

Microsoft



MICROSOFT CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

CITIZENSHIP REPORT | MARCH 2006



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Foreword

Even as Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) outpaces much of the rest of the globe in economic growth, persistent social and economic hurdles remain — unemployment, technology access and skills, barriers to entrepreneurship, and a stark divide between urban and rural standards of living, for example. To help speed development, governments have been embracing information and communication technologies (ICT).

With more than 1,000 Microsoft employees at work in the CEE region, Microsoft has a long-term commitment to helping local businesses, government and individuals participate more fully in the knowledge economy. Since 1992, when Microsoft opened its first CEE subsidiary in Poland, we have been partnering with local organisations to achieve economic and social goals for the public and private sectors.

In this booklet, you will find a series of case studies that illustrate the kinds of collaborative programmes that we lead or contribute to in association with governments and local business partners. In Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia and virtually every other country in the region, we are working with schools and community centres to provide computer education and skills training for thousands of teachers, young students in underserved communities, underemployed adults, at-risk youth, homeless people, refugees, the elderly and people with disabilities.

And technology skills are not our only focus. Microsoft is a leader in interoperability and open standards, which stimulate the commercial software industry and help customers manage costs in heterogeneous computing environments. Our European Union Grants Advisor programme is a collaborative effort to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) take advantage of EU funding opportunities.

I am proud of these accomplishments, and I look forward to continued collaboration that supports the strategic aims of regional, national and local governments, and creates economic opportunity for communities across the region.

Sincerely,



Vahé Torossian

*Vice President Microsoft EMEA and
Regional Vice President Microsoft Central & Eastern Europe*





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Key Milestones in CEE

- 1975** Microsoft is founded in the US.
- 1989** Microsoft establishes its European headquarters, located in Paris.
- 1990** Bernard Vergnes becomes vice president of Microsoft Europe.
- 1992** Microsoft becomes the first software company with a broad presence in Eastern Europe, establishing Eastern and Central European subsidiaries in Russia, Poland and Czech Republic.
- 1992** A Microsoft subsidiary is established in Greece.
- 1993** A Microsoft subsidiary is established in Hungary.
- 1994** A Microsoft subsidiary is established in Slovenia.
- 1995** A Microsoft subsidiary is established in Slovakia.
- 1996** Microsoft subsidiaries are established in Croatia and Romania.
- 1997** Michel Lacombe is named president of Microsoft Europe. Bernard Vergnes becomes chairman of Microsoft Europe.
- 1999** A Microsoft subsidiary is established in Bulgaria.
- 2000** Jean-Philippe Courtois is named president of Microsoft EMEA.
- 2002** Microsoft establishes subsidiaries in Kazakhstan, Serbia-Montenegro and Ukraine.
- 2003** Microsoft establishes subsidiaries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- 2004** A Microsoft subsidiary is established in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).
- 2005** Microsoft Development Centres are opened in Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro. A Microsoft subsidiary is established in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Neil Holloway is named president of Microsoft EMEA; Jean Philippe Courtois becomes president of Microsoft International. Vahé Torossian is named regional vice president, Microsoft Central and Eastern Europe.
- 2006** Microsoft subsidiaries are established in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Global Citizenship at Microsoft

Microsoft is committed to being a responsible partner, working with businesses, communities, and governments to help advance social and economic well-being and to enable people around the world to realise their full potential.

At Microsoft, we believe that every successful corporation has a responsibility to use its resources and influence to make a positive impact on the world and its people. Microsoft's commitment and responsibilities as a global corporate citizen are grounded in our company mission and values, manifested through our business practices and operations, and carried out by thousands of Microsoft employees and suppliers worldwide.

Microsoft's ongoing work in the area of global citizenship is focused on mobilising our resources across the company to create opportunities in communities around the world, to foster economic growth and to serve the public good through innovative technologies and partnerships with government, industry and community organisations.

The Global Citizenship Initiative

At Microsoft, our Global Citizenship Initiative is organised around three pillars, or strategic concepts, which form the foundation of the company's citizenship activities worldwide:

- **Demonstrating Responsible Business Practices.** Ensure integrity and transparency in all of our business

practices, with emphasis on strong governance, legal and antitrust compliance, support for industry standards, respect for intellectual property, interoperability of our products, and commitment to openness in our technology practices.

- **Improving Security and Internet Safety.** Address the societal challenges of ICT — such as security, privacy, children's online safety, and spam — through investments in security technology; partnering with industry, governments, and law enforcement to combat cybercrime; and broadly distributing information to help customers make their systems more secure.
- **Advancing the Knowledge Economy.** Partner with governments and communities around the world to help strengthen local economies — through digital inclusion initiatives, innovation, and programmes that stimulate growth of the local technology industry — while contributing to the vitality of the global economy through ongoing technology innovation that leads to job creation and overall economic growth.



Constructive Stakeholder Engagement

At Microsoft, we understand that our reputation is a direct reflection of how we demonstrate our corporate values through our actions every day. We believe that constructive engagement with customers, partners, shareholders, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders is an essential part of helping us to identify and manage key issues that will test how successfully we live our values. This improves our business decision-making processes, helps us to anticipate and respond to the changing

expectations of society, and enables us to maintain a broad and balanced perspective about issues affecting our business and society.

Further Information

More information about Microsoft's Global Citizenship Initiative and our progress in each of the pillars is available at www.microsoft.com/mscorp/citizenship/report/



Partnership Brings a Sustainable Knowledge-Based Economy Closer

"We want to empower schools to raise the levels of ICT literacy among staff and students, support the creation of a culture of innovation and prepare learners for the digital workplace"

Teodor Milev, General Manager, Microsoft Bulgaria

For Kamelia Petkova, Vania Boteva and Maya Dobрева, all teachers of informatics in secondary schools in Bulgaria, working life will never be the same again. They are among the first to benefit from a dramatic change in the country's education system, which has given them access to the latest ICT and expertise.

Bulgaria is transforming its schools to embrace technology that can benefit staff and students alike. The aim is that every student has access to the latest, localised ICT resources, and teachers are thoroughly versed both on desktop and education-specific applications. In Bulgaria, this vision is becoming a reality for its education sector.

Traditionally, Bulgaria needed to juggle spending priorities to boost educational budgets. This situation has become a thing of the past for the country, thanks to the commitment of the Bulgarian government to enhance the education system through public-private partnerships (PPP).

This national programme of change, i-Bulgaria, aims to make the country more computer and Internet literate as Bulgaria works towards its 2007 goal of acceptance into the EU. The vision of i-Bulgaria is in line with the Lisbon Agenda, which aims to make Europe the most competitive and

dynamic knowledge based-economy in the world by 2010.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) Thematic Review of National Policies for Education — Bulgaria: "The transition of the region towards a pluralistic democracy and a market economy has been marked by economic, social, and political changes of extraordinary breadth, and depth. The talents, skills, and knowledge of the population are crucial in this process; hence the ambitious scale and urgency of the reforms being advanced for education."

Nikolay Vassilev, Minister of Public Administration and Administrative Reform, who is responsible for Information Society development, says: "The Bulgarian society traditionally gives high importance to the quality of education at all levels. A major part of i-Bulgaria is the i-Class project, aimed specifically at ICT access in Bulgarian secondary schools.

"Supported by funding totalling €72m (US \$87 million) for the period 2005–2007, it envisages a holistic approach for the introduction of ICT in each and every school. It has four distinct areas: equipping all schools with modern computer labs, connecting the schools into a broadband



Nikolay Vassilev, Minister of Public Administration and Administrative Reform.

"I received a high-quality curriculum, learning plans, teacher and students manuals...all for free"
Vania Boteva, Teacher

virtual private network (VPN), creating extensive digital educational content, and showing teachers how to more effectively use ICT in their work."

The journey towards the realisation of i-Bulgaria, and specifically i-Class, has already started thanks to a partnership between the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Microsoft through its Partners in Learning initiative.

Microsoft has provided further funding of US \$700,000 to complement the initial government investment.

Teodor Milev, general manager, Microsoft Bulgaria, says: "At Microsoft, we believe that ICT in education can be a powerful catalyst to improving teaching and learning for all. Through Partners in Learning, we want to empower schools to raise the levels of ICT literacy among staff and students, support the creation of an internal culture of innovation and, ultimately, prepare learners for the digital workplace."

To ensure project success, Microsoft Bulgaria has established long-term partnerships with key stakeholders actively engaged in improving the Bulgarian education system. These include the Ministry of Education and Science, Syndicate of Bulgarian Teachers, Sofia University, the Technical University of Sofia, Plovdiv University, Junior Achievement Bulgaria, the National Pedagogical Centre (NPC) and a number of other non-governmental, branch, and professional organisations.

The government has set the NPC — the main organisation for teacher training — stiff targets to train at least 40,000 teachers in ICT during the current academic year. To reach this target, some 28 training academies have opened across Bulgarian districts.

To support this teacher training drive, Microsoft and its partner consortium are building a National Education Portal. The portal will serve as an information repository, assist teachers' interaction, and provide best practice exchange through virtual professional communities.

The Partners in Learning initiative has bold aims and is backing up these challenging aspirations with even bolder achievements:

- More than 3,000 school systems administrators have passed through the programme in Bulgaria. Each administrator is now able to maintain their schools' network and support the teaching and learning process with ICT.
- By the end of the programme, 90,000 teachers will be equipped with solid ICT skills and some 900,000 Bulgarian students will obtain the digital skills they need to be competitive in the modern knowledge-based society.
- Every school in Bulgaria has been equipped with new laboratories, delivering more than 35,000 computers. The ratio of students per computer has improved from 49:1 to 15:1.
- More than 200 senior instructors for educators have been trained.

- Five curriculum programmes, developed by outstanding experts in ICT and education on behalf of Microsoft, have been localised by leading Bulgarian universities.
- 1,500 curriculum textbooks for three of these localised programmes have been published.
- Microsoft has provided the K-12 system with licensed Bulgarian and English versions of its latest desktop software.
- Every Bulgarian teacher has been granted free work-at-home rights for the above-mentioned software.
- By the end of 2006 more than 90 per cent of Bulgarian schools should have broadband access through a VPN.

Kamelia Petkova, a teacher at the Ivan Peichev secondary school in Montana, Bulgaria, says: "As a result of the training and technology implementation in the classroom, I will be able to motivate my students to work harder and to achieve excellent knowledge about using ICT in innovative ways."

Vania Boteva, who teaches at Batcho Kiro school in Pavlikeni, also feels well supported by the programme: "I received a high-quality curriculum, learning plans, teacher and students manuals, and didactical references, all for free."

Maya Dobрева, Informatics Teacher, P.K.Yavorov secondary school in Sofia, says: "The training supported my professional development route. The

knowledge and materials I received will help me to move faster."

The local community will also benefit at both a business and social level. The community will receive a resource pool that is willing and able to support the growth of the local economy.

The Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum (BBLF) recognises the valuable contribution that companies make to the social and economic prosperity of local, national, and regional communities around the world. For the second consecutive year, Microsoft has won the BBLF Annual Award (<http://www.bblf.bg/annual.php?sub=3>) for corporate social responsibility in the category "Investor in Education". Microsoft received this accolade solely for the impact of its Partners in Learning initiative.

Milev says: "Building a sustainable partnership environment, facing government and society needs, and delivering the exact level of support needed. These are the three main steps of being a responsible company, recognised throughout the world as a trusted partner. It is of crucial importance that we help define government agendas and work in close support and cooperation with authorities, education leaders, and educational institutions to respond to these needs."

Vassilev adds: "We believe the i-Class project and digital education in a more general sense is the best investment a nation can make for its future."

Fast Facts

Microsoft Partners in Learning
— Bulgaria

Web Site

<http://www.microsoft.com/emea/education/partnersInLearning>

Situation

Like that of many countries, the Bulgarian education system is under immense pressure to do more with less. Financial pressures have resulted in de-motivated staff and students and a lack of vital ICT tools and resources.

Solution

The Bulgarian government has started an ambitious project to transform the education sector, called i-Bulgaria and backed by an investment of €7m. The project aims to increase computer and Internet literacy and access throughout the country. A key component of this strategy, i-Class, is focused on increasing ICT access in schools. Microsoft Bulgaria has worked with the government and a consortium of partners to fuel this change, and train teachers in the use of ICT through its Partners in Learning initiative.

