

the purpose

To **connect** ICT professionals with schools throughout New Zealand so as to raise the **visibility of opportunities** and **interest in careers** in the ICT Sector

Background

The NZ Computer Society has a number of work programmes being considered in 2008/2009 which are designed to increase the professionalism and engagement of ICT professionals and the visibility and desirability of the ICT sector in NZ.

One of the areas of focus identified is a need to create a “bridge” between ICT professionals and students and children who are choosing their future career paths. Equally as important is the communication between industry professionals and teachers and guidance councillors who are interacting with students on a daily basis and who need support and knowledge from the ICT profession.

Some interaction with schools with related programmes is underway within the Ministry of Education, the IPENZ *FutureinTech* project, and a few regional projects more related to individual institutions (such as Wintec). Whilst these programmes are extremely worthwhile, NZCS wishes to investigate whether a larger scale programme driven specifically by ICT professionals and the ICT sector would fill an additional gap. It is intended that ICT-Connect would be complimentary to any existing programmes.

NZ is also experiencing an ICT skills crisis with many organisations saying they cannot find enough skilled and qualified people to fill available roles. The NZCS intends to provide a coordination point between the ICT profession and Industry and the education sector by designing an ICT-industry intervention programme designed to impart information from professionals to young people whilst still in school.

Why is this important?

Our young people in NZ are being influenced by their peers, parents, teachers and media in their career choices. Many have been exposed to “technology” from a very young age and are significant users of mobile phones, PCs, Web 2.0 apps etc. Many are also unaware of the raft of potential opportunities in the ICT profession which link their day-to-day use of technology with their future career choices.

Current industry professionals are exposed to constantly-changing technology, employment and market environments. The gambit of ICT careers run from enterprise architects to software developers and telecommunications engineers through to web designers and marketers – all of whom work in the sector. Often teachers and advisors in schools are unaware of what careers are available and are in need of support and encouragement directly from industry professionals in order to assist them with their work.

Participation

The programme will coordinate passionate NZCS ICT professionals engaging and making interactive presentations to secondary (and potentially intermediate) schools in their area covering the endless possibilities of a career in the ICT sector. The NZCS member can also provide an additional resource to teachers by assisting with their course planning (limited to if and where teachers would like assistance).

ICT professionals can actively participate in growing the pipeline of potential entrants to the industry by imparting personal career knowledge and industry / market opportunities. People have responded positively to the idea, with many understanding that 'giving back' to the professional ICT community in a way such as this is an integral part of their own professional growth.

Teachers and schools (many of which have requested this service already) can participate in this programme with very little input on their part – making a class of students and teachers available to a speaker / invitation to assembly for an hour is all that is required. Kids benefit by being exposed to better and more relevant career choices (hearing them from the "horses' mouths").

How and when would this be underway?

NZCS is establishing a small working group to form a programme of work for late 2008/early 2009. The working group will be comprised of ICT professionals from industry, education, the state sector and NZCS and will be convened by an NZCS member (Janet Mazenier).

An invitation from NZCS to potential working group members will be issued in the very near future. An advisory group of sector experts (ICT industry and education) will also be established. The working group will steer the direction of the pilot (including managing invitations to schools, making decisions on nominations for speakers at each of the schools and liaising with advisory group members as required).

It is intended to run a pilot across a limited number of South Island and North Island schools both in cities and in provincial areas in early 2009 (noting that for secondary schools in particular, running anything over the October-November timeframe is likely to be difficult given exam timetables etc). After the pilot has run and been reviewed, feedback from schools, teachers, students and ICT professionals can be used to assist NZCS as to the nature, scope and timing of any future programme.

Funding

Working Group members will be volunteering their time in an effort to help construct a worthwhile conduit between schools and the industry. At this stage it is expected that costs will be minimal during the pilot stage. Once a review of the pilot has been completed a more detailed budget can be created for consideration by NZCS and potential external funders. NZCS will make funds available for incidentals and travel costs related to the Working Group's work researching and establishing the pilot programme.

Terms of Reference

Once the working group is confirmed, a full Terms of Reference will be agreed by NZCS Council, with associated communications handled through the standard NZCS processes.

Next steps

The NZCS has formally established the group and appointed NZCS member Janet Mazenier as Convenor. Invitations to candidates for the advisory and working groups will be issued and Terms of Reference (including detailed scope for the pilot) drafted.

Meetings with the Ministry of Education and other related parties will take place in order to ratify the direction of the pilot and ensure a consistent approach is being taken.