The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Chicago, Illinois, US

YEAR:
2011

STATUS:
Laureate

CATEGORY:
Training/Education

ORGANIZATION:
Littelfuse Inc.

ORGANIZATION URL:
http://www.littelfuse.com

PROJECT NAME:
Community Out Reach

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2008, Littelfuse's information technology department set out to make a technology workforce impact by working directly with the community to provide training, support, jobs and placement services. Our goal was, and continues to be, to build the next generation of technology workers in order to give back to our profession. Our efforts were divided into two approaches. The first was getting involved with a local college or university by providing real life projects and problems for students to work on alongside our staff, helping better prepare the students for workforce expectations. We also provided financial support to a charitable organization that provides technical training for people that want to enter the technology field. University of Illinois Initiative: In 2008, we engaged the University of Illinois to see if students could assist us with a research assignment. We have increased our interaction with UIC since 2008 from one class project to two for 2009 and 2010. We specifically work with two UIC Master Management Information Systems gradate classes: The capstone course for the graduate program and a project management course that is also part of the MMIS degree. Each course has six students. The UIC students have worked on projects such as researching global salary dynamics and researching and making a recommendation on our company's future hardware platform, which will result in $500,000 annual savings once implemented. They also researched and made a recommendation on the next generation of helpdesk tools. The students first understand the problem, then do the analysis, prepare an approach and present their findings and recommendation in less than 10 weeks. Our student teams strengthen their project management and leadership skills and learn team dynamics. i.c.Stars Initiative: In 2008, our CIO engaged with i.c.Stars, an inner city youth technology training and leadership development and placement non-profit organization, to see what support we could give them. Each year the organization handpicks three to four groups of 12 students from a pool of more than 350 applicants. Each group of students goes through an extensive boot camp experience, leaning technology and leadership skills over a two month period. Established in 1998, i.c.Stars has trained 185 inner city youths. Often described as the

inner-city MBA program, the organization targets promising economically disadvantaged 18- to 27-year-olds. The group is guided by the belief that its graduates provide Fortune 1000 companies with skilled technical workers who, by their success, help uplift their families and neighborhoods. i.c.Stars spends about $258,000 to train each group of interns. Much of the money is provided by donations from businesses and foundations, Our CIO provided leadership training to an i.c.Stars group in 2008. He now volunteers as the organizations' event co-chair, helping to raise funds needed to support the organization's existence. Our CIO, along with the another CIO co-chair, has been able to turn the organization's events into a profit-generating vehicle that contributes more than $100,000 in annual revenue for the organization. Littelfuse, along with 40 other local companies, is also an annual sponsor of i.c.Stars.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

Since 2008, Littelfuse has engaged with 22 students and has given them real experiences. Littelfuse team members have volunteered 1,000+ hours, supporting i.c.Stars events and providing training to young people that now have a better chance to start and continue with a technology career.

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

UIC Each of our UIC students can add their experiences doing real life projects with our company to their resumes. i.c.Stars I think the most telling benefit of i.c.Stars is a recent Chicago Tribune article about one of their students. Beatrice Elizalde, 34, talked about her life before and after i.c.Stars. Before she entered the program in 2006, Elizalde scrimped and saved on her receptionist salary to provide for her three children. She and her husband qualified for public assistance. That changed when Elizalde graduated from the program with four months of technology training under her belt. She got a job as a project administrator at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, a position that more than doubled her annual wage to $46,000. The family was able to rent a home near Chicago's Brighton Park neighborhood. When Elizalde and her husband had their fourth child in 2007, they required no federal help to pay their bills. Elizalde is also working to start a children's community center. "This program, I always say, it changed me. It changed my life completely," Elizalde said. The full article can be referenced from the linked below: http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-holiday-inner-city-computer-st20101106,0,5968429.story Accenture, a key sponsor and supporter of i.c.Stars, has hired nearly a dozen program graduates. The consulting firm also partnered with the group's leaders to fine-tune the overall strategy and operations. Bob Kress, executive director of Accenture's IT business operations, called it a "win-win." Many other companies hire i.c.Stars students. Before starting the program, most students are making around $10,000 annually. Graduates of the program earn about $32,000 after the first year of employment and $46,000 after three years. The job placement rate for i.c.Stars students is 93 percent, even in this difficult economy. There are now 14 first time home owners and 70 percent of all alums are engaged in community service, compared to 26 percent of the general population. Littelfuse has hired one i.c.Stars student, who now works as our SharePoint expert.

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes