An innovative solution bridges a gap in charitable giving

Cisco partners with "best in class" channels to create and distribute complete networking solutions for long-term, measurable impact in nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project
Cisco Product Donation Program

Focus Area
NGO/NPO Internet productivity

Challenge
· Limited budgets and lack of in-house expertise often prevent nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations from using technology as a development tool

Solution
· The Cisco Product Donation Program distributes new and refurbished Cisco networking equipment to nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations through a network of international partners

Results
· Working with partners increases the program's scalability and sustainability

· Nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations benefit from better supported and complete technology solutions that help them to better achieve their humanitarian goals

Challenges

Throughout the world at least one billion citizens live on less than one dollar per day and at least 2.8 billion citizens, or approximately half the world's population, live on less than two dollars per day. More than 10 million nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NPOs and NGOs) worldwide attempt to serve many of the needs of these marginalized communities.

However, NPOs and NGOs have limited budgets. With fulfillment of their main mission clearly their primary concern, budget allocation for information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure is often understandably low. As a result, these organizations may not be able to afford to capitalize on the improvements in communications and efficiency which the latest technology can bring. This limits their ability to improve services, to respond to natural disasters, and to explore innovative approaches to service delivery, recruitment, and maintenance of donor support. NPOs and NGOs require access to technical knowledge, assistance, and products in order to build and maintain the infrastructure needed to effectively use technology as a development tool. For these organizations to best serve their communities, they require a full range of software and hardware that is affordable and delivered with local support.

Solution

Cisco Corporate Social Responsibility aims to provide innovative network-centric solutions to nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, especially in the areas of education, healthcare education, and disaster response. To this end, the Cisco Product Donation Program distributes new and refurbished Cisco networking equipment such as switches, routers, wireless equipment, and firewalls to nonprofits in its focus areas.

Cisco has enlisted several external partners to create and distribute complete solutions using Cisco technology in conjunction with hardware and software from a variety of different vendors. The cornerstone of this approach is the company's partnership with TechSoup Stock, a technology product philanthropy service created by the nonprofit technology assistance provider, TechSoup. This online service for NPOs and NGOs serves as the virtual donation platform for the Cisco Product Donation Program.

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–Jody Mahoney, Former Senior Director of International Development, TechSoup

Providing Cisco technology as part of an entire solution set makes the Product Donation Program more sustainable and creates a bigger impact for the recipient charities. Working with TechSoup dramatically increases the scalability of the program; it has enabled Cisco to reach more nonprofits, especially small, cash-poor organizations with a great need for technology. Because of this partnership, Cisco products can be provided quickly with minimal administration and more support.

Based in the United States, TechSoup works with a growing network of in-country partners to ensure reliable service and support to local NGOs. TechSoup's NGO partners are currently located in the UK, Europe, and Africa, with Asia and Latin America to be added in 2007. Existing partners for the Cisco program include the Polish organization BDR (Stowarzyszenie Bank Drugiej Reki, Second Hand Bank Association), UK-based Charity Technology Trust (CTT), Belgium-based Close the Gap, Australia-based Community Information Strategies Australia (CISA), South Africa-based SANGONeT, and Technosite in Spain. TechSoup and Cisco are working to expand the program into Africa, other parts of Europe, and the Middle East.

BDR has used Cisco technology to serve the needs of NGOs across Poland. It gathers second-hand and refurbished hardware from businesses and issues these to NPOs and NGOs, helping them take full advantage of ICT to further their mission and supporting them after installation.

CTT, formed in 2001, is an established organization with over 150 charity clients across the UK. Its activities center around fundraising and supporter management technology and it provides online fundraising tools, charity payment systems, Internet-based lotteries, e-communications, mobile applications, and ICT strategy consulting. CTT has enabled Cisco to provide equipment for LAN connectivity and Internet access to NPOs and NGOs in the UK, thus enhancing their internal and external communications capabilities.

Close the Gap donates ICT equipment to NPOs and NGOs across Europe and Africa with the aim of developing people's potential and providing access to knowledge to help people lift themselves out of poverty. Close the Gap also works to empower local technology enterprises so that they can support the increasing technology needs of charities and even public sector organizations in the area. Education is a major focus, giving Close the Gap good synergy with the mission of Cisco Corporate Citizenship.

Community Information Strategies Australia (CISA) was formed in 1981 and provides independent ICT advice and services to Australian NPOs. Its services include Web development, ICT healthchecks, and ICT consulting via its CommunIT project. CISA also annually delivers Australia's only ICT conference focused on the nonprofit sector, Connecting Up, and it is working with the Australian government towards the development of a national nonproft ICT coalition. In partnership with TechSoup, CISA is now delivering Cisco products via its www. donortec.com.au site to Australian NPOs to help build their ICT capacity.

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> **–Robert Deutsch, Senior Community Investment Manager, Cisco Systems, Inc**

SANGONeT has a 20-year history of supporting the effective use of ICTs in Southern African civil society organizations by providing quality services and initiatives to this sector. Through the SANGOTeCH programme, South African charities and NPOs are assisted in two key ways: by the provision of technology products from companies such as Cisco and Microsoft at a nominal administration fee, and by assisting NGOs in making the most of their ICT purchases and infrastructure.