Benefits

- Thousands of teachers will gain more up-to-date ICT skills, boosting confidence and enhancing the education experience.
- A greater resource pool of IT-savvy workers will help Bulgaria create a stronger economy.
- Microsoft has won the Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum (BBLF) Annual Award for corporate social responsibility in the category "Investor in Education".

American College of Sofia Lifts Student Attainment with Microsoft Technology

"Microsoft products teach students how to work on any work-station. The administration of the whole system is easy and simple."

Angel Miloshev, System Administrator, American College of Sofia, Bulgaria

The American College of Sofia has organised the delivery of its entire curriculum around Microsoft software. The college has equipped four classrooms with more than 100 computers using Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional or Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional. The file server uses Microsoft Windows 2000 Server where the college has created individual working directories for more than 700 students from five academic grades. Every student's personal data is securely stored on the server. Since the Microsoft implementation, maintenance work has been vastly reduced, giving teachers and students more time to concentrate on learning. The college is teaching students programming skills through Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET and is fully compliant with Microsoft's licensing programme.

Effective teaching and learning outcomes increasingly demand high-quality and reliable computer systems and software. The PC is no longer confined to the ICT suite, but rather is now a learning tool used throughout the curriculum. Colleges, especially in Eastern Europe — where institutions are still catching up with the West, following the collapse of communism — are hungry for the benefits of new technology, but can make themselves vulnerable by under investing in software. These were some of the considerations that led the American College of Sofia to standardise the delivery of its teaching programme on Microsoft software with a Microsoft Windows 2000

Server operating system.

The college was founded in 1860, the oldest American educational institution outside the US. After closing during World War II, the college re-opened in 1991. Since then it has invested in continuous improvement of its computer systems because of increasing demand for system, application and specialised programming software. In addition to the classroom PCs, teachers have their own computers and the library is also equipped with workstations. The college has an Internet connection, library software and a computer-based encyclopedia, which is accessible to all network users.

Over the past few years, the college has upgraded its network by investing in Microsoft technology. It started with one server running Microsoft Windows NT 4 Server version 4.0 and most computers running Microsoft NT Workstation 4.0, but felt that it was time to modernise the system and benefit from the scalability and flexibility of a newer configuration.

The college has upgraded its system and is now running Microsoft Windows 2000 Server with workstations using Microsoft Windows XP Professional or Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional. The Web server <http://www.acs.bg> and the library database are located on one of the servers and the other two maintain the students' personal directories.

College students are taught how to use Microsoft Windows and the products

"Our students will be much better equipped for post-graduate studies with Microsoft Office and programming skills."

Angel Miloshev,
System Administrator

included in the Microsoft Office package. Programming skills are taught through Microsoft Visual Studio .NET development system. The students are trained in C++ and the Microsoft Visual Basic development system. Teaching in Web design is done with Microsoft FrontPage®, a Web site creation and management tool. Every student has free access to all computers in the library, library software, the encyclopedia Microsoft Encarta® and the Internet.

The whole system is administered from a single point of access using Microsoft server administration tools. If a particular workstation has the appropriate access rights then the system can work without anti-virus software. Angel Miloshev, system administrator, American College of Sofia, says: "So far this has proved very efficient and to date there have been no breaches of the security system for the servers."

The e-mail server is protected with an anti-virus program. There is a back-up server for all workstations in the classrooms. Miloshev says: "This provides for fast and easy cleaning of the local disks. College students may store all their personal data in their personal directories."

Benefits

Students Achieve Higher Educational Standards. Students are achieving higher standards of excellence in education thanks to the upgraded computer network and Microsoft software and development tools. With downtime eliminated and maintenance tasks vastly reduced, teachers have been freed to spend more time delivering the curriculum and less time on back-office tasks. Miloshev says: "Our students will be much better equipped for post-graduate studies with Microsoft Office and programming skills."
Technology Benefits the Whole Syllabus.

Computers are now used throughout the syllabus instead of just in ICT lessons. Students all have a personal directory where their work is securely stored instead of relying on paper records that can easily be lost or mislaid. Teachers have used the new system to set their pupils challenging tasks that encourage independent learning. Miloshev says: "Microsoft products teach students how to work on any workstation. The administration of the whole system is easy and simple."

Reduced Costs on IT Provision. The college is benefiting from Microsoft pricing structure for academic institutions and is compliant with the Microsoft licensing programme. By using only licensed Microsoft products, the college is protecting itself against unauthorised software and the risks to which such use can expose any network.

Miloshev says: "By purchasing all products and licenses together we have achieved additional savings under the Microsoft Open License Program as well as peace of mind. This is how the American College of Sofia has achieved licensed use of all software products at a reasonable cost."

College Protected Against Hackers.

The college is benefiting from much more reliable and secure hardware and software. Previously, the college was vulnerable to 'hackers' familiar with Internet technology. But since the new system was implemented the college has thwarted a number of attempts to break through the security system.

Miloshev says: "To date none of these attempts to hack into the system have been successful thanks to the system configuration and the security qualities of Microsoft Windows 2000 Server, Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional and Microsoft Windows XP Professional."

Microsoft Windows Server System

Microsoft Windows Server System is a comprehensive, integrated and interoperable server infrastructure, that helps reduce the complexity and costs of building, deploying, connecting and operating agile business solutions. It helps customers create value for their business through the strategic use of their IT assets. Windows Server System delivers dependable infrastructure for data management and analysis; enterprise integration; customer, partner and employee portals; business process automation; communications and collaboration; and core IT operations.

Bulgarian University Offers Students 24x7 Access to Learning Resources



"The branch is now saving several thousands of Bulgarian Leva a year from the funds it would otherwise have spent on photocopier paper and toner."

Professor Dimitar Katsov, Director, Technical University of Sofia, Bulgaria

The Plovdiv branch of the Technical University of Sofia wanted to create an integrated, Web-based learning community for its lecturers and students. In doing so, it hoped to: reduce the administrative burden of paper-based student assessment and testing; enable staff and students to work remotely out-of-hours; reduce the burden of manual data processing; and provide additional learning resources online.

In addition, the Technical University of Sofia wanted to increase standards of attainment and tailor content for students of varying abilities.

Solution

To achieve these goals, the Technical University of Sofia worked with Bulgarian Software House (BSH) to deploy a new solution based on Microsoft Office SharePoint™ Portal Server 2003 and Microsoft Class Server 2.0. This solution provides the following benefits: a personalised interface for each student; the sharing of a resource library as well as online assignments and grading; and secure access for administrators, teachers and students.

Benefits

The following benefits were realised by the University:

- Elimination of administration associated with paper-based processes and student assessments
- Opportunities for students and lecturers to work remotely 24x7 via Internet-enabled PCs
- Resource sharing between lecturers for best practice and reduced workload
- Ability to create personalised tests for students with the click of a mouse
- Students are able to engage in one-to-one consultations with their mentors via the Web
- Secure management of student attainment records
- Reduced storage requirement for paper records
- Employees have more time to focus on adding value to the curriculum

Fast Facts

Customer

Technical University of Sofia

Country

Bulgaria

Web Site

www.tu-sofia.bg

Customer Profile

The Technical University of Sofia educates more than 2,400 students to bachelor degree level and offers post-graduate studies leading to a master's degree qualifications and doctorates.

Microsoft Business-Technology Centre Established in the Republic of Croatia

"Microsoft's extensive experience will be of great importance in all we are doing to promote the use of new technologies in our country, both in business and public sector."

Dr Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

The Microsoft Business-Technology Centre, established in May 2005 and operational in October 2005, is an institution that will, in its first 30 months, directly assist a minimum of 100 independent software vendors (ISVs) with formal training and technical assistance with software development. Located in the City of Varaždin, the Centre will assist the development of the local economy as well as support SMEs in Croatia.

With the support from the government of the Republic of Croatia, the project is based on agreement between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Microsoft and City of Varaždin, as well as, the partners from the ICT sector in Croatia, CISCO, HP and T-COM.

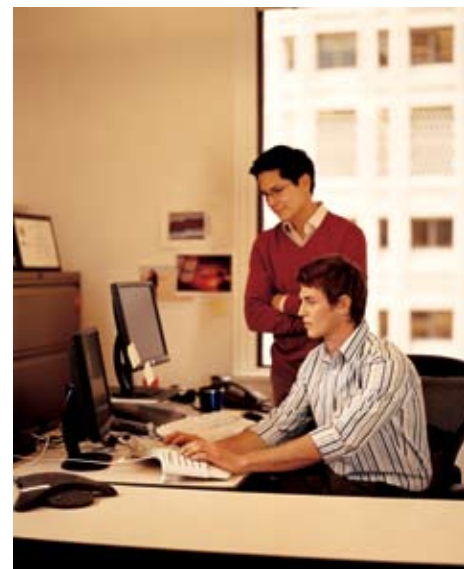
This joint project is a result of USAID and Microsoft recognition that Croatian enterprises across the economy need new technologies in order to raise their productivity and capacity to deliver high-quality goods and services at lower prices. The development of the ICT sector in Croatia will directly result in the creation of new IT tools for the Croatian businesses that will enhance their ability to compete on regional and global markets, thus stimulating growth and job creation at the national level.

Background

In 2000, USAID commissioned a study on the ICT industry in Croatia. The study found that, while Croatia has tremendous potential to create an IT economy, and the basic infrastructure is quite good, there remain some structural and business impediments that limit the ability of companies, particularly SMEs, to succeed.

Four years ago, despite a labour force that includes many professionals with software development skills, there were fewer than expected companies engaged in the development of software applications. While the number of ISVs has grown to about 250 in the past four years, there still remain the basic structural problems, including a weak overall business climate for entrepreneurship.

Microsoft and USAID share the same goal of stimulating the development of Croatia's ICT industry, leading to growth and job creation in that sector. At the same time, both of them recognise that Croatian enterprises across the economy need new technologies of all types in order to raise their productivity and capacity to deliver higher quality goods and services at competitive prices. In addition, it is hoped that further development of the ICT sector in Croatia will result in the creation of new IT tools for Croatian businesses



Fast Facts

Microsoft Business-Technology Centre has been established to provide the infrastructure and resources to help ISVs create innovative new products and services, bring those products and services to market, and build well-managed businesses around those innovative products and services.

Over the first 30 months following results are expected:

- The Centre will directly assist a minimum of 100 ISV companies with formal training or technical assistance with software development.
- A minimum of 200 new employees will be hired by assisted companies as these companies develop and market new products and find new markets for their existing products.
- A minimum of 20 new start-up ISV companies will be established as a result of Centre assistance
- A minimum of 50 new software products will be developed, registered under internationally recognised standards, and offered to the market

that can enhance their ability to compete on regional and global markets, thus stimulating growth and job creation at the national level.

Following the mutual priorities, and with the support of Croatian Government and other distinguished partners, Microsoft and USAID joined together in an effort to support the development of more competitive SMEs in Croatia, developing the project to address an sector with high growth potential.

Objectives

The Microsoft Business-Technology Centre has the task to provide the infrastructure and resources to help ISVs create innovative new products and services, bring those products and services to market, and build well-managed businesses around those innovative products and services.

After three years, it is expected that the Microsoft Business-Technology Centre will operate on a fully self-sustaining basis and will continue to provide services on to the ICT industry in Croatia.

To realise the potential of this initial idea Microsoft has gathered a number of partners from the public and private sectors; and the City of Varaždin, CISCO, HP and T-COM are contributing resources toward development and operations of the Centre.

The Centre is to focus on delivering knowledge transfer in both technology and business through classes, workshops, testing and demonstration sessions. Staffed

by a core team of programme managers, the Centre will provide support for envisioning, designing and testing software applications by using subject matter and product experts in engagements tailored to the specific needs of the ISV. Thanks to the excellent local cooperation with partners HP, CISCO and T-Com, the Centre is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and through that partnership will also provide joint offerings in the areas of education and business services for ISVs.

The Centre should also provide the infrastructure and resources to help ISVs adapt existing applications or create new innovations using Microsoft tools, methodology and resources. For each ISV engagement, the Centre will bring together a team of experts appropriate to the objectives of the session — whether it is an “envisioning session” to discuss product viability at the earliest stages of innovation, a design review, or a later-stage proof-of-concept session with a pre-release versions of the software.

