Opportunity and Job Readiness through Networking Academy

According to Professor Yuriy Boyko at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, "I was historically preconditioned to become an educator. My grandparents, parents, and sister are all schoolteachers." With a PhD in physics and mathematics, his focus on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is not surprising either. As chair of the Computer Engineering Department at the university since 2008, Professor Boyko dedicates much of his time educating students and teachers about networking infrastructure.

Professor Boyko believes his work at the university, where he has taught since 1991, is his opportunity to define and change the development of Ukraine. He says, "My work provides the opportunity to offer choice to Ukrainian youth for their future employment."

Training for Needed Network Specialists and Students

In 2000, when the university decided to build a unified information network for both Internet and intranet, Professor Boyko was invited to lead the Information and Computer Center that would manage the network. Learning from Cisco® about Cisco Networking Academy®, Professor Boyko decided "without any hesitation" to open both a regional academy and a local academy to prepare instructors and specialists for the university's new network.

To ensure they have proper training for their jobs, all employees of the Information and Computer Center are required to complete Networking Academy courses. In addition, all Networking Academy courses are taught within the curricula of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

Attracting the Best Students

Previously about 400,000 students were prepared to enter Ukraine's 800 universities every year. But in 2010, the number of applicants dropped to 250,000. The resulting competition among universities for qualified and motivated students has prompted close to 30 Ukraine universities to follow the example of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and introduce Networking Academy courses as part of their curricula.

Professor Boyko notes, "In the Ukraine, theoretical education is of high quality, but the practical component of university education is lacking. Students do not have enough practical skills when they graduate from the university." Without sufficient practical skills, students' job prospects are limited. Professor Boyko continues, "Students usually seek employment when they study at the university. If the universities themselves do not have connections with enterprises or internship programs, or enough modern laboratory equipment, students have a hard time finding jobs in their field of study."

Ukraine

Situation

- Historically about 400,000 students are prepared to enter in Ukraine's 800 universities every year. In 2010, the number dropped to about 250,000 applicants.
- Universities compete for young people who are knowledgeable and motivated.
- ICT is a high priority in Ukraine's economy.

Challenges

- Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv needed ICT specialists for its new Information and Computer Center.
- Students and instructors lacked practical skills for job readiness in ICT positions.
- Skilled ICT workers are in high demand in Ukraine.

Results

- Students are taught using modern networking technology.
- With faster access to Internet and information, research scientists within the university can work more efficiently and productively.
- Networking Academy provides a model for successful cooperation between industries and universities.
- Students in a growing number of orphanages are receiving ICT training through Networking Academy.
ICT Skills in High Demand in Ukraine

Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Serhiy Tihipko, recently stated that in 2010 Ukraine was ranked fifth in the world in Information Technology (IT) services at $1 billion for that year. Developing IT as a source of income is a high priority for Ukraine. Professor Boyko notes, “As a result of the high demand for students with IT skills, Ukraine is raising the number of students who can study IT at the universities free of charge, meaning the country is ready to pay for those students.”

Professor Boyko says Networking Academy is distinctive in the way it helps address Ukraine’s ICT needs: “Networking Academy provides the full package for the education process. Some of the other vendors’ programs don’t have content or lab assignments or tools to manage the teaching. And the Cisco certification the students earn is very prestigious.”

Another important aspect of Networking Academy, Professor Boyko says, is that Cisco continues to develop the curriculum and materials over time: “Networking Academy is constantly developing, adding new features as the technology, teaching techniques, and society develop. Great examples are the Aspire game within the entrepreneurial component, Passport 21, and social media for teachers. Network Academy instructors collaborate and share best practices on websites such as iPortal [inetacad.net] and Academy Connection.”

Success Story: Orthodox Priest Teaches Networking at an Orphanage

In January 2008, the regional Networking Academy of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv opened a local academy at the Bucha Orphanage. It became the first Networking Academy at an orphanage in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). When Professor Boyko first met Father Mykola at the orphanage, he could not imagine an orthodox priest — someone with advanced education outside technology — would be brave enough to study Networking Academy courses and then teach them to students. But that is exactly what happened.

Father Mykola not only teaches the orphans free of charge, but also teaches school children from low-income families from town. Professor Boyko and Father Mykola hold open lessons at the Bucha Orphanage Networking Academy for other orphanages as well. Three more orphanages are already part of Networking Academy, with three additional orphanage academies planned for 2011.

A pressing concern for orphanage staff is what graduates are going to do after school. Cisco Networking Academy has helped provide an answer to this question. More than 50 Ukrainian orphans have graduated from Networking Academy already. What they have learned in their Networking Academy courses has helped