The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Status:
Laureate

Year:
2013

Organization Name:
Littelfuse Inc.

Organization URL:
www.littelfuse.com

Project Name:
Next Generation Development

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.)

Our project is more of an initiative. 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 help 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 or problems for students to work on alongside our staff, helping better prepare the students for workforce expectations. Second and in the same spirit, our company provides financial and other support to a charitable organization called i.c.Stars that provides technical training for inner

city youth that desire to have technology careers. We feel having students work on our real technology issues as part of their class assignment gives the students excellent work experiences, all while our department receives the quality of work they deliver, which is an innovated approach to support our goal. The main challenge we need to overcome each semester is to ensure we have the right projects in mind for students to work on. Student projects must be completed within a 12-week cycle. We feel it is important for the students to be able to deliver a fully complete solution or recommendation within this timeframe.

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.)

In 2008, we engaged the University of Illinois to see if students could assist us with research assignments. Our involvement since 2008 continues and ranges from working with up to two class projects a semester depending on the need of the school and our availability. 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 project involves up to six students to address a different problem each time. Our last student project team delivered a recommendation on which direction we should consider in respect to HR software. Our involvement with i.c.Stars continues as well. Our company supports the organization by being a financial sponsor. In addition, our CIO serves on the organization's event board.

If this is a previously submitted project that has been significantly updated and/or expanded, please describe the nature of the update here. (In 300 words or less.)

Although our involvement with the U of I, as well as the support given to the inner city youth technology development organization called i.c.Stars, continues. We have expanded our involvement with students in 2012 a little bit more. Specifically, our CIO is engaged with Elmhurst College's mentor program. In this program, each year our CIO is assigned one protege to mentor. Mentoring consists of career development but mostly focus is on resume building, job interviewing practice, networking and general career guidance.

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.)

The initiative is not complete; it will continue. Since 2008, Littelfuse has engaged with over 30+ students and has given them real career experiences. Littelfuse

team members have volunteered 2,000+ hours, supporting either UIC, i.c.Stars or Elmhurst College. Our efforts to provide training to young people enable then to now have a better chance to start and continue with a technology career. Perhaps these students will remember the experiences they had with Littelfuse and will offer the same support to the next generation of technology professionals as they can. We feel our work is not complete and will continue these initiatives as we can. Our CIO continues to be engaged with i.c.Stars and co-chairs the organization's events board. A little bit more on the organization: Each year the organization handpicks two to four groups of 12 students from a pool of more than 350 applicants each cycle. Each group of students goes through an extensive boot camp experience, learning technology and leadership skills over a two-month period. Established in 1998, i.c.Stars has trained 277 inner city youths. The organization targets promising economically disadvantaged 18- to 27-year-olds.

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.)

College Support: Each of the students can add their experiences doing real-life projects to their resumes. All students receive feedback on career development and get a chance to practice in the field of their careers. 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 below:
http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-holiday-inner-city-computer-st20101106,0,5968429.story

Before starting the program, annual earnings in 2011 went from an average of $3,276 before the program to $38,000 upon completion. The job placement rate for i.c.Stars students is 96 percent, even in this difficult economy. There are now over 14 first-time home owners and 70 percent of all alums are engaged in community service, compared to 26 percent of the general population.

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.)

In terms of providing mentoring time or funding to not-for-profits is of course something each company can do, and the level of involvement with local colleges in respect to developing a program to include a project as part of students' assignment is very doable. There are lessons we have learned to make the interaction with schools more effective and those lessons could be easily modeled.

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

It is difficult putting a dollar value in respect to the benefits our company receives by being involved in these activities. We believe however, our employees involved with the students get satisfaction helping and acting in the mentor role. Clearly the results of the projects have brought us benefits. For the students we work with, we hope they will move on in their technology careers with a positive impression of our company and the kind of culture we try to cultivate. We are not a very large company, but we do think our involvement in these programs will have a positive and life-lasting impact to these students.