Classes and workshops in the Centre will be delivered by recognised local industry experts and Microsoft professionals, as well as specialists coming from HP, CISCO, T-Com, universities and other educational institutions. Given that the Centre will be focused holistically on the creation of sustainable ICT for SMEs, the Centre will also deliver training and technical assistance on a wide range of business development topics in areas such as: project management, finance, marketing, sales, export and organisational development.

Czech Principals Take Interactive Message on Board

"We have just stepped into a new way of teaching. Computers have become tools for interactive teaching of all subjects, not just informatics."

Milan Hausner, principal, Junior Language School, Prague, Czech Republic

As part of a drive to boost IT, the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has an ongoing programme to spread the use of technology into all classrooms. One of the challenges is to educate teachers in the use of new technologies.

The Junior Language School in Prague, is a specialist school, for children aged from six to 15 years old, that focuses on languages and on ICT. The school has a particular interest in the development of multimedia educational software and interactive teaching tools. Since 1996, it has been accredited by the Ministry to educate teachers from other schools on how to integrate ICT into their classrooms. In 2004, the Junior Language School took up a new challenge, to ensure school principals fully appreciated the role of ICT in improving teaching and learning. The school was accredited to provide special courses for principals as part of the country's life-long learning programme. In the Czech Republic it's a requirement for principals to attend such courses as part of their career development.

Solution

The Junior Language School has a long-standing relationship with Microsoft that has been strengthened through the Partners in Learning programme. All of the school's training courses are designed for

Microsoft products or products closely linked to them. The school also uses Microsoft-developed tools for the authoring of learning units.

The school adapted the Microsoft Virtual Classroom Tour (VCT) template to fit the needs of Czech principals. To expose the principals to the fundamental issues of integrating ICT into the classroom, the Junior Language School uses a course on interactive whiteboards. The school's own experience has shown that whiteboards require teachers to create completely different types of lessons, becoming guides to children's explorations rather than lecturers. Used creatively, whiteboards can improve student motivation, speed of learning and the teacher-student relationship. Through this practical course, more than 200 principals have learned that technology is a tool that requires positive, new approaches to be effective. The principals have returned to their schools with a better understanding of the issues and opportunities for using ICT to improve the quality of education. They can now be effective in helping their teachers transform the classroom with appropriate uses of interactive technology.

Fast Facts

Customer

Junior Language School, Prague

Country

Czech Republic

Web Site

www.lupacovka.cz/

Customer Profile

Prague's Junior Language School is more than a school, it's a government-accredited centre for training teachers in the use of IT in the classroom. Since 2004, it has also been educating school principals in the use of interactive whiteboards and the integration of technology into lessons outside of the computer lab.

Estonian Businesses Respond to Special-Needs Schools

Fast Facts

Customer

The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research

Country

Estonia

Web Site

www.hm.ee

Customer Profile

The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research is dedicated to providing access to life-long learning for people in Estonia. Believing that the individual aptitudes and differences of every learner should be respected, it is determined to provide access to IT for special-needs children.

"This project will enable children with special educational needs to manage independently in their future lives. The fast, positive reaction to this project was remarkable."

Kai Kukk, Adviser of Special Educational Needs, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia

Within the past few years, access to IT has improved remarkably in Estonian schools, but some schools still have better access than others. Both the government and the Estonian corporate sector know that there is still room for improvement in rural areas and in schools that cater for special-needs children. Together with other businesses, The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research agreed the campaign strategy. The aim was to provide them with appropriate technology to support them in learning, communicating and interacting. Together with the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research and other companies, a campaign was agreed on. The goal was to collect at least 160 used computers from Estonian companies and public institutions, refurbish the computers, install new versions of software, and distribute the computers to schools with special-needs children.

Solution

Towards the end of February 2005, letters were sent directly to large Microsoft customers, asking them to help the country's special-needs children. Microsoft also used national media coverage and the Microsoft website to promote the project. The response from around the country was

prompt and positive: by mid-April, 170 PCs and 20 laptops had been donated by both private and public organisations.

As a logistics partner, DHL volunteered its resources to collect all the donated computers and store them before they were refurbished. At the end of April 2005, the computers were taken to another partner, the Estonian Information Technology College, that offers practical IT training for further education students. For two weeks, students at the College — a member of a Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher programme — gained refurbishment and software installation experience on 160 of the donated computers. This work provided a rare and valuable opportunity for the students to apply their knowledge to a real-life situation. Once the 160 computers were ready, DHL distributed them to 39 schools chosen by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The whole project was completed by the second week of June 2005, meeting the intended target of the end of the school year. The project was so successful that the partners hope it will be the first of many similar donation projects.

Hungarian Government Rolls Out IT Training to 1,500 Schools Nationwide

"I now feel confident to take the IT skills I have learnt and begin to make use of them in the classroom."

Pető László, Teacher, Hungary

As part of a drive to boost IT literacy, and improve teachers' ICT skills, Hungary's government has launched several initiatives aimed at increasing the use of technology in schools and universities.

Partnership with the private sector plays a vital role in this programme. This includes an important agreement between Microsoft and the Hungarian Ministry of Informatics and Communication that has allowed the ministry to provide all secondary schools throughout Hungary with Microsoft server software.

The next challenge was to train teachers and ICT staff to make sure that they had the necessary skills and qualifications to take advantage of this new software.

Solution

Working closely with the ministry, Microsoft set out plans for an ICT Training Truck, equipped with 25 HP workstations loaded with the same server software now available to all secondary schools. Getting the right team to staff this mobile training unit was also essential. Microsoft carefully selected a team of experienced teachers, chosen for their ability to pass on their knowledge of applying ICT skills in an educational environment.

In May 2004, the team began its tour of the country, stopping at local schools to train teachers and IT support staff. During the first four weeks, more than 350 teachers attended and were trained so that they were able to pass on their new skills to colleagues in both their own school, and schools nearby. In August, a more comprehensive three-day session was held at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, where a further 500 teachers and IT staff underwent a similar training programme.

Feedback from the training was extremely positive, with all teachers who attended expressing a high degree of satisfaction. Most importantly, in just a few months, staff at schools throughout Hungary have been equipped with the server software skills that will help create a more stimulating and engaging learning environment for pupils and teachers alike.

Fast Facts

Customer

The Ministry of Informatics and Communication

Country

Hungary

Web Site

<http://en.ihm.gov.hu/>

Customer Profile

The Ministry of Informatics and Communication is actively working on initiatives to bridge the digital divide in the country. This includes developing the technological infrastructure for schools including assistance in acquiring and maintaining computers, software, and Internet capabilities.



Online Entrance Exam Gives Results in Minutes

"This online exam is ideal for accredited colleges as it enables teachers to rapidly identify students by results."

Krisztina Zimányi, Director of Distance Learning Center, Hungary

Hungary is a robust market economy that became part of the EU in May 2004. Since 1989, it has undergone a dramatic transformation from a centrally planned economy to one of the most open, pro-business economies in Europe. Hungary can expect substantial net resource flows from the EU, but to make the most of this it needs to have a highly educated workforce. Education, therefore, is seen as a priority, with more than 95 per cent of pupils involved in attaining vocational or academic qualifications at age 17.

The Faculty of Commerce, Catering, and Tourism (CCT) at Budapest Business School is receiving record numbers of applications for its course. Krisztina Zimányi, Budapest Business School — Faculty of Commerce, Catering, and Tourism, Director of the Distance Learning Center, says: "In 2003, we had three times the number of applicants than the number of places available. The Distance Learning Center had to register more than 1,300 people.

"It takes a lot of work to organise an entrance exam: one and a half weeks to run a traditional written exam involving the entire registry department, including 20 teachers. We had to find a way of making the entrance exam easier to administer."

Solution

The Faculty of CCT decided to implement an electronic entrance exam system, RevisiON 2.1, based on Microsoft technology. The exam is one of the most

important in a student's life. If they take it and pass, they can get into high school. If not, they have to wait one year until they can retake it.

RevisiON, which was developed by a third-party software developer, can run on both an intranet and the Internet. Applicants sit at workstations and access a Web-based, multiple-choice examination application. Zimányi says: "The system sorts the settings so that all the applicants take the same exam. But it presents questions randomly in some categories to decrease the possibility of cheating."

Applicant data is registered in a national entrance exam system called Fresher, which is based on a countrywide system that uses Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000. All universities get student information about future freshers and their results go back into this system. However, because of legal regulations, feedback is paper-based but educators hope this will change to electronic notification in the future.

Zimányi says: "The computer evaluates answers to the questions automatically and results are available for staff and students immediately. This is a big advantage for all of us. In the past they had to wait four weeks to get the results."

But before coming to Budapest Business School, the applicants can practice taking the exam at home as it is available over the Internet. It means that they can take the

"The computer evaluates answers to the questions automatically and results are available for staff and students immediately. This is a big advantage for all of us. In the past they had to wait four weeks to get the results."

Krisztina Zimányi,
BBS — CCT, Director of
Distance Learning Center

exam when they are fully prepared, rather than coming to it cold. And as the average age is 20, many are experienced computer users. If not, they can practice until they are.

Zimányi says: "The Internet-based version enables applicants to practise the exam several times at home and measure their performance immediately after each practice."

The solution is based on the Microsoft Windows 2000 Server operating system and SQL Server 2000. Applicants use Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional on PCs, connected to the server by Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.1 and above.

The developer created a program using Microsoft InterDev, Microsoft Visual Studio development system, Microsoft Visual Basic® development system, Microsoft Visual Basic Script, Microsoft Visual C++® development system, Microsoft ASP.NET, JavaScript and SQL. Written before the Microsoft .NET Framework was launched, the developer is now rewriting it using this environment. The Microsoft .NET Framework is an integral Windows component that supports next-generation applications and Web services.

Segmentation. When there are three applicants for each place, it is vital for teachers to rapidly view the results as part of the entry process to select the best students. "This online exam is ideal for those administrating exams at accredited colleges," says Zimányi, "as it enables teachers to rapidly identify students by their results. According to opinion leaders, this is the method of the future."

Reuse the Entrance Exam System for Internal Exams. As well as giving rapid

results, there are other benefits. As the system is based on flexible Microsoft technology, it can be customised for use within other departments in the school. Zimányi says: "Our experience and statistics show that the system is not only worth using for external exams but internal exams as well. We can reuse data, create new applications, and store [them] in a database to make sure we have the latest information on candidates."

Positive Feedback From Applicants.

Applicants who have taken the exam are delighted at receiving their results on the same day they take the exam. They don't have that nail-biting wait for results and no interview with the lecturers is required. One young woman says: "I got the results immediately, which was very nice, and it took only half an hour — not like other written exams that take two to three hours. I got 80 per cent, which I think is good enough for entry to this school. I didn't have to wait four weeks to find that out."

Reduced Administration; More Satisfied Applicants. The system handles dedicated seats and can give different questions from the same exam to different students sitting side by side, or wherever they are located. This reduces the possibility of cheating.

When a seat becomes free, the next applicant starts the exam immediately. If there is a problem, the system knows who the applicant is. Once resolved, the applicant can carry on from where they were before. The results are also archived, so applicants and lecturers can reach them at any time. All of this reduces the administration staff required, generates results quicker, and results in more satisfied students.

Fast Facts

Country

Hungary

Solution

The Faculty implemented an online entrance exam based on Microsoft technology.

Benefits

- Integrity of testing system
- Immediate results
- Reduces paperwork
- Results stored on national system
- Rapid decision making

Kazakhstan Builds Basic Understanding of ICT in Education

Fast Facts

Customer

Republican Institute for Improving Qualification Standards for Teachers and Educators

Country

Kazakhstan

Customer Profile

Kazakhstan's Republican Institute for Improving Qualification Standards for Teachers and Educators needs to find practical ways to develop the information technology knowledge of all educators at primary and secondary level.

"We plan to introduce as many Partners in Learning curricula as possible, to improve teachers' qualifications and those of school directors and department heads."

