and deliver in-person workshops to school groups (particularly those underrepresented in engineering). They have become confident advocates of HF, able to clearly understand and communicate value of their work. School groups experienced a design challenge through 'Get a Grip' workshops (facilitated by ambassadors), working to understand the importance of inclusive design. These workshops engaged almost 300 school and college students. They were part of the 'Think Human' exhibition (Grant et al., 2025).

Approach and main findings

Seven HF professionals were engaged in training for developing public engagement skills (including pitching, communication and workshop delivery) with both the ambassadors and participating school groups taking part in ongoing evaluation (King et al., 2025).

Ambassadors

The ambassadors valued the experience of the training programme. They noted strong skills development throughout. Delivering school workshops and communicating HF were the most impactful element. Ambassadors felt confident and empowered in their work, and saw the value of what they were delivering both for the students and the profession at large. Many have reported a desire to continue acting in ambassador capacity for HF. Evaluation was conducted at several stages: an online survey at the beginning of the project to identify baseline of the ambassadors and relevant skills (seven ambassadors); online survey distributed after training element, to assess developed skills, alongside views looking forward to the delivery phase (five ambassadors);

observation of two school workshops (two different ambassadors) captured experience of delivery; online focus group after workshop delivery, gathered in-depth feedback (five ambassadors). Ambassadors were asked about motivations for taking part. It is clear there is a mix of altruistic and personal motivations, the most common that they are 'passionate about inspiring the next generation of ergonomists'. They were also keen to work with young people, give back, to try something new and improve their public engagement skills. The process of producing an 'elevator pitch' had a real impact for the ambassadors, and they enjoyed filming videos. This was seen as the strongest developed skill and was felt to have had the most impact. Ambassadors felt they could talk about what they did, using relevant, real life examples, to a range of audiences, including children, colleagues inside and outside the industry, and to family and friends.

School groups

The teachers felt very positively about the sessions, reporting good levels of learning and enjoyment, and were keen to continue HF learning with their students. A key highlight for the teachers were the knowledge, enthusiasm and skills of the ambassadors leading the workshop, which was seen as very well planned, pitched to the right level and engaging. The students enjoyed the hands-on nature of the session. The engagement and enjoyment of those from non-traditional educational settings was a particular highlight. The participants rated the workshops on a series of qualities. The strongest qualities were 'accessible' and 'inclusive'. The sessions were also perceived as clear and engaging, showcasing a positive, educational and enjoyable experience for the students. Summary metrics are included in Table 1.

Table 1: School group impact metrics

Did you...	Yes	Not sure	No
Enjoy the workshop?	85%	15%	
Find out more about what human factors engineers do?	70%	20%	10%
Find out about how human factors engineering improves our lives?	80%	20%	

Evaluation of the schools programme was conducted in several ways: two observations at different school sessions; short paper surveys on participant experience; and online teacher survey for teachers at all sessions, exploring experience and impact of the session. Students were asked how much they knew about HF prior to the session. The largest response was that students had heard of HF, but did not know anything about it. The workshops provided clear information on human factors as a discipline, although the theory section of the sessions was the least appealing element (the practical activity was much more popular!). Many students reported strong learning about HF considerations during design, and how different products were designed for different people, particularly what considerations are needed when designing products for different people.

Key takeaways/ learning points

If you are considering outreach and public engagement with a HF flavour – what is our advice?

- Make use of existing networks. Engaging a range of stakeholders early on can help for co-creation of ideas, which is really important for diverse audiences.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. The support we had made it an enjoyable experience and helped us expand the existing networks.
- Find a balance between scheduling and flexibility. Trying to accommodate everyone made scheduling really hard at times.

- It will be exhausting, but worth it!
- Creativity is really important to help explore your examples as well as how you engage your audience.

References

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