



# The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

## Final Copy of Case Study

**Status:**

Laureate

**Year:**

2013

**Organization Name:**

New Signature

**Organization URL:**

[newsignature.com](http://newsignature.com)

**Project Name:**

Opportunities for Youth

**Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:**

Philanthropy

**Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)**

Everyone at New Signature, including the owners, believes in a balanced view of the corporation as an entity with responsibilities to other stakeholder groups, not just shareholders. One of the most important stakeholders is our community, and the success of the community directly impacts New Signature's success. The community provides the springboard from which New Signature operates and importantly draws talent. Today's youth ultimately will provide the next generation of leaders that will drive New Signature's success to even greater heights. New Signature CEO Christopher Hertz had the idea to engage urban young adults who hadn't been given the opportunity to succeed. He went looking for nonprofit partners that were already helping urban young adults on the path to success

with marketable job skills, personal development, and internships to empower them to reach their potential through professional careers and higher education. New Signature quickly established relationships with amazing organizations including Year Up, Alliance for Excellent Education, and Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). Year Up is a one-year, intensive training program that provides at-risk youth, ages 18-24, with a combination of hands-on skill development, college credits, and corporate internships (<http://youtu.be/rJ7odjQ8YNk>). Year Up's program is split into two phases: classroom training and internship. We have promoted the Year Up program tirelessly, helped update the program's IT curriculum, provided mentorship to their trainers, provided strategic guidance on supporting IT systems, and initiated a weekly on-campus training class called "Tech Thursdays". New Signature also provides internships to Year Up students in the second phase of the program. In addition to working within the non-profits, New Signature provides in-kind services to NFTE and Year Up, as well as Crisis Link in the form of IT and web design services.

**When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)**

Working with these groups is not a one-time event. We support and engage with them throughout the year and will continue to do so for as long as our company is standing. Over the last 18 months, New Signature has provided \$77,500 in funding to sponsor Year Up's interns. New Signature provides internships to two students from each class, and four former Year Up interns are now full-time employees at New Signature. Over the past 20 months New Signature has provided over \$200,000 of in-kind services to charities in our community, including Year Up, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), Street Sense, Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination, the Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County, and other local nonprofits. In the Tech Thursday classes that are taught by New Signature employees to Year Up students, we teach the latest in Microsoft technologies, including Office 2013, Lync 2013 and Lync Online, SharePoint 2010 and SharePoint Online, Exchange 2010 and Exchange Online, Office 365, Windows Intune, Windows 7, Windows 8, troubleshooting methodology, virtualization, and IT careers. We placed a strong focus on cloud technologies (public and private), as we can see Microsoft is moving in this direction, and we want the students to be ready.

**Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)**

There will never be a complete date to our work with youth development and education. New Signature is incredibly proud of the impact that Year Up has had and continues to have. Since its founding in 2000, Year Up has served over 4,000 young adults. The program achieves 100% placement of qualified Year Up students into internships, 95% of Year Up interns meet or exceed their internship manager's expectations, and 84% of graduates are employed or attending college full-time within four months of completing the program. Employed Year Up graduates earn an average of \$15 per hour – the equivalent of \$30,000 per year. Over 33,000 young adults in the Washington, DC metropolitan area do not have access to livable wage careers or higher education, and Year Up's students and graduates have proven that these young adults are capable of adding immediate value to local companies.

**Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)**

The Tech Thursday idea was developed by Reed Wiedower, New Signature's CTO, when he determined that Year Up students were hungry to hear about the latest technologies. More than a dozen New Signature employees have now acted as adjunct professors to provide instruction to Year Up students. Participation is highly regarded as a sign of excellence and in many cases there are multiple New Signature staff applying to lead a Tech Thursday session and is now organized by another staff member, Andy Nelson. During one of Year Up's semesters, a student named Roxanne Cano became a regular during the Tech Thursday presentations. Roxanne was selected for an internship at New Signature. During this time she excelled and before graduation New Signature's CEO Christopher Hertz offered her a full-time job as an IT Analyst. Since joining New Signature as a full-time employee Roxanne has demonstrated that she is a true leader and is on track to become a manager. Andy asked Roxanne to comment on her experience. "Before Year Up I definitely had opportunities but none compared to the opportunity of going to school, doing an internship, and then gaining a career with New Signature, all-in-one. I moved from Tacoma, Washington, to Washington, D.C., just to attend Year Up. I believed it would help me learn more about technology and get me on the right path to be successful in the field. Now that I am employed full time with New Signature I am surpassing even my own expectations of being successful in my career. I still have a tremendous amount of room for growth; however, I have a nurturing and supportive foundation with New Signature."

**Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)**

I think this could be considered all of the above. It is absolutely a Best Practice for companies to engage with their community, give back to those who are in need and grow both the community and the business. We, at New Signature, believe every organization should adopt similar programs no matter how large or small the organization may be. We want to help Year Up National Capital Region to scale up and have an even greater impact on the Washington, DC metropolitan area community. The program was just able to double the number of students they can serve annually to 240, but we would like to see that number multiply even further in coming years. This is imperative because more than 33,000 youth in the Washington, DC metropolitan area do not have access to livable wage careers or higher education, and Year Up's students and graduates have proven that these young adults are capable of adding immediate value to local companies. We are working to help through increased financial support, public speaking opportunities, and promotion of Year Up to partners, customers and vendors. New Signature proposed holding an event with the DC Chamber of Commerce to promote the positive impact that involvement with Year Up can have on small and large companies. We have also hosted events in the past to raise awareness and funds for Year Up. The timing of our relationship with Year Up was right because they were teaching students a curriculum based on out-of-date technologies, working as hard as they could to prepare the students for a career in IT. New Signature was able to come in and make an immediate impact by helping galvanize a review of Year Up's curriculum.

**If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)**

Please view the testimonial by Year Up's Erin Regan and DC Chamber of Commerce representative about the work New Signature has conducted in the area of youth education and opportunity. YearUp National Capital Region – <http://youtu.be/EuLpahFC7Jw>; DC Chamber of Commerce – <http://youtu.be/7XbhH5hKGt4>.

New Signature has received media coverage for its civic and social responsibility efforts and programs (especially focused on urban youth at risk). However, we tend to keep a low profile, focusing more on program results than press opportunities. New Signature receives National Capital Business Ethics award: <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2010/10/prweb4724014.htm>; <http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/blog/2010/12/awards-will-honor-ethical->



[businesses.html](#); Helios Announces 6th Annual Apollo Award Finalists: <http://www.helioshr.com/news/helios-announces-6th-annual-apollo-award-finalists>; Christopher Hertz, New Signature CEO, named Opportunity Champion of the Year 2012: <http://www.newsignature.com/blog/2012/11/19/new-signature-ceo-christopher-hertz-honored-as-year-up-national-capital-regions-2012-opportunity-champion/>; New Signature wins Microsoft World Partner award for Opportunities for Youth Partner of the Year: <http://www.newsignature.com/blog/2012/06/25/in-recognition-of-support-for-year-up-new-signature-wins-microsoft-citizenship-opportunities-for-youth-partner-of-the-year-award/>