Berizkhan Almukhambetov, Director, Republican Institute for Improving Qualification Standards for Teachers and Educators, Kazakhstan

The Republican Institute for Improving Qualification Standards for Teachers and Educators is responsible for improving the skills and qualifications of Kazakhstan's primary and secondary school educators. One of the Institute's current priorities is to develop teachers' abilities to use IT. The Institute has an established system for developing the IT skills of Kazakhstan's IT teachers. Now it wants to spread its efforts to all other teachers, so that technology can be used beyond the computer laboratory, to improve teaching in every classroom. Microsoft was asked to work with the Institute when the government of Kazakhstan signed the Partners in Learning Memorandum of Understanding in December 2004. Microsoft suggested to the Institute that the seven courses from the Partners in Learning curriculum could be very useful in helping all teachers, of both IT and other subjects, to understand and use new technologies to improve teaching and learning.

Solution

The seven courses from the Partners in Learning curriculum provide lesson plans, instruction handbooks, grading guides for teachers, and classroom materials for students. Educators are free to adopt the course content and materials in their entirety, or customise them to meet local needs.

To assess the effectiveness of the Microsoft courses, the Republican Institute for

Improving Qualification Standards for Teachers and Educators nominated 25 IT teachers to be trained on the Understanding and Building Basic Networks course. As IT teachers, they fell within the Institute's existing plans for IT training, and were well-positioned to assess the value of the course for IT teachers and non-IT teachers. In April 2005, the 25 teachers gathered in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city. There they were trained on the Basic Networks course by a local Microsoft partner, Alphatech.

The response to the course was so positive that directly afterwards 23 out of the 25 teachers decided to enrol for the Microsoft Office Specialist certification, operated by another local Microsoft partner, Hightech for Human. Based on the response of the IT teachers, the Institute has decided to move forward with introducing other Partners in Learning courses as quickly as possible.

In the 2005/2006 academic year, the Institute will seek formal approval from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to introduce further courses covering a wide variety of technical and non-technical IT issues. These courses will be targeted at teachers, principals and managers, to enable Kazakhstan's educators at all levels to understand and support the integration of technology into classrooms.

Latvian Schools Work Hard to Succeed in Golden Ant Competition

"Self-realisation and self-confidence are essential to youth. The Golden Ant contest not only contributes to this, but the results are very useful for the schools and the local community."
Leons Lídums, School Director, Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium, Latvia

Twice a year, the Golden Ant competition (www.zeltaskudra.lv) is open to a number of Latvia's school districts, in two or three regions of the country. The competition was launched in 2003 by Lattelekom, Latvia's telecommunications incumbent, in partnership with Microsoft. Children in Latvia's rural areas still have limited access to the Internet. At primary and secondary schools, Internet-related skills such as Web page development are not part of the official IT curriculum. The Golden Ant competition aims to help students learn about the Web and develop skills such as text editing and picture formatting as well as an understanding of the principles of navigation and file management. In its third year, 2005, the Golden Ant competition came to the Aizkraukle and Ogre regions of Latvia's Vidzeme district.

The Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium, a secondary school (grades 7–12), stepped up to the challenge of the competition along with 28 other schools in the region.

Solution

The Golden Ant competition requires students to develop simple but dynamic Web pages with tools such as Microsoft FrontPage. When a school applies for the competition, Microsoft invites it to send one or more teachers for training. Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium sent one of its informatics teachers to the training session, held at Microsoft's training centre

in Latvia's capital city, Riga. Over an intensive weekend, the teachers are coached in basic Internet and FrontPage skills. They then return to their schools to work with student teams on their entries. Each school submits as many entries as it likes. In each district, a judging panel selects the best five entries, at both primary and secondary level, to progress to the district final.

Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium was proud to have a team in the Vidzeme district final, and to be chosen as the venue where the ten finalists met for the final round. In the final, each team first presented its Web site entry. Then the primary-level finalists had to answer a set of questions by searching for the information on the Web, while the secondary-level finalists developed a small Web site in just half an hour. Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium came second in its section, winning a scanner for the school for its entry named "IQ and other powers of the mind".

One of the most impressive results of the competition is that approximately 10 per cent of the entries, developed by the students for local organisations, have been taken over by the organisations after the competition. This is a testament to the enthusiasm generated by the competition, and its success in equipping the students with real skills to create Web sites of genuine value.

Fast Facts

Customer

Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium

Country

Latvia

Web Site

www.adc.lv/skola

Customer Profile

Aizkraukle Region Gymnasium, a secondary school in Latvia's Aizkraukle region, came second in a competition aimed at providing children with important IT skills through Web page development.

School Teachers in Lithuania Prove They Can Innovate With IT

Fast Facts

Customer

Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science

Country

Lithuania

Web Site

www.smm.lt

Customer Profile

The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science has a goal to turn Lithuania into an 'information society'. It wants to encourage the development of innovative uses of information technology in the classroom, and spread these uses to all schools in the country

"We've learned that there are many creative teachers in Lithuania. The competition has given them the chance to spread the fruits of their labour beyond a single classroom to the whole country."

Vainas Brazdeikis, Director, Centre of IT of Education, Ministry of Education and Science, Lithuania

Lithuania's Centre of Information Technology of Education is responsible for investing in technological infrastructure and providing hardware, software and IT training to primary and secondary schools in Lithuania. The Centre is part of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, and its efforts have resulted in a steady growth of IT resources in schools.

At a meeting of Lithuania's Partners in Learning advisory board, the Ministry decided to endorse a project to find out how its investment in IT has affected the practice of teaching and learning in the country's 2,000 schools. Another aim of the project was to make it easier for teachers and schools to adopt innovative teaching practices, by finding and publicising examples of successful, interesting and creative uses of technology in the classroom.

Solution

In September 2004, the Minister of Education and Science launched a competition for all of Lithuania's primary and secondary schools. They were given until the beginning of December to submit entries describing innovative teaching practices employing information technology. Microsoft provided a Microsoft PowerPoint template called the Virtual Classroom Tour.

The template was translated into Lithuanian and all entries were submitted in this format. By filling in the template, teachers provided enough information about a classroom project so that others could assess its value and success, making it easy for other teachers to repeat the project.

A total of 221 entries were received from 100 schools around Lithuania, representing the work of 193 teachers. They covered all age groups and a wide range of subjects, from music, art and ethics to mathematics, languages, biology, physics and history. Subject experts selected by the Ministry assessed all the entries.

The top ten projects, representing the work of 17 teachers, were recognised at Lithuania's first Innovative Teachers Forum on 7 April 2005. Most importantly, 177 of the entries have been published on a Ministry Web portal financed by Microsoft (<http://metodika.emokykla.lt/default.htm>), so that they can be accessed by teachers around the country and used to inspire further innovation in teaching and learning.



IT Training Helps Poland to Drive Industry Towards a Knowledge-Based Future

"Polish people have gained a great opportunity to take their personal drive and ambition to the next level in terms of productivity, and make Poland an increasingly important partner in the EU."

Witold Ozimek, Training Division Director, Computer Service Support, Poland

The people of Poland have been highlighting the dynamism and self-motivation inherent in their personalities. The latest figures show that in the last 15 years, the number of students in higher education has grown fivefold.

Poles are keen to take full advantage of Poland's entry into the EU in 2004 and emulate the success of countries such as Spain and Ireland, whose economies have benefited greatly from member status. Today, among communities across the country, there is a drive to improve career prospects and gain IT skills that add real business value to a growing economy.

As a result, Poland is developing a major new industry sector around IT training. In the West, this type of training has been a feature of the corporate landscape for decades. Since the 1960s, the United States, the world's economic powerhouse, has led the way in demonstrating how IT can help people achieve their business goals more effectively and boost the efficiency of day-to-day operations as well as ultimately having a beneficial transformational effect on individuals. Consequently, technology training is now almost as ubiquitous as the teaching of reading and writing.

Bridging the Skills Divide

As part of the country's young market economy, Poles are trying to bridge a large gap in IT training. Computer Service Support, headquartered in Warsaw, is a leading supplier of technology training in Poland and is one organisation working to bridge the skills divide before it becomes too pronounced.

Witold Ozimek, training division director, Computer Service Support, says: "We launched the company in 1993 with a team of just three people. The number of employees we had reflected the size of the market that we operated in. But, since then, we have grown substantially as more and more organisations in Poland have switched on to IT training and see the importance of technology in helping develop productivity and economic prosperity for all."

Nevertheless, currently the vast majority of Polish organisations that invest in IT training are large enterprises — around 65 per cent. At the smaller company level (organisations of less than 500 people), the figure is tiny — between 2 and 3 per cent. In fact, in a nationwide survey of SMEs conducted by Microsoft Poland called "Microsoft Index of the IT Situation" released in May 2005, 40 per cent of respondents said IT training delivered no efficiency gains whatsoever.



"We have grown substantially as more and more organisations in Poland have switched on to IT training and see the importance of technology in helping develop productivity and economic prosperity for all."

Witold Ozimek,
Training Division Director,
Computer Service Support,
Poland

Artur Rybka, small business manager at Microsoft Poland, says: "This, in part, reflected the poor culture around work that is a legacy from the communist era in Poland. It certainly highlighted the need to promote the benefits of IT and IT skills to SMEs."

The EU is pushing IT and training in technology as it recognises that increased personal productivity drives economic growth. In March 2000, the European Council, part of the EU, created the Lisbon Agenda, which aims to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. It recognised that a powerful way to achieve this was to fund IT awareness and training programmes aimed squarely at the grassroots level — the European SME market.

The European Council strongly believes that organisations of this size using IT and creating dynamic local economies will lead to consistent growth at the higher macro level.

As a result, the European Union Grants Advisor (EUGA) programme was born. EUGA is an initiative developed by Microsoft, in partnership with HP and Intel, to increase awareness and understanding of EU funds among SMEs and local and regional governments (LRGs). In Poland, in particular, it is starting to make a real impact, helping SME personnel gain IT skills, and increase innovation, thereby boosting local economies, and thereby helping deliver on the Lisbon strategy.

Currently, the EU is funding training at smaller organisations to the tune of €17.5m (US \$20.7m) over the next two years, and this figure is set to rise. It means these companies get access to courses at massively discounted prices (up to 80 per cent reduction). Such discounts remove the funding barrier that all too often prevents SMEs from obtaining up-to-date and relevant IT skills that can boost individual confidence as well as positively impacting the bottom line and local community. The money comes from successful funding bids to the European Social Fund (ESF) and is a direct result of assistance from Microsoft Poland and its local consortium members, which supply key support services in the application process.

Solution

With the money in place, a campaign is now in full swing to promote the business value of IT and advertise the discounted training available. During December 2005, at Computer Service Support, which has 12 training centres across Poland, people were putting together a marketing campaign for the latest-version IT courses.

The campaign will consist of newspaper advertisements in the local press, telesales, and e-mailing thousands of target companies contained in a database. The effort is aimed at levelling the playing field throughout Poland and allowing the country to gain the skills that will allow it compete in the global market.

The promotional drive is also backed by all the EUGA consortium members. The Consortium has planned a campaign that

promotes the training schemes to SMEs and highlights how IT can increase personal productivity and add real value.

Rybka says: "We are speaking to journalists in the press, on TV, and on the radio about IT and trying to change attitudes. We have really worked hard on this and we believe the right messages are getting through." In addition to targeting journalists, Microsoft Poland is also promoting the courses available on its Web site (www.microsoft.com/poland/) and is e-mailing a database of 25,000 SMEs across the country with promotional messages and Internet links to the training companies' sites to increase awareness.

Accordingly, more than 50,000 Poles who work for SMEs will receive IT training by 2008 as a result of grants allocated and those expected in the future. That gives the Consortium two years to fulfil its responsibility of helping Europe to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010.

At Computer Service Support, those trained will increase their general IT skills, including how to use the latest versions of software solutions that boost productivity across all business processes, such as infrastructure software, software for better communication and collaboration, and a range of knowledge worker courses, which focus on desktop environments and can significantly increase the productivity of workers.

Poles, whether they work for SMEs or not, now have the chance to improve their personal circumstances and gain IT skills. Small companies can see the business value of IT in the same way as enterprises, and receive financial support that makes IT training more attractive. This will have a large impact on local economies in the near future and help the EU meet the aims and objectives of the Lisbon Agenda. Ozimek says: "Polish people have gained a great opportunity to take their personal drive and ambition to the next level in terms of productivity, and make Poland an increasingly important partner in the EU."

