

One Economy Provides Tools to Improve People's Lives

One Economy is a global nonprofit organization that is committed to helping people improve their quality of life through greater access to information and technology. The partnership between Cisco and One Economy has helped extend the benefits of computers, broadband access, and the Internet to low-income households and individuals throughout the world.

Background

One Economy was founded on the idea that increased access to technology and information can provide the means for low-income people to make positive changes in their life.

Since its establishment in 2000, One Economy has partnered with businesses, governments, and nonprofits to combat poverty and isolation through digital inclusion. "Our operating philosophy grows out of human nature and a belief that low-income people have the same aspirations as other people," explains One Economy co-founder and CEO Rey Ramsey. "Most of us seek things that are comfortable and convenient, so we put technology in people's homes to make it more comfortable and convenient."



Senior Advisor Moustafa Mourad and CEO Rey Ramsey commemorate the launch of the Beehive in Durban, South Africa at a ribbon cutting ceremony

Since 2000, One Economy has grown from a team of four people working out of a basement to a globally-recognized provider of innovative solutions that transform the way information reaches low-income people. This evolution was supported by the contributions of 13 Cisco Community Fellows in 2001 and 2002, who accelerated many of the objectives One Economy had in place by working on planning and design, developing guidelines to bring technology into housing developments, and performing environmental scans to identify community needs and determine how to best fulfill them. The Community Fellows also helped One Economy bring Internet access into subsidized housing communities and create a portal of information to make the Internet more accessible for low-income people. Cisco and the Cisco Foundation have also provided approximately 20 cash and equipment grants to One Economy in support of various initiatives.

The innovative programs and solutions developed by One Economy are designed around a holistic, integrative strategy that consists of three primary objectives:

- Facilitate the deployment of broadband within low-income households
- Develop valuable, public-purpose media resources
- Train youth to provide education and support for the adoption of new technologies

Broadband Access

As a result of initiatives designed to build infrastructure and capacity, One Economy has brought broadband Internet access into the homes of more than 300,000 people. They have established several partnerships with local governments and nonprofits to extend the benefits of these initiatives through increased access to affordable computers, training, and free Internet access in

“Our partnership with Cisco has been rooted in mutual respect. Cisco respected the fact that we knew a fair amount about how to work in communities, and they were willing to take a chance on us. Since that time, they’ve given us people, equipment, and cash, and have supported a variety of initiatives.”

Rey Ramsey
Chief Executive Officer
One Economy

new housing developments. To sustain these efforts, One Economy has developed capacity-building programs that enable local organizations to integrate these solutions into their program offerings.

To help illustrate the important role of technology in shaping the 21st century economy, One Economy has also developed a U.S. national blueprint. This framework serves as a guide for federal, state, and local governments to integrate technology-based solutions into their economic infrastructure. One Economy hopes this framework will ultimately benefit all low- to moderate-income communities.

In April 2008, One Economy launched a two-year campaign called *Bring IT Home America*, which aims to extend the promise and benefits of information and communication

technologies to those who need it most. *Bring IT Home America* builds on the success of One Economy’s previous campaign, *Bring IT Home*, which led to changes in affordable housing policies in 42 states and increased broadband access among low-income individuals. One Economy hopes to bring access into the homes of 500,000 low-income Americans as a result of the latest campaign, and will enroll 5000 youth across the United States in a national movement to build cultural bridges between technology and their communities.

Public-Purpose Media

“In order to take steps toward a better life, we believe people need to have access to information,” says Ramsey. This belief has shaped the development of several online tools that One Economy has developed to connect individuals with user-friendly, beneficial resources. Since 2001, more than 14 million people have used these tools to improve their lives.

Here is an overview of several Websites that have been developed to support the needs of low-income individuals:

- **The Beehive:** This multilingual, award-winning Web portal provides information about financial services, education, jobs, health care, and family. It contains valuable resources such as a homework helper, free online tax filing, and career coaching.
- **247 Town Hall:** 247townhall.org is an interactive civic-engagement site that encourages citizens to become involved in policy and government affairs. It encourages positive change in communities by providing a forum for advocacy, dialogue, and debate.
- **Zip Road:** ZipRoad.org is an extensive education tool that connects students, parents, teachers, and caregivers with local educational resources such as after-school programs, college preparation, and tutoring services.
- **Public Internet Channel:** PIC.tv is an informative and engaging public-purpose multimedia experience that inspires and empowers its viewers to actively take steps to improve their lives by providing tools that enable viewers put their new knowledge to good use.

