

## Corporate Service Corps – Case Study: FedEx Partnership in Brazil

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. FedEx was the first to follow this model. In May, 2011, FedEx sent four people along with ten IBMers on a CSC engagement to Salvador, Brazil. "We wanted to do a pilot alongside IBM's program so we could see what modifications we'd want to do," says Tess Smith, manager of corporate human resources at FedEx, who was one of the four participants.

### Assignment details

IBM offered four posts on its CSC team to FedEx and they went to Salvador, located in the northeast coast in Bahia, to work on several projects with local non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). 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 NGO, CDC Development Solutions (CDS), provided assistance with organizing the project work and logistics.

One FedEx team member, Shane O'Connor, blogged about his experience, stating that "the skill sets acquired and honed, the relationships developed and our enhanced understanding of how the world works has certainly made us more versatile, equipped and dedicated FedEx team members." He added that "the team from IBM was awesome. They warmly welcomed our FedEx team and made us feel a part of their family."

Tess considered her participation in the program as "an experience of a lifetime – to live and enjoy the unique culture of the area, to work with passionate people on their mission to raise people out of poverty, and to interact with some of the great talent within IBM and FedEx." Her sentiment that this is an experience of a lifetime, while assisting the needs of growing global communities, has been repeated by IBMers that have participated in past assignments, and continues here.

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.

In addition to the benefits that IBM sees from the program mentioned, FedEx has been able to identify several additional benefits. These include enhanced collaboration among various functions and geographies and insight into operations in a growing market. Additionally, the program has provided an opportunity for employees to recharge while serving in communities where FedEx lives and works, providing an immersive experience that changes employee perspective and the way volunteers work upon their return.

### What's next?

FedEx leadership is encouraged by the pilot results and supports moving the program forward. Tess hopes that once FedEx launches what it calls its Global Leadership Corps after their test run with IBM, it will send out about ten teams per year based on their own pre-work materials and program processes modified from IBM's. "We are very grateful for the opportunity to team with IBM and those connections have benefited both sides since our return," she explained when speaking with IBM leadership.

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, 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](http://ibm.com/corporateservicecorps). or call 914 499-1900.



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