



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Minneapolis, MN, US

ORGANIZATION:
City of Minneapolis

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
www.pcsforpeople.com

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
PCs for People

CATEGORY:
Human Services

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Unisys Corporation has been a long time service provider for the City of Minneapolis providing IT managed services since 2003. As one of the areas of service, Unisys manages the City's desktop environment and disposes of aging equipment. Unisys previously had a contract with a local vendor to pickup and dispose of the aged equipment after the hard drives were destroyed. With the strong relationship between Unisys and the City of Minneapolis, the CIO of the City reached out to Unisys about donating PC's on behalf of the City. Unisys was able to put a contract and process in place that would allow Unisys to donate these PC's on behalf of the City to the PCs for People non-profit organization. PCs for People (www.pcsforpeople.com) is a Saint Paul-based non-profit organization that refurbishes computers donated by businesses, organizations, and individuals and distributes them to people throughout Minnesota. To receive a computer from PCs for People, a potential recipient must be below the 150 percent poverty level, have a family member with a disability, work with a social worker or be enrolled in a government assistance program. PCs for People also provide phone support, trains dozens of workers and has reused almost 100 tons of computer equipment. Not only has it benefited the people who are less fortunate, it is also a green initiative and environmentally



beneficial by keeping destroyed computers out of area landfills. To date the City and Unisys has put thousands of PC's into hands of the underprivileged.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

The City of Minneapolis and Unisys has provided thousands of computers to underprivileged people of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The program provides recipients with access to technology and increases the education and access to essential information and services that they would not normally have available to them.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETE?

No

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

The following paragraphs are directly from Casey Sorensen , PCs for People PCs for People has been distributing computers since 1998, but the partnership that developed between Unisys, the City of Minneapolis and our organization was the first big step towards growing our program. In early 2009, demand for our services far outweighed our supply of PCs and we saw our waiting list grow to almost 1,000 families. By late 2009 we had reduced the waiting list but a family would still have to wait months to receive a PC. The CIO of the City of Minneapolis approached us with the perfect solution to our problem. The city wanted to make a difference in the community and had hundreds of old computers they were currently recycling. PCs for People provided the perfect outlet to get the computers to residents of the city. In 2009 and 2010 we gave out more than 4,000 computers to low income families. That means more than 12,000 people now have access to a computer in their home. Most of us take for granted the opportunities computers and internet access provide, but this essential component of life is out of reach for many families. The average income for a family of 3 that receives a computer from PCs for People is \$12,100 and over 80% of computer recipients have never owned a computer. With such a low income level these families have been unable to purchase a computer on their own. PCs for People allows recipients to own a computer for the first time, which is a modern necessity in an increasingly digital world. There are many tangible and intangible benefits to be realized from the growth of our program. Over the past two years we have recycled over 20 tons of electronics, provided 500 hours of phone support, trained dozens of workers and reused almost



200 tons of computer equipment. An increase in the number of computers being refurbished resulted in a need for increased workers. To solve this problem PCs for People developed partnership with Ramsey County to provide workforce development opportunities to displaced workers. In this partnership PC for People provides temporary employment and training for individuals transitioning off Government assistance who are seeking full-time employment. Participants are able to learn real-world job skills while preparing themselves for new careers in technology and office administrative fields. Over the next 5 years PCs for People will train and help place 300 unemployed workers. PCs for People attributes much of their recent growth and success to the partnership with Unisys and the City of Minneapolis. The partnership has allowed the waiting list to be eliminated and to better serve clients while opening the door to more corporate and government computer donations.

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes. This best practice is something that should be adopted by all companies and organizations. Millions of people rely on their government to educate their children and keep communities safe, but everyone can help in this endeavor. This project has several benefits and has enabled the City and a major IT company to give back to the community. In a digital age it has benefited the underprivileged people in the community allowing them to be involved in technology while benefiting the environment at the same time.

ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION: The donation of PCs to the PCs for People organization directly benefits the citizens of Minneapolis and St. Paul. As you can see by the article written in 2009, at the start of the program by the City of Minneapolis (See Appendix 1) and the PCs for People recent newsletter (See Appendix 2), the PCs donated directly go to those in need who benefit from now having access to the PC hardware, technology, and information along with the associated support and training that the organization provides. This effort has further strengthened the Unisys relationship with the City, outside of the normal day-to-day service and solution deliverables. Both the City of Minneapolis and Unisys take pride in the program knowing they are providing back to the community and environment in which they live and work.