



The Big Bang

UK Young Scientists & Engineers Fair

Big Bang Digital

Learnings from 2020

Big Bang Digital 2020 - Learnings

1. Introduction

The 'Big Bang Digital 2020 – science, engineering and Covid-19', sought to showcase the incredible contribution of scientists, healthcare professionals, engineers and technicians responding to Covid-19. The event comprised a series of live and pre-recorded sessions for young people, a live chat function for them to get involved, interactive polls to gauge their views of science, engineering and the pandemic and STEM career quizzes and resources. Big Bang Digital was planned in tight timelines and delivered in mid July, coinciding with the end of the summer term (in England) at a time when the majority of children across the UK were learning at home. EngineeringUK, with support from our event agency fresh, planned and delivered the event, including the development of a microsite to host it and worked with several of our supporters to develop content for the day.

28,000+ individual viewers joined in the Big Bang Digital 2020

- The largest audience size at any one time was 7,500
- Peak viewing times were 9am – 11 am

Almost 700 young people responded to a survey during the event, of those, 48% were aged 11 to 12 and 45% were aged 13 to 14. The vast majority of young people who completed the survey had heard about Big Bang Digital 2020 from their teachers (82%); 8% said that their parent or carer recommended it; 2% had heard about it through social media; 2% had heard about it from friends. 6% heard about Big Bang Digital 2020 from another source.

2. What the audience told us:

Key findings from around 700 young people, aged 11-18 years, who took part in Big Bang Digital indicated:

- 80% of young people rated Big Bang Digital 2020 as 'good' or 'excellent', and 71% said they would be likely to attend another Big Bang Digital in future
- 82% of young people enjoyed the sessions that they watched and 88% found the sessions informative
- 75% said the sessions were interesting to them, with the optimal session length being 15-20 minutes

3. What worked well and what were the challenges?

Project Management

Multiple teams internal and external to EngineeringUK worked collaboratively and remotely to deliver this new project in a short timeframe. The comms and marketing campaign drove high levels of engagement on the day. Our learning about how the event would work developed organically as the planning progressed. For example, it became clear that shorter (than our initial 20 minute) video content was more engaging and that we would need to edit all video content to ensure consistency and style across the content programme. We also identified the need for and developed a licencing agreement for supporters who were sharing video content.

Content

We developed the theme of 'Science, engineering & Covid-19' on the back of insight from a survey by the [British Science Association](#) that young people were feeling excluded from the discussion about the pandemic; this was well received, giving young people a chance to learn about it and express their views on the topic. The theme felt topical and enabled us to structure the content to demonstrate how a wide range of scientists and engineers have played a part during the Covid-19 crisis across all aspects of society. The mix of pre-recorded interspersed with live questions was positive. Involving young people directly was also well received. Young people took part in the 'Ask the experts' session, where they posed questions about the pandemic to Sir Jeremy Farrar. Big Bang Competition alumni delivered an inspiring session entitled 'Young talent against Covid-19'. The host, Greg Foot, made the event feel live, exciting, and contributed to the smooth running of the day.

Safeguarding and Accessibility

The team developed a new safeguarding approach for a digital event that took into account the age of the target audience and the potentially sensitive topic of Covid-19. The approach included one-way video streaming, moderated live chat (by DBS checked moderators) including no full names being visible, as well as a link to Childline for any visitor who felt affected by the content. The team made a concerted effort to embed accessibility into the event, with all video content subtitled and a live BSL stream available as an option for the entirety of the event.

Engagement

The level of engagement in all aspects of the event day was very high, with thousands of people logged on to the website over 2 hours before the event was due to start. Many teachers had instructed classes to take part in the event as part of their lessons. The live chat function was unexpectedly popular and provided a brilliant opportunity for viewers to respond and interact with the content, resulting in some challenges due to the sheer number of messages (26,000) received, meaning a significant number of moderators was required, and even then, it was impossible to keep up with the messages coming through. This resulted in a lag in the messages being published.

4. Building on what worked and addressing the challenges moving forward

- Clearly define and communicate roles and delivery process
- Improve/increase frequency of internal comms
- Develop quality objectives for content to include representation of diversity, quality content and STEM messaging
- Work collaboratively with supporters on content both in terms of what it covers
- Continue to focus on online safeguarding and accessibility
- Involve young people in creating the programme and participating in it
- Involve teachers in creating the programme and e.g. linking more sessions to the curriculum
- Use insight from analytics to structure the day differently – start earlier, consider duration of event; consider how to enable hands-on activities
- Review live chat function to ensure it runs more effectively (e.g. auto moderation); review how we can use the feedback and insight gained via live chat
- Mitigate for tech issues – hardwire, back up hosts, full rehearsal
- Explore options for registration for the event (so we know who is attending and can follow up)
- Explore options for evaluation - data about the audience and individual sessions will help to inform the event's direction in the future
- Build on our safeguarding approach to ensure we are adopting best practice
- Share our learnings and make sure we're learning from others