Technosite belongs to the ONCE Foundation, Spain's National Organization for the Blind. It is part of the Foundation's business group, Grupo Fundosa, which was set up in 1989 with the mission of creating jobs for people with disabilities. With multidisciplinary teams adapted to the needs of each client, Technosite's projects incorporate the criteria of usability and design for all. Using an evaluation methodology approved and endorsed by the European Commission, it is a pioneer both in analysing user experience and in consultancy on technology and disability. Now, in partnership with TechSoup, Technosite has developed the DONO program. The aim of the program is to help strengthen the organizational capacity of Spanish NPOs and improve their ability to meet the ever-increasing needs of their communities.

Results

Since it began in January 2002, the engagement with TechSoup and its local partners in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America has enabled Cisco to donate equipment to over 134 NPOs and NGOs across these regions.

The donations have allowed the nonprofits to improve the service they offer to their communities. Recipients have reported savings in operational costs and more efficient use of staff time as well as significant increases in network performance and in the quantity and availability of services delivered to clients. Because of these operational improvements, recipient organizations have been able to increase the number of clients served by an average of 14 percent.

"The partnership with TechSoup has enabled Cisco to donate to as many organizations per month as we previously donated to in one year," says Robert Deutsch, Senior Community Investment Manager, Cisco Systems. "Thanks to TechSoup, Cisco is now able to reach out to the smallest nonprofit organizations with the greatest need for technology, and the least amount of funding for technology infrastructure."

Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale
United Kingdom

Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale is one of many organizations that have benefited from a Cisco grant through TechSoup and its local partners. The donation has helped it to better fulfill its mission.

Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale was established in 1983 as one of the first Groundwork Trusts, a partnership between the local authorities and the Countryside Commission. Its aim is to enhance and manage the urban fringe areas by bringing together public pride and the voluntary sector.

For some time, the organization had been seeking to provide a wireless Internet hotspot approach to engaging new learners; however, lack of funding and experience was hindering its ability to offer new services.

In 2003, at the instigation of TechSoup's UK partner, Charity Technology Trust, Cisco made a donation of ADSL and Ethernet routers, a wireless access point, and Catalyst switches to Groundwork. This was a crucial development because it showed local funding teams that the organization was serious in its intent and had secured capital equipment relevant to the project.

The donation allowed Groundwork to embark on a two-year pilot project designed to engage 300 households from a very deprived part of Oldham, UK. Preliminary research in the area showed that around 63 percent of residents did not own a computer and 75 percent did not have access to the Internet. Almost 60 percent believed that ICT training would help them to progress into work, but nearly 71 percent had never had access to such training. An evaluation of the area conducted by Sheffield Hallam University in 2003 stated: "There are complex barriers at work in Fitton Hill and Hathershaw. Factors like low aspiration and motivation, poor prior educational attainment and material disadvantage. This is overlaid by lack of social capital, manifested through low community engagement in local politics and two communities divided by racism and mutual suspicion. Such barriers present a considerable challenge to the effective provision and take up of Lifelong Learning."

Broadband Internet connections, powered by Cisco ADSL routers and wireless equipment, were installed in a range of host centers such as libraries, primary schools, voluntary organizations and private sector businesses. In this way several hotspots were created. Eligible households within a few hundred meters of each hotspot were identified, targeting the unemployed, those who had never owned a computer, and the disabled. These households were supplied with a refurbished PC and a wall-mounted antenna for connecting to the wireless signal. After just 19 weeks, 91 residents had accessed the program.

Periods of free Internet access are granted in exchange for enrolment and attendance on accredited training courses. Courses are delivered by multiple partners and different courses have different trade-in weightings for periods of free Internet use. In this way a "training currency" has developed, offering clear incentives for course attendance.

Groundwork's reputation as a partner organization has been greatly enhanced by this project; training providers are delighted to receive referrals and see the efficacy of the project. Groundwork's reputation for innovative thinking has also been enhanced and new invitations from influential steering groups, such as the Skills for Life Strategy Group, have been forthcoming. It is hoped that free broadband to the home and ICT training will help improve access to the employment market for people who never before owned a computer and rarely used the Internet.

The Future

Cisco and TechSoup are committed to working together to help more NGOs and NPOs better achieve their missions using technology. Through this partnership Cisco can continue to help more communities around the world.

"Cisco pioneered TechSoup's international product donation program," says Jody Mahoney, Former Senior Director of International Development, TechSoup. "Cisco's investment, combined with Cisco's willingness to listen to the needs of the global NGO sector through TechSoup, helped grow the TechSoup Global Channel from a fledgling pilot project in 2005 to a robust, growing channel that will be capable of offering donated products from multiple donor partners to nonprofits and NGOs around the world."

For More Information

To find out more please visit the following Websites:

BDR (Stowarzyszenie Bank Drugiej Reki, Second Hand Bank Association): http://www.bdr.ngo.pl/

Charity Technology Trust (CTT): http://www.ctt.org/

Close the Gap: http://www.close-the-gap.org/.

Community Information Strategies Australia: http://www.cisa.asn.au/

Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale: http://www.groundworkoldham.co.uk/

SANGONeT: http://www.sangonet.org.za

Technosite: http://www.proyectodono.org

TechSoup: http://www.techsoup.org

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco.com Website at **www.cisco.com/go/offices.**