Fast Facts

Country

Poland

Web Site

<http://www.microsoft.com/poland>

Company Profile

SMEs in Poland represent the driving force behind local economies within this country that joined the European Union in 2004.

Situation

Among these organisations, there was a shortfall in IT training for employees. This was due to a lack of knowledge around the business value from technology in making day-to-day processes more efficient, and the cost of developing worker skills.

Solution

IT training institutions in Poland successfully applied to the EU, using the EUGA programme, and have secured funds that will rise above €17.5m (US \$20.7m) to promote and subsidise courses. EUGA is an initiative developed by Microsoft, in partnership with HP and Intel, and implemented in partnership with local consortium members, to increase awareness and understanding of EU funds among SMEs and LRGs.

Benefits

- Poles gain assistance in realising their economic potential using IT solutions that help achieve business goals more efficiently.
- SMEs drive increased growth in local economies, establishing a solid foundation for future prosperity countrywide.
- Reduces paperwork
- Poland's young market economy develops faster and joins EU member states in making Europe a knowledge-based economy.

Perm Municipal Education and Science Committee Increases Staff Productivity

"The fact that staff from all over the region can work closely together is having a significant impact on productivity."

Nikolai Yakovlevich Karpushin, Chairman of the Perm Municipal Education and Science Committee, Russia

In the Perm Region of Russia some 90 per cent of classrooms are equipped with computers, compared with 70 per cent for the rest of Russia. Perm's Municipal Education and Science Committee is working in partnership with the Municipal Centre for the Development of Education and the Information Analysis Centre to create an Internet association within schools by organising competitions and conferences involving the city's pupils and teachers. A number of educational facilities in Perm currently use online methods for teaching pupils.

The main challenge is to create an IT system for managing Perm's educational facilities. The groundwork for this has been laid, with a personalised record system, a database for equipment and property in buildings, and a system recording additional, payable education services in place.

The Education Committee has a large number of departments and subsidiary institutions across the city. Contact between staff involved in document management and in implementing solutions is infrequent, as they are spread out regionally. This makes it difficult to monitor performance and leads to duplication of effort and discrepancies between document versions. It was necessary to radically improve communication between

Education Committee staff and to simplify the document management process.

Nikolai Yakovlevich Karpushin, chairman of the Perm Municipal Education and Science Committee, says: "We needed a centralised system for planning activities and monitoring the allocation of working time as well as for assigning tasks and monitoring how they are carried out. Our ultimate aim is to migrate to a paperless system in the future so we needed a system which would be flexible enough to support this."

To establish more effective collaboration between staff located across the region, it was necessary to create an IT infrastructure that consisted of state-of-the-art document management technology. It was especially important to select a platform that wouldn't impose standard collaborative models on staff or create large training requirements.

The Education Committee involved the Centre of Informational and Financial Technologies (CIFT) in the task of creating an automated collaboration and document management system. CIFT already has Microsoft Gold Certified Partner status in the "Collaboration Solutions" category, making it a suitable partner for this type of project. The structure to be automated was a distributed IT environment



comprising several local area networks located far apart, and standalone computers connected to the Internet using dedicated and dial-up channels. All remote structures were connected to the central site using a VPN, ensuring secure data transmission via the Internet.

Solution

After researching the market, CIFT and the committee selected Microsoft Routing and Remote Access Service, which provides advanced routing and internetworking capabilities, and Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2000, a multi-layer enterprise firewall and Web cache that helps provide secure, fast and manageable Internet connectivity. These were used to create the VPN and the main site's secure Internet connection. Microsoft Office XP and Microsoft Office 2003 are running on the workstations in each office. Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services, which help teams share information, collaborate on documents, and collect team knowledge over the Internet or corporate network, supply the collaborative functions.

The committee's existing domain environment was migrated from Microsoft Windows NT® Server 4.0 to Microsoft Windows Server 2003 operating system, part of the Microsoft Windows Server System integrated server software. Windows Server 2003 enables organisations to do more with less, without compromising security or performance. The solution enables collaboration between staff. A portal

created using Microsoft Internet Information Server will enable external users to access information about education in the region. A total of two servers and 40 workstations have been used in the project, using the hardware already in place.

Better Communication, Increased

Productivity. Windows SharePoint Services allows more effective interaction between department managers working across the region. Users can automate functions for planning activities and allocate working time, as well as assign tasks and monitor how they are carried out. This eliminates duplicated effort and reduces error, as senior managers can regulate who alters documents by setting permissions.

Karpushin says: "The fact that staff from all over the region can work closely together is having a significant impact on productivity. This affects staff from all levels, but we're seeing the most impact for department heads. Senior managers find it much easier to make the best use of their employees' time. The collaborative functions of Windows SharePoint Services, coupled with the timetabling functions available within Microsoft Office 2003, provide them with all the tools they need to plan effectively and increase productivity."

More Accessible Information for Parents.

The whole community benefits from the solution as it can access relevant information about education services within the Perm Region. Karpushin says: "We have implemented an Internet portal

"We needed a centralised system for planning activities and monitoring the allocation of working time as well as for assigning tasks and monitoring how they are carried out. Our ultimate aim is to migrate to a paperless system in the future so we needed a system which would be flexible enough to support this."

Nikolai Yakovlevich Karpushin,
Chairman of the Perm
Municipal Education and
Science Committee

for the Perm education service, which will have a significant role to play in making information accessible to external organisations, parents, and any other Internet users who might simply be interested.”

Secure Remote Access and Automatic Backup. The integrity of the solution is guaranteed via a number of security measures. Users are able to connect to the central site via their own network while still fully protected by an Internet firewall. Data is protected using high-level encryption. “The solution also protects data by running an automatic backup for server data and configurations. Users can access all the information they need remotely with confidence that the data will remain accessible only to those authorised to see it,” says Karpushin.

Familiar Tools, Less Training Required. Education Committee staff already have experience in using Microsoft technology. The familiar user interface and consistent menu structures make it easy for staff to

understand the new system, ensuring minimal training costs.

Karpushin says: “We weren’t intending to invent our own in-house product to achieve our objectives. We wanted to use the latest Microsoft technology, as have had great success implementing Microsoft software in the past. The Microsoft platform was already familiar to our staff, so we knew it would be easy for them to learn how to get the most from the new applications.”

Scalable and Flexible. The solution enables the Education Committee to develop further tools and procedures for managing information for maximum benefit. Karpushin says: “This solution means we can be flexible in our plans to restructure our ICT infrastructure. Our aim is to achieve an entirely paperless office in the near future, and having a solution in place which we can adapt to support that is very valuable.”



Equipping Teachers in Russia With ICT Skills to Promote Digital Literacy

"Our task is to teach the teachers. We need to show teachers what is possible and how to use ICT across the curriculum."

Yelena Bulin-Sokolova, Director of the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre, Russia

The Russian Government is running a (US) \$2.6bn programme, "Electronic Russia 2002–2010", to boost e-commerce and Internet use. The programme concentrates on the regulatory and legal environment, Internet infrastructure, e-government and e-education. In terms of e-education, the government aims to boost distance learning, develop better digital teaching resources, and empower students to achieve their full potential through the use of ICT. The Moscow Department of Education is developing e-learning in schools through The Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre, which provides equipment to schools, co-ordinates teaching support, and aims to improve skills.

Over the last eight years, members and guests of the local club "TekhnoLogiya", which includes teachers of different subjects from hundreds of educational establishments in Moscow, have been meeting at the centre. These people are committed to modernising technology in Moscow schools and meet once a week to exchange ideas, solve problems, and find out about current developments and the latest innovations appearing on the global educational software market.

The centre adopts an inclusive approach to creating IT environments for schools,

including providing industry links, methodologies and training for new software and equipment. As part of its involvement in the Moscow administration's programmes, such as the local government's "e-Moscow" drive and its programme to create a standardised IT environment for Moscow's education system, the centre is working on solutions that enable it to: monitor developments in the IT sector; decide which technology is appropriate for each educational facility; and provide staff training.

Yelena Bulin-Sokolova, director of the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre, says: "Nowadays, chalk and a blackboard aren't the only resources for teaching children. We're using state-of-the-art, high-tech tools, which can be used by teachers and pupils to carry out scientific experiments during lessons and for modelling natural processes, creating multimedia presentations, searching for information, and organising their presentations. Our task is to teach the teachers. We need to show teachers what is possible and how to use ICT across the curriculum." To achieve these aims, the centre needs to ensure it has the right technology and all the latest information and skills in order to be in the best position to support schools.

“Using Microsoft software is easy, but we’re enabling teachers to gain a wider view of ICT and to explore all the potential applications of this technology in the classroom. This rounded approach benefits students of all abilities, in all subjects.”

Yelena Bulin-Sokolova,
Director of the Information
Technology and Training
Equipment Centre

Solution

The centre has implemented standardised Microsoft software, with Microsoft Office XP Professional. Microsoft products are proving especially popular in Moscow, so the centre will be able to provide teachers with the right skills to use the technology in their own schools. A course teaching how to use Microsoft products has, in fact, been introduced as part of the Moscow IT curriculum. This is due to their widespread use in Russia in general and to the special supply terms offered to schools by Microsoft.

The Microsoft School Agreement, for example, provides schools with discounted licences, and the Microsoft Partners in Learning Fresh Start for Donated Computers programme enables schools to acquire licences for donated computers at no additional cost.

Teachers are now able to learn how to use Office XP at the centre to increase their personal productivity and reduce their administrative workload. Programmes such as Microsoft Office Outlook 2003 messaging and collaboration client enable teachers to construct timetables and share information with colleagues quickly and easily. Teachers can also now learn how to make the most of other programs as key teaching tools.

Bulin-Sokolova says: “The experts at the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre are aware of the need to provide teaching modules to education professionals set at different levels of difficulty, given that some teachers will have had more ICT experience and training than others in the past. As a result, the centre’s course modules in different subjects — maths, physics, technology, foreign languages,

biology, chemistry, natural sciences, and humanities etc — are divided into three stages: initial level (12 hours), basic level (24 hours) and practical seminar (36 hours). To begin with, the teachers learn how to create simple text and tables using Word and Excel, before moving on to producing larger presentations and Web projects using PowerPoint and Microsoft Office FrontPage 2003, a Web site creation and management tool.

Benefiting the Whole Curriculum.

Acquiring skills in using Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Photo Editor will enable teachers to be more creative in their use of ICT in the classroom and promote digital literacy.

Bulin-Sokolova says: “Using Microsoft software is easy, but we’re enabling teachers to gain a wider view of ICT and to explore all the potential applications of this technology in the classroom. This rounded approach benefits students of all abilities, in all subjects.”

The Skills to Nurture Talent Early On.

The Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre realises that ICT needs to be introduced as part of the teaching process from an early school age. As such, primary schools all over the Moscow region are teaching children how to use a variety of Microsoft software programs. The centre is providing teachers with the necessary skills to support this. In particular, teachers in classes years one to three have begun to use Word as a tool for improving literacy through taking dictation.

Yelena Khokhlova, deputy head teacher at School No. 1811, says: “Doing dictation in Word is easy and convenient, especially once we have taught the children how to touch-type. This is something which will

come in very useful to them. Teachers at our school are also teaching other literacy and ICT skills using Word, such as formatting and aligning text and spellchecking. If pupils see that Word has found a mistake, they start analysing the context. This enables them to correct their spelling and means they know the correct way to do it next time. We are trying to actively encourage this self-paced learning wherever possible.

“Teachers who’ve trained at the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre are constantly finding new teaching methods using technology. We’re using these tools to enable our students to achieve their full potential both now and in the future.”

Leading by Example Using PowerPoint.

On the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre Web site there are a number of modules available on different topics, which have been created using PowerPoint by both trainers at the centre and school teachers. They are available for general view, and can also be used directly in the teaching process when carrying out practical assignments or introducing a new topic.

Teachers attending the centre are discovering the ease of use and flexibility of PowerPoint. For instance, it can be used to adapt existing presentations easily and so make the best use of learning resources and teacher time. Preparing lessons has, in the past, taken up a lot of time, and using PowerPoint is streamlining this preparation considerably for many teachers.