Youth Initiatives

The Digital Connectors program enlists the support of young people as “digital innovators” to help overcome barriers to technology adoption and use in low-income communities. Youth involved in the program receive training in technology, leadership, marketing, and digital media, and then apply their skills in a community service setting. The types of services they engage in are designed to promote and support the adoption and use of technology.



Digital Connector Lavonda Gray trains other youth in San Francisco

More than 1200 youth have participated in the Digital Connectors program since 2001; providing more than 42,000 hours of service to their communities while building valuable career skills for the 21st century. In addition to developing technical skills, this program fosters personal growth, strengthens leadership abilities, and inspires an ethic of community service among participants. Youth in the program are exposed to higher education and career opportunities through corporate site visits, job shadowing programs, campus tours, and mentoring activities. They are also encouraged to become ‘civic journalists’ who promote social engagement by developing content about their neighborhoods. In support of this program, One Economy has launched an Arts and Digital Media program to give Digital Connectors the tools they need to capture audio and visual content and create engaging stories about their communities.

One Global Economy

One Global Economy (OGE) is the international branch of One Economy. OGE harnesses the power of technology to expand the benefits of the 21st-century economy to low-income people around the world and help them join the economic mainstream. OGE implements an integrated, multisector approach to alleviating poverty that incorporates asset building, private sector participation, community development, and transparency.

One Global Economy was established in 2005. “We address three issues simultaneously: access, content, and training,” explains Moustafa Mourad, President of One Global Economy. “The critical component of that is content, which is where we add the most value. Wherever we go, we work with the community to develop a portal that acts as an introduction to the Internet for people who may never have seen a computer before.” The development of a portal is an inclusive and intense participatory process. “We work with all stakeholders, governments, NGOs, and local residents through town hall meetings, focus groups, and surveys to make sure the portal addresses issues that are meaningful to people and the content is accessible, so they can use the information to improve their lives in a very immediate fashion” says Mourad.

Cisco recently announced that OGE was one of four nonprofit partners chosen to help further the objectives of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Rwanda, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Kenya, and Nigeria. “Our job is two-fold,” explains Mourad, “we are playing a coordinating role among the nonprofits, and also performing the initial assessment and evaluation of countries on behalf of entire partnership.” The evaluation process is designed to determine the

capacity of nonprofits and the extent of connectivity. The next step is to conduct a series of workshops with nonprofits that are involved in various issues such as health, rural and urban development, and education, and develop Beehive content that addresses these issues.



Moustafa Mourad introduces the mayor of Durban to the Beehive

Aside from the CGI project, OGE has developed extremely successful portals globally such as the Turkish Beehive and the South Durban Beehive in South Africa, which many unemployed and poverty-stricken individuals access through a community technology center established by OGE at a local library.

Michael Yutzenka, Executive Director of the Cisco Foundation, has posed a challenge for One Global Economy to establish operations in 10 countries by 2010. To accomplish this, Cisco and OGE have worked together to develop a new methodology that focuses more on capacity building and community development up front, and gives local groups more control over project development on the back end. “We will need to make full use of the properties of Web 2.0 technologies to make it simpler for people to customize the portal to meet their needs,” says Mourad. This “Beehive in a box” concept will incorporate best practices and toolsets to allow for easy customization and provide the greatest benefit to end users.

Future Plans

One Economy and One Global Economy will continue to expand their services and resources to increase opportunities for low-income individuals to participate in the 21st century economy.

“My vision is a family of connected portals all over the world,” says Mourad, “where people not only get information, but actively exchange information with each other, and don’t think twice about consulting the Internet for everyday needs.” Yutzenka is confident that they have the means to be successful, “They’re full of great ideas and they get things done,” he says. “They make it happen.”



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
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