

Corporate Service Corps – Case Study: John Deere Partnership in India

IBM Corporate Service Corps (CSC) was launched in 2008 primarily as a vehicle for leadership development and social responsibility for emerging leaders. Teams of eight to 15 members work with government, business and civic leaders in emerging markets to help address high priority issues with societal significance. They also help grassroots organizations serving entrepreneurs and artisans. The program is directly aligned with IBM's business strategies and Smarter Planet™ and Smarter Cities® agendas, which harness advanced technologies and problem-solving expertise to make the world work better.



Since its inception, CSC has done more than improve IBM's standing in communities and developing employee skills. These initiatives have become an integral part of the way IBM does business. CSC is a triple benefit. Communities get their problems addressed by teams of IBM's top talent. IBMers receive leadership development and have life-changing experiences. And IBM cultivates a new generation of global leaders while gaining a foothold in emerging markets. The program also assists in reinforcing the IBM brand name.



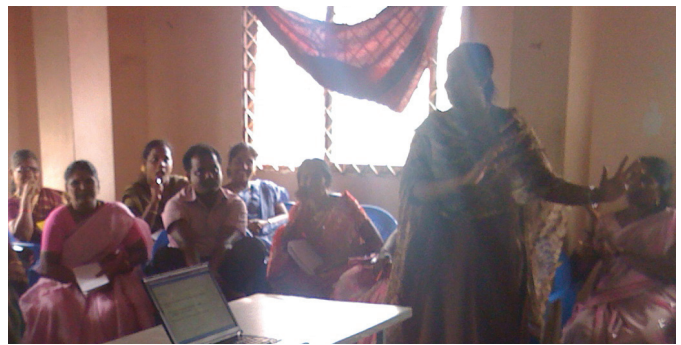
IBM Corporate Citizenship leaders meet regularly with executives from companies that are IBM's business clients at their request to explain how the program works. IBM has now helped several other companies put together similar programs, including Dow Corning, FedEx, John Deere, Novartis and Pepsi. "I think 'service learning' is an excellent strategy for leadership development, and I believe it can be done economically and on a mass scale," says Laura Asiala, director of Corporate Citizenship at Dow Corning.

In some cases, with IBM's engagement and permission, other companies can send employees along with IBM CSC teams. John Deere is one of them. In October, 2011, John Deere sent four people along with 11 IBMers on a CSC engagement to Chennai, India. "Programs like these help shape IBM's value to our client. The relationships that form naturally lead to greater visibility and trust. IBM stock continues to rise in part due to the innovative ideas like CSC that we bring to the table" says Bill Keegan, John Deere Business Development Executive, IBM.

Assignment details

IBM offered four posts on its CSC team to John Deere and they went to Chennai. IBM had sent over a dozen teams to India in the past, and John Deere sees it as an important location for their business. While employees from both companies participated in joint meetings to prepare for the trip, shared meals together and stayed at the same accommodations, their teams split up to focus on different project work that was more aligned with their corporate strategy. A US-based non-governmental organization, CDC Development Solutions, provided assistance with organizing the project work and logistics.

"We were extremely impressed with IBM's pre-work materials and expertise preparing our participants for the program, as well as CDS's coordination of the project and their support during the program. The project identified for John Deere was very well aligned to our company's objectives for the program to assist with rural development, free trade and helping to feed the world. We were thrilled with the project and the outcomes and felt our participants did a fantastic job!" says Chelsey Allaman, Business Direct Services, John Deere.



This program is one way John Deere is exploring to take a more active role supporting global citizenship efforts and increasing brand awareness, as well as helping them understand local practices and economic models. The IBM team worked on several small projects related to distance learning and community information centers.

Another John Deere employee that participated on the assignment stated, "I was surprised by how authentic our experience felt. We spent some time with expats who had been in the country a lot longer, but in many cases they seemed to have experienced less."

The IBMers that traveled to Chennai echoed the same sentiments that John Deere observed. Quynh Dang, an IBMer, reflected that “in a friendly, non-competitive way, we bonded very well between the two companies, sharing laughter and emotions as we went through the experience together. Seeing too that another company is striving to achieve the same objective as IBM makes me proud to be an IBMer.”



IBM's program is producing impressive results. A recent survey of participants conducted in July of 2011 shows that the goals for the program are being met. Of 575 people who responded, 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their CSC involvement had increased their leadership skills and 94 percent said it had expanded their cultural awareness. Ninety percent said it had increased their understanding of IBM's role in the developing world, and 76 percent said it boosted their desire to complete their business career at IBM.

What's next?

John Deere is calling their program Inspirational Leadership. They have two sessions planned for 2012 and hope to continue to grow their program beyond that in the future. “The participants had a phenomenal experience. They have commented that they continue to get more out of this experiential learning experience every time they think about it or share their experience with others,” added Chelsey Allaman.

IBM continues to lead discussions with other clients around the world to support their efforts in developing a similar program. Pepsi and Dow Corning have begun their own programs based on IBM's model. In addition to the conversations that IBM has with their own clients, in mid-2011, IBM announced a partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and CDC Development Solutions (CDS), an NGO focused on international volunteer projects, to encourage corporate volunteerism with a goal of improving global relations. One aspect of the alliance is a Center of Excellence for International Corporate Volunteerism, funded by USAID, which will provide resources and an information forum for companies that are interested in pursuing strategies based on IBM's model.

The hope is that IBM's response to expressions of interest from its clients and the alliance with USAID will accelerate this kind of corporate social engagement. The government faces severe budget constraints, so it welcomes participation by businesses. “We're at the point where it's clear we have global problems which require global solutions from key stakeholders,” says Kathy Hunt, a senior development specialist at USAID who is coordinating the program. “USAID by itself can't be as effective as an amalgamation of stakeholders who are committed to solving problems.”

More than 1500 IBMers have participated in the Corporate Service Corps on over 150 teams in almost 30 countries including Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Vietnam.

“We're changing the way people see IBM,” says Stanley Litow, IBM Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs. “They now see us as a company that provides services and solves critical problems.”

For more information on Corporate Service Corps, visit: ibm.com/corporateservicecorps. or call 914 499-1900.



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