Nadezhda Dmitriyeva, a biology trainer at the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre, says: “It’s difficult to choose a specific software product to use

for giving lessons in a particular subject. It’s much more interesting and useful to use it to carry out a specific practical assignment, such as doing dictation or preparing a presentation on a particular topic. These presentations can be reused for different classes with only minor adaptation required, meaning we are making the most effective use of time and resources.”

There has been a drive to modernise the Moscow’s education system. During that time, nearly 10,000 teachers have attended ICT training centres to improve their skills, with a significant number of them attending the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre.

Dmitriyeva says: “During the last two years, teachers from every newly built school have improved their skills in the application of ICT across the curriculum at our centre. As soon as these schools have a classroom with computer access, the school management has been sending up to ten teachers on courses to improve their skills. The important thing is that they are keen to acquire these new skills.”

Since 2001, around 500 chemistry and biology teachers have attended courses at the Information Technology and Training Equipment Centre on how to use computer technology. Already, about 10 per cent of them are actively incorporating PowerPoint presentations, which they have created themselves, into their lessons.

Bulin-Sokolova says: “These technology-based teaching methods are providing students with new ways of understanding their lessons, while at the same time giving them a thorough understanding of Microsoft technology. In this way, students are realising their potential through technology while building skills for the future.”



Developing Opportunities in Serbia

"Microsoft is taking a collaborative approach to innovation, working with partners and governments to produce technologies that serve society, businesses and the technology industry."

**Bodin Dresevic, Director of Development,
Belgrade Development Centre, Serbia-Montenegro**

Two years ago Bodin Dresevic was ready to quit his job as a development manager in the Microsoft Tablet PC group and leave the US to return to his homeland of Serbia-Montenegro. The Microsoft employee of 16 years was in a quandary, he says: "I loved my job with Microsoft. Yet I missed living in Europe. I also wanted to help stem the 'brain drain' in Serbia-Montenegro."

The break up of Yugoslavia and the resulting unrest had meant that there was a lack of opportunities in Belgrade for talented technology engineers. During this time, a significant proportion of the country's highly skilled professional population emigrated to countries offering better opportunities. Dresevic, who left Serbia 20 years ago, is one example of this mass exodus of talented and educated professionals. Consequently, the development of Serbia-Montenegro has suffered.

"There is a large number of people from former Yugoslavia working for Microsoft in North America. The number of highly educated professionals from Serbia-Montenegro residing elsewhere, far exceeds the number of professionals that work within the country," says Dresevic. "This is something that needs to be addressed for the future of my country." While talking over his predicament with

Microsoft colleague Dejan Cvetkovic, the two ex-patriots came up with an exciting idea. "We realised that we could kill two birds with one stone: continue to contribute to the value of Microsoft products, while leveraging the potential talent base located within Serbia-Montenegro and rebuilding an intellectual community," says Dresevic.

Dresevic and Cvetkovic presented the case for Microsoft to establish a global development centre in Serbia, joining the ranks of Ireland, India and China. The result is a development centre that aims to create opportunities for developers in Serbia-Montenegro and strengthen an emerging market, as well as improving the experience of Microsoft Windows Mobile users.

The focus of the Belgrade Development Centre is on the development of code for Microsoft Tablet PC technology, the Microsoft Windows operating system built for mobile-computing. With a Tablet PC users can capture handwritten notes on screen, which can then be converted into text for the required languages. At present, Tablet PC handwriting recognisers exist only for four major East Asian languages and five major Western European languages. Work carried out at this new development centre will expand support for handwriting recognition for more languages.

The centre will also conduct research on how to apply modern machine-learning techniques to the recognition of digital ink 2-D structures. In other words, building recognisers for more complex, handwritten structures, such as mathematical equations and chemical diagrams. The result will give Tablet PC users more flexibility to use a computer in more places and situations than previous systems have allowed.

“Our mission is to ship industrial-strength code to customers around the world,” said Drešević, director of development at the Belgrade Development Centre. “It is about three things: improving lives; bridging the digital divide; and improving computer literacy.”

The centre illustrates the benefit of public and private alliance to achieve more knowledge-based jobs in Europe, which in turn leads to economic growth and competitiveness. Its vision is very much in line with that of the Lisbon Agenda, which aims to make Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010. According to Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Miroslav Labus, the opening of the development centre demonstrates that the business climate in the country has improved as companies keen to invest in export-bound production are starting to look towards Serbia and Montenegro. “This investment from Microsoft is a step forward, proving that Serbia is not technologically backward,” Labus said.

Cvetković, general manager, Microsoft in Serbia-Montenegro, says: “The code that is

written and produced in Serbia will be on millions of PCs running future versions of Microsoft Windows worldwide. This is a testament to the great talent pool in Serbia-Montenegro and it a great coup for our country.”

Initially, the team hired ten experts, two of which returned to Serbia-Montenegro after pursuing opportunities in the US and Slovenia. The centre also intends to engage local engineers, along with Microsoft subsidiaries, academia and other local companies with expertise in the field to develop language and handwriting-recognition technologies.

Cvetković says, “Our government and Microsoft are striving to keep and attract smart and skilled workers in Serbia and Montenegro. This development centre puts Serbia and Montenegro on the world technology map.”

Choosing Serbia-Montenegro to be among the first countries in Europe to host a development centre is a signal of the confidence Microsoft holds in the country’s economic prospects. This will aid the local economy in more ways than one. Not only will this energise Microsoft partners in using this opportunity to promote their talent, but it will also challenge Microsoft competitors to respond. Further, this investment will grow local economic development and enable Serbia-Montenegro to better compete in the global marketplace. Ultimately allowing individuals and local and regional communities to enjoy the benefits and opportunities IT can deliver.

“The development centre will provide opportunities to highly skilled professionals that didn’t exist before.”

Bodin Drešević,
Director of Development,
Belgrade Development Centre



Drešević says: "More than ever, Microsoft is taking an open and collaborative approach to innovation, working with partners and governments to produce technologies that serve society, businesses, and the technology industry."

"I believe that the establishment of this development centre is one of the healthiest foreign direct investments in Serbia and Montenegro, which is a shining representative of emerging market countries," adds Cvetković.

Improving Lives

By establishing long-term collaborations with government and private companies and providing employment for future generations, Microsoft is working to enhance the economic development of Serbia-Montenegro. For Drešević, this investment from Microsoft has given Serbia-Montenegro hope for future innovation and greater economic strength. It has also helped him fulfill his dream of working and living in the country he loves. Drešević says, "While there is a philanthropic aspect to this project, for me, it has been a personal journey. I have given something back to the community, to the country in which I was raised.

"The development centre will provide opportunities to highly skilled professionals that didn't exist before. It will entice them to return and remain in the country, and work together on creating products that will raise the profile of Serbia-Montenegro. So I am contributing to the economic prospects of this country and helping to build an island of excellence and

better compete in the global marketplace through the use of technology.

"But the best part of this experience is that I have been able to return to my homeland of Serbia and Montenegro while contributing to the creation of a strong knowledge-based economy. I am looking forward to the future."

Serbian Teachers Get The Support They Need, With The Help of Microsoft

"The competition is a fine example of how a forceful and generous partnership can provide strong support for innovative and energetic teaching staff."

Professor Ljubomir Protic, General Manager, Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing, Serbia-Montenegro

After the Partners in Learning Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Serbian government in June 2004, one of the first Partners in Learning initiatives was to train teachers, who had very little knowledge of computers, on Serbian versions of Office 2003 and Windows XP. Initial feedback to this customised training — provided by local Microsoft Certified Gold Partner, Computer Equipment and Trade (CET) — showed that teachers worried that they would forget their new skills if they didn't have a reason to use them once they were back at school. In response, the Serbian Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing decided it had to encourage teachers to use computers as an integral part of their jobs.

The Institute is responsible, among other things, for the professional progress of Serbian teachers and the development of curricula.

Solution

In February 2005, the Institute, supported by Microsoft and CET, announced a competition for all high school teachers. The aim was not only to encourage the use of new skills, but also to create a database of innovative teaching materials and a network of innovative teachers. The competition required teachers to provide evidence of using ICT in a meaningful way,

not necessarily in the classroom, but at least in preparing innovative lessons. The Microsoft VCT, a template that enables classroom projects to be described and assessed, was translated into Serbian and adapted for this purpose. Over 700 high school teachers registered their interest in the competition, and nearly 200 took up an offer of free training on use of the VCT model. For the two months of the competition, the Microsoft customer helpdesk in Serbia also offered free technical support to registered competitors.

When the competition closed in April, 425 teachers had submitted a total of 513 VCTs. They represented 151 of Serbia's 600 high schools, and 60 different cities. The top nine were recognised at a ceremony at the end of June 2005.

As a result of the competition, the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing now has the beginnings of an innovative teachers network, with over 700 registered teachers who have shown an interest in using ICT in teaching and learning. It also has a new Web site and a searchable database, developed with the help of CET, to enable the best of the competition entries to be shared with other teachers. In 2006 it will continue to expand, and there are plans for a second competition that will also include primary school teachers.

Fast Facts

Customer

Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing

Country

Serbia-Montenegro

Web Site

www.zuov.sr.gov.yu

Customer Profile

Founded in June 2004 from the merging of five separate government institutes, the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing is responsible for the practical implementation of the country's educational policies and laws, in areas such as teacher and curriculum development.

Dedicated IT Access Campaign Brings a Window to the World for Serbian Children with Disabilities

"I think this initiative helps the country in many ways. Our country faces many struggles in trying to keep up with international trends. This initiative certainly helps fill the gaps in development."

Srdjan Starovic, Microsoft Belgrade, Serbia-Montenegro

Years of conflict and international isolation have left the people of Serbia-Montenegro facing many challenges. More than a decade of social and political turmoil has created an influx of refugees in the region, many of who are now residing in Serbia. This is quite a burden for a stifled economy and has added to Serbia's list of important developmental issues.

As in any society, children and adolescents are one of the most vulnerable groups in Serbia. Many of them are refugees, some left without parental care, and some with disabilities. Despite being hugely important to the future and development of the country, the needs of this group always outweigh the support available, especially through this era of hardship.

Fresh thinking was needed to address the situation and ensure that this disadvantaged group had access to the same opportunities as everyone else. In line with this aim to bring about sustainable, long-term change, Microsoft Belgrade, in cooperation with its system builder (SB) partners, organised a humanitarian initiative, called "Window to the World".

The project delivers computers and computer equipment to the institutions where children with visual and hearing

impairments, mentally challenged children, young refugees, and children without parental guardianship are based. The aim of the project is simple: to bring the information age to disadvantaged youth.

The initiative began in September 2005. During a three-month period, 40 brand-new computers and computer equipment were donated by local system builders. The donations were delivered to four institutions that care for more than 1,500 children on a regular basis.

According to a report entitled "Refugees and Internally-Displaced Women and Children in Serbia and Montenegro", published by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children: "The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) reports that there are more than 8,000 children in Serbia who have been orphaned or have lost one parent as a result of the decade of wars. Some of the children are in orphanages, others in foster care and still others live with close or distant relatives. Twelve per cent of children in Serbian orphanages are refugees or internally-displaced people (IDPs).

"For many of the refugee and IDP children in Serbia, life was described as 'only survival, no development'. Food shortages have affected their education.

To date, school meals have not been part of education programmes. This problem affects the entire population, but is particularly critical for refugee and IDP children.”¹

UNICEF encourages local and international aid to be spread among geographic areas with the largest numbers of refugees, as in these areas, the social services agencies are under resourced and overwhelmed by demand.

The Window to the World campaign did just that, the initiative was spread right throughout the country, with the aim of reaching some of its neediest areas. The first donation was made in the northern city of Novi Sad to an institution that cares for some 900 children in need of special care. Another went to an institution for the hearing impaired in the city of Uzice, and one more to an institution that takes care of refugees and abandoned children in the southern city of Nis.

Svetlana Marojevic, project officer, UNICEF, says: “Adolescent refugees and IDPs are especially affected by the wars and

displacement and remain the most neglected group. They need to feel useful and included and to get some qualifications. They are in need of psychosocial support and interventions, educational encouragement, counselling and clubs where they can talk about their animosity and how they can work through it to help in the process of building civil society.”²

Srdjan Starovic, system builder account manager, Microsoft Belgrade, says: “I think this initiative helps the country in many ways. Our country faces many struggles in trying to keep up with international trends. This initiative certainly helps fill the gaps in development. It forces organisations and companies out there to think about the groups of people that are in need of special attention in our country. We aimed to raise awareness of particular issues in our society and I feel that we have achieved that.”

The Internet is somewhere that children with disabilities, refugees and other disadvantaged children can play and interact with other people. In this way, the computers donated by the Window to the World project are being used break down

¹ <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/yu.pdf>

² <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/yu.pdf>



Fast Facts

Country

Serbia-Montenegro

Situation

Children and adolescents are one of the most vulnerable groups in Serbia and Montenegro. Many of them are refugees, some left without parental care, and some with disabilities. Despite being hugely important to the future and development of the country, the needs of this group always outweigh the support available.

Solution

Microsoft Belgrade, in cooperation with its SB partners, organised a humanitarian action initiative called Window to the World. It delivers computers and computer equipment to the institutions where children with visual and hearing impairments, mentally challenged children, young refugees, and children without parental care are based. The initiative is supported by partners, local dignitaries, media, representatives of local and regional authorities, and the US Ambassador for Serbia-Montenegro, Michael C Polt and his wife.

Benefits

- Campaign has raised awareness of the need to give children in Serbia-Montenegro special attention.
- Children are using the Internet to combat social isolation and help better the social integration of the country.
- IT is being used to help with children's learning and development.
- Computers have been used for music therapy to help developmentally-challenged children.

barriers and reduce the feelings of isolation experienced by disabled and refugee children. The Internet is also being used to access educational programmes online and help children with different forms of therapy.

Starovic says: "The institutions were ready for modern equipment like computers and printers — for both the classes for the children getting used to IT or for the use of the computers in their therapy. The children can also use the Internet to chat with their friends. Chatting online is good way for the children to interact with the world. For most of them this is their first contact with modern technology — they get the advantages of using educational programmes online and also get to do fun things like play with video games."

Helping to raise awareness of this initiative, focused on improving the lives of children throughout the country, was the United States Ambassador in Serbia-Montenegro, Michael C Polt and his wife Halle Polt. The couple made significant contributions to the initiative; they supported the operation and personally attended the activities and participated in the proceedings.

Support for the operation did not stop at the ambassador and his wife. The donations and the ceremony were widely supported and attended by partners, local dignitaries, media and representatives from local and regional educational authorities.

System builder partner Direct Link was very pleased with the outcome of this project.

Nebojsa Bugarinovic says: "We were very happy to help bring the information age to our people. We had a great response from the community. Most importantly we managed to draw public attention to the children who needed it most, those who didn't have any support and who the public have neglected in times like this where there are economic and social problems all over the country. From our perspective this project has been a huge success."

But the initiative doesn't stop with four donations. That is just the beginning, waves of companies and organisations across the country have expressed their interest in adding their contribution to the initiative. At the moment, Microsoft Belgrade is negotiating with local NGOs working on further initiatives to help children with special needs. They hope to be making another round of donations very soon.

Slovakian Teachers Get More Tools for Innovation in the Classroom

"The Innovative Teachers Network is a project of positive change. In my opinion, this is the best way to increase the level, quality, and purpose of our educational system, and to help fulfil our day-to-day educational and pedagogical objectives."

Stefan Karolcik, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia

Slovakia is committed to ensuring its citizens are able to participate in the global knowledge economy, and that its children are prepared for the future. Through its Infovek initiative, the Ministry of Education has been promoting and supporting the effective use of ICT in education since 1999. Its remit has been to provide schools with computers, internet access, content and teacher training.

To date, more than 38,000 teachers nationwide have been supported through travelling roadshows, and evening classes in elementary ICT training. Grounded in the basics, teachers were keen for more resources to support in-class activities — accessible at the times they are needed most.

Solution

Slovakia has become the 13th country to be part of the Partners in Learning programme — a worldwide initiative from Microsoft to deliver more than (US) \$250m in cash grants, tailored curriculum development and ICT training and technical support to schools.

On 27 January 2004, Microsoft signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with Slovakia, which entails additional funds of (US) \$1,358,000 in Slovakia and

the neighbouring Czech Republic. These funds will be used to support technology in education projects, with the ultimate goal of assisting students and teachers to realise their full potential.

One of the main initiatives supported by Partners in Learning in Slovakia is the Innovative Teachers Programme, which is delivered as a partnership between Microsoft, P-MAT and Infovek — two bodies that focus on promoting the use of ICT in education. Microsoft identified and recruited an initial group of more than 250 innovative teachers. From this team, 20 expert evaluators were chosen to evaluate content across different subject areas. The best material will be translated to assist the global learning community, funded by Microsoft. A dedicated Web portal has been set up to support teachers, which hosts more than 1,300 resources for teachers to download and use — from quick tips that can be used in classes, to projects that can support full-length classroom sessions and longer.

P-MAT is managing and delivering teacher training and support; this includes the use of online resources to support teaching and learning, and shows teachers how to capture their own best practice to share with others, based on a framework

Fast Facts

Customer

Slovakian Ministry of Education

Country

Slovakia

Web Site

www.minedu.sk

Situation

Through its Infovek initiative, the Ministry of Education has been promoting and supporting the effective use of ICT in education since 1999. Its remit has been to provide schools with computers, internet access, content, and teacher training.

Partners in Learning

A memorandum of understanding between Microsoft and Slovakia was signed in Bratislava, on January 27, 2004. Slovakia has become the 13th country to be part of the Partners in Learning programme. A range of projects are being funded, including the Innovative Teachers Programme, which builds on the Infovek projects to date.

developed by Cambridge University. INFOVEK is promoting the initiative across schools nationwide, building upon existing programmes that complement Partners in Learning.

INFOVEK has augmented the Partners in Learning initiative by providing content from related projects it has funded, and is raising awareness among Slovakian schools through its ICT roadshow. More than 800 teachers from different schools have registered and are regularly using the portal since its launch in December 2005.

“The Innovative Teachers Network is a project of positive change,” says Stefan Karolcik, one of the innovative teachers. “In my opinion, this is the best way to increase the level, quality and purpose of our educational system, and to help fulfil our day-to-day educational and pedagogical objectives.”

For more information about other Microsoft Partners in Learning customer successes, please visit:

www.microsoft.com/emea/partnersinlearning



Slovenian Vocational Students to Benefit From Microsoft Networking Course

"The Partners in Learning curriculum material saved us a lot of time in preparing our new course material."

David Drogenik, IT Teacher, School Center Ptuj, Slovenia

In 2005, staff at School Center Ptuj — a centre for vocational education — had to develop courses for a new post-secondary technical school. Located in the Slovenian urban municipality of Ptuj, the centre consists of a number of different schools, including schools for economics, electrical engineering and agriculture.

The new school at the centre was intended for students aged 18–21 who were interested in studying 'mechatronics', a new inter-disciplinary programme combining aspects of mechanical engineering and electronics. Mechatronics was being developed as a vocational programme in Slovenia by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, a public institution responsible for the development of skills and standards in Slovenian vocational education.

While educators from School Center Ptuj and the Centre for Vocational Education and Training were tackling the task of developing courses, one of the teachers informed them of some training he had attended in Budapest in February 2005. He had been invited to Budapest by Microsoft Partners in Learning, after School Center Ptuj had enthusiastically adopted a number of Partners in Learning initiatives. The Budapest training focused on the Partners in Learning curriculum, which provides lesson plans and material for a number of courses. Educators are free to

adopt these courses in their entirety, or customise them to meet local needs.

As soon as the mechatronics working group learned about the Partners in Learning course "Understanding and Building Basic Networks", they realised it was exactly what they needed for some of the content of two mechatronics subjects: "IT" and "technical terminology in a foreign language". The working group brought together teachers to translate and localise the content of the Understanding and Building Basic Networks course. With very little modification to the structure or scope, they produced material for 30–36 teaching hours of the course. It was decided that five School Center Ptuj teachers would firstly give the course to approximately 130 mechatronics students at the new post-secondary school. If that was successful, the course would probably be included in the new national textbook for mechatronics, to be used at post-secondary vocational schools throughout Slovenia. In the meantime, Slovenian teachers are being trained on the Understanding and Building Basic Networks content, both through School Center Ptuj and at other Slovenian IT Academies.

The response has been consistently positive, raising the possibility that it might, in future also be incorporated into a networking subject at secondary school level.

Fast Facts

Customer

School Center Ptuj

Country

Slovenia

Web Site

www.scptuj.net

Customer Profile

School Center Ptuj is a centre for vocational education of secondary and post-secondary students in the Slovenian urban municipality of Ptuj. It comprises several technical schools, the newest being a post-secondary technical school established in 2005. The centre had to develop a new vocational programme, mechatronics, for the new school.

Slovenian Scholarship Programme Boosts IT and Supports SMEs

"We wish to stimulate other Slovenian companies to invest in the development and education of young people, as they represent the future of the Slovenian and international IT industry."

Jaka Stele, General Manager, Microsoft Slovenia



Jaka Stele, Slovenian subsidiary general manager who gives the check to Simon Jurič, the winner.



Simon Jurič at the winner's presentation.

Slovenia is considered one of the stronger new members of the EU, but danger signs have been identified that may threaten its promising start. Specifically, there are concerns that SMEs may be struggling, compared to their competitors in neighbouring countries.

Ostensibly, there appears little immediate cause for concern. At first glance, the situation appears impressive — particularly for a country which was only recognised as an independent state in 1991, and will be hosting the EU presidency in 2008. Slovenia's standard of living was 75 per cent of the EU-15 average upon entry to the EU in 2004 — far greater than its peers. In the same year, it became the first transition country to graduate from borrower status to donor partner at the World Bank.

An encouraging start has also been made towards realising the aims of the Lisbon Agenda, which aims to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010. The Centre for European Reform (CER) ranks Slovenia seventh in its Lisbon league table, published in February 2005. It notes the country has "achieved respectable positions in terms of overall Lisbon performance", and went further to call Slovenia a "hero" in the fields of R&D and information society, surging ahead of the

EU-15 in the use of new technology. However, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) highlights the need for supporting Slovenian SMEs. This sector of the economy provides work for 35 per cent of Slovenia's workforce, according to the UNECE Index of SME Development, but Slovenia is at the bottom of the league table for new business activity. Less than 4 per cent of the population are involved with an entrepreneurial venture, compared to the EU-25 average of five per cent. Although Slovenia has the highest GDP per capita of Central and Eastern European countries in transition, there is a danger of stagnation if the SME sector does not receive support.

In 2004, Microsoft Slovenia created the "Million for Ascent" scholarship, to help develop a network of young and creative experts, who can help build upon the country's technological lead, and support new business development. "We are convinced that only a knowledge-based society can be globally competitive," says Jaka Stele, general manager of Microsoft Slovenia. "We wish to stimulate other Slovenian companies to invest in the development and education of young people, as they represent the future of the Slovenian and international IT industry."

The scholarship is open to students between 18 and 27 years old, and

awarded to the students who demonstrate the highest level of knowledge and innovation in using IT to support Slovenian society — including projects aimed at helping households, the local community, and small businesses. The winner receives an award of one million Tolars (US \$5,000) plus internships at Microsoft Slovenia and Microsoft's European research centre in Dublin. The intern is assigned a personal mentor within Microsoft's Slovenian subsidiary, and has opportunities to participate in Microsoft's international events.

Importantly, Slovenians have a say in determining the most deserving projects: all solutions are publicly available to download and use; and feedback can be provided through ratings and comments on the Slovenian Microsoft Office Online Web site (<http://office.microsoft.com/slovenija>). Public feedback, the number of downloads, and average star ratings represent 20 per cent of the final score. The remainder is allocated on four criteria: usefulness, innovation, overall execution and solution presentation. The highest scoring entries are presented to the award committee.

Peter Jaušovec was the first winner, in 2004. During his internship, he extended his winning entry to develop a set of 78 templates to support SMEs. These included modifications to existing templates to support the euro, and help SMEs meet legal requirements in readiness for Slovenian membership of the EU. "Peter's work has been a great success," says Andrej Koklic, of Microsoft Slovenia. "They are

among the most frequently used templates on the site, with more than 7,000 downloads to date."

The most recent winner is Simon Jurič, who was awarded his scholarship for his tax return receipts solution created in November 2005. He was also part of team that entered Microsoft's Imagine Cup competition, which was invited to further develop their work at an "acceleration workshop", organised by Microsoft and British Telecom in January 2006. Simon is currently in Dublin working on a number of projects, including add-ins for the 2007 versions of Microsoft Office, and helping to develop a tool for managing complex texts in multiple European languages.

Fast Facts

Country

Slovenia

Country Profile

Located in Central Europe, Slovenia borders the Adriatic Sea, between Austria and Croatia. Slovenia has a population of two million. SMEs employ 62 per cent of the working population, and contribute 56 per cent of gross domestic product.

Situation

Despite an impressive entry into Europe, Slovenia is at the bottom of the Lisbon league table for new business activity. Entrepreneurship and private ownership of business remains low, and innovation activities need to be stimulated.

Solution

Microsoft Slovenia created the "Million for Ascent" scholarship, to help develop a network of young creative experts who can help build upon the country's technological lead and support new business development. The scholar receives an award of one million Tolars, internships at Microsoft Slovenia and the European research centre in Dublin, and a personal mentor.

Benefits

- Students get to build upon innovative work, gain valuable experience and transferable skills for their future careers.
- SMEs gain free, useful resources to support their activities, and are ready for Slovenia's entry into the European Union.
- The Slovenian economy benefits from its own talent, and is in a stronger position to realise its potential in the EU.

For more information on the winning 2005 scholarship entries, see:

<http://office.microsoft.com/sl-si/templates/CT012302131060.aspx> (Slovenian version)

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/ST012302131060.aspx> (English version).

Bright Ideas from Entrepreneurial Students Help Boost Slovenian Economy

"We hope our project about the knowledge society will open some new doors into the knowledge economy for ourselves."

Aleš Korenčan, Economic Challenge competition winner, Slovenia

Slovenia was keen to enter the EU in 2004, after scoring the highest referendum result in favour of EU accession, but although it is doing well in many areas, concerns exist that a lack of entrepreneurship and innovation may inhibit economic growth.

So far, the overall picture is encouraging and the country has made steps towards realising the aims of the Lisbon Agenda — to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010. However, private ownership of companies lags behind neighbouring countries: a 2004 study calculated 65 per cent of companies in Slovenia are privately owned — the same as Romania. When this is compared with 80 per cent in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, and 99 per cent in Croatia, it is clear that entrepreneurship and innovation should be supported.

This issue also concerned staff at the University of Ljubljana, who were eager to engage their students more closely with the commercial sector. For this reason, Professor Katarina Zajc set up the Business Forum to expose her law students to business life and issues. It soon grew into a cross-faculty initiative, giving students opportunities to work on real-world challenges from a multidisciplinary perspective — and for them to suggest ideas for further activities.

One such initiative came from a group of three students interested in setting up and taking part in a case study project. Professor Zajc was very impressed by the idea, and agreed to use the Business Forum to support the idea. The forum approached a number of partners, including Microsoft Slovenia, which suggested a theme for the competition. Students could propose how to boost Slovenia's reputation as a knowledge society; by identifying practical examples and basic guidelines on how to achieve this goal.

The project became known as the Economic Challenge competition. As well as helping to develop the competition theme, Microsoft Slovenia also agreed to sponsor the competition, offering a prize to the winning team of one million Tolars (US \$5,000), and agreed to give the winners a chance to present their work at Slovenia's largest IT conference.

"We were extremely pleased to support the Economic Challenge," says Jaka Stele, general manager, Microsoft Slovenia. "Our country has a tradition of being able to adapt well in the face of change. We care deeply about the future of our country, including its competitiveness in times of increasing globalisation. And this local perspective is important to us at Microsoft Slovenia. Developing the knowledge economy is a key factor to

help meet today's challenges, and we are proud to assist student efforts in this direction."

With a framework and incentives in place, the Economic Challenge competition was announced in January 2006, open to cross-disciplinary teams of final-year students. Marko Coh, of the Department of Entrepreneurship at the Faculty of Economics, was chair of the project selection committee. "There were two key objectives to the project," says Coh. "The first was to get students to develop critical analysis skills, by identifying the key issues facing Slovenia today. Secondly, we were looking for workable ideas that built upon that analysis."

Although the competition took place during the first set of student exams, the project work complemented the official university curriculum. It gave students an opportunity to draw upon their own knowledge and awareness of national economic issues, and to apply theoretical knowledge gained through their studies. "Students were very keen to take part," says Coh. A total of 89 students registered, submitting 23 projects.

The project committee reviewed all entries anonymously, and produced a shortlist of three finalists. From these, the committee and Microsoft Slovenia selected a winner. "There was an amazing combination of intellectual capital and knowledge," says Zlatko Polak, academic programmes manager, Microsoft Slovenia. "We were particularly impressed by how well students from different faculties and

subject areas worked together, which was a key factor in getting a fresh view of the knowledge society challenges," says Coh. "Had I not known the papers were by students, I would have thought these were authored by economists."

The blind judging process meant the projects' authors were not known until the winning project had been announced. The victors were a group of friends, comprising two couples: Jernej Pintar and Katarina Blatnik; and Maša Jezernik and Aleš Korenčan. Their case study presented a framework explaining how knowledge economies and knowledge societies are connected, and how they evolve.

The group proposed a network of European Development Centres as incubators for knowledge generation, beginning with a pilot centre in Slovenia. They emphasised the importance of developing value-added industries, supported by private-public partnerships and paying particular attention to how multinational firms can contribute to both economic and societal growth.

Organisers of the Economic Forum, students Blaž Kos, Štefan Furlan, and Uroš Jurglič, were delighted with the success of the event. "We are excited about the number and the quality of submitted papers as well as by the innovative solutions offered by them," says Kos. "So much hard work proves that students are not apathetic about Slovenia's future."

This enthusiasm was shared by the winners. "More events like these should take place,"

Fast Facts

Country

Slovenia

Solution

The University of Ljubljana worked with Microsoft to develop a student case study competition. It was designed to help address how Slovenia can become a knowledge society, through identifying practical examples and basic guidelines to achieve this goal. Teams had an opportunity to win one million Tolars, and present their work to the biggest IT conference in Slovenia.

Benefits

- Students gain experience in multi-disciplinary teamwork, transferable skills for the future, and greater self-confidence.
- Improved links between academia and industry, helping develop student entrepreneurial skills.
- Original ideas from fresh minds shared with the Slovenian IT industry and wider business community.



says Blatnik. "With a great theme and such an attractive reward, one can be sure to get high-quality participants and excellent results. There is a lot of unexplored and unexploited student potential, and this is a great way to discover it."

The students recognised how this can help both themselves, and their country. "I was very excited to work on a project which could help influence the future development of Slovenia and the EU," says Jezernik. "Winning a competition like this boosts your self-confidence." The content of the project will also help the students' employment prospects after graduation. "We hope our project about the knowledge society will open some new doors into the knowledge economy for ourselves," says Korenčan.

"It was a great opportunity for us to help reach and recognise our own potential," says Pintar. "As well as exercising our analytical skills and capability for

innovation, it gave us experience in multidisciplinary projects, helping us to work better in teams, and improving our job prospects."

The organisers are keen to ensure the benefits to Slovenian employers are distributed as widely as possible. "This competition has been a tremendous success for everyone involved," says Stele. Microsoft is giving the winning team an opportunity to present their work at the "NT konferenca 2006" conference, taking place at Portorož in May. Coh intends to ensure the case studies can be shared by the Slovenian community, and is working on the publication of a summary of the projects.

Pioneering Distance-Learning Course Ends Technical Glitches for Ukrainian Schools

"I had been looking for something like this course for a long time and I am so thankful for the opportunity it presented. The skills I've learned will help to ensure that the children at our school benefit from our investment in information technology."

Maryna Lobastova, Informatics Teacher, School 12, Kupyansk, Kharkiv region, Ukraine

A hugely successful distance-learning course is transforming ordinary Ukrainian teachers into technical administrators for their schools' computer networks, empowering them to overcome limited technical budgets and support the delivery of computer classes in their schools. The course has quickly become a vital part of the Ukrainian government's drive to have all secondary schools running computer classes by 2008.

"I had been looking for something like this course for a long time and I am so thankful for the opportunity it presented," says Maryna Lobastova, an informatics teacher at School 12, Kupyansk, in the Kharkiv region. She continues: "The skills I've learned will help to ensure that the children at our school benefit from our investment in information technology."

Since 2003, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has been funding a major drive to equip all its schools, especially secondary schools in rural areas, with computers and an Internet connection. By the end of 2005, almost half of all Ukrainian secondary schools had computers, but many were encountering difficulties in offering

computer classes on a sustainable, ongoing basis.

"The Ministry was really succeeding in computerising our schools," explains Inna Malyukova, director of the Ukrainian Institute of Information Technologies in Education. "But we found that progress became compromised if a school encountered a hardware or software problem. There was a lack of funding or provision in school budgets for technical specialists. This meant that when a technical problem occurred schools were very much on their own — especially those in remote rural areas. It was frustrating for the schools and for us."

The Ukrainian Institute of Information Technologies in Education was created by the Ministry of Education and Science to implement ICT in education. Determined to help schools overcome their technical challenges, the institute teamed up with the Microsoft Partners in Learning initiative and the Ministry of Education and Science.

In 2005, Ukraine's first ever distance-learning programme for teachers was launched by the three-way partnership. The 72-hour online course equips ordinary

"I had been looking for something like this course for a long time and I am so thankful for the opportunity it presented. The skills I've learned will help to ensure that the children at our school benefit from our investment in information technology."

Maryna Lobastova,
Informatics Teacher,
School 12, Kupyansk <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/elvis-costello/hover-factory.html>

Fast Facts

Customer

Ukrainian Institute of Information Technologies in Education, part of the National

Country

Ukraine

Web Site

<http://www.ntu-kpi.kiev.ua/en/faculty/uiite.html>

A state-wide Ukrainian programme to implement ICT in secondary schools was being hampered by a lack of funding for technical staff. The answer was to create a highly interactive distance-learning course that would give ordinary teachers the skills and knowledge to administer computer equipment and local networks. The Ukrainian Institute of Information Technologies in Education, together with the Microsoft Partners in Learning team, jointly developed content for a 72-hour computer administrator certification programme.

Launched in 2005, the first distance-learning course for teachers in Ukraine has proved an instant hit. After just a year-and-a-half, more than 1,300 teachers have already completed the course, and demand continues to grow exponentially. The aim is for at least one teacher from each of Ukraine's 12,000 secondary schools to complete the course by 2008, empowering them to help keep their schools' computers running effectively.

In less than two years, Ukraine has given 1,300 teachers the technical skills to support the government's information technology strategy. By 2008, this number will grow to 12,000.

teachers with the skills and knowledge to administer their school computers and local networks. The Partners in Learning initiative helped to develop the content for the course, and also provides funding for teachers to join it.

The programme gives teachers online access to an interactive reference book, and individual online training at hours that suit their needs. At the end of the programme the teachers must pass an online examination. Those who succeed in obtaining the course certificate can then provide technical support to keep their schools' computers running effectively. In this way they play a vital role in supporting the delivery of the computer curriculum in their schools.

"The distance-learning programme has been a runaway success," says Malyukova. "In its first year, 117 teachers from across Ukraine completed it. Now, midway through its second year, 1,250 teachers have already completed it — an increase of more than 900 per cent. Even more encouragingly, new registrations are running at between 200 and 300 each month. It looks like we'll easily meet the Ministry's target of having at least one certified teacher in all 12,000 secondary schools by 2008."

Because of the positive response of teachers who have completed it, demand for the course is being fuelled by word of mouth. Ivan Arsenych, a teacher at the Institute for Teachers' Postgraduate Education in Ivano-Frankivsk, comments: "This is a very important course, because

it's so comprehensible for non-technical teachers. At the same time it contains useful information for those, like me, who already have experience in Windows administration. And I think its success is also partly due to the fact that it's in the Ukrainian language."

Malyukova sums up the importance of the programme for Ukraine as a whole: "Ultimately it is our pupils who will benefit. Ordinary teachers are now able to help bring students into the information community, which is such an important part of our country's educational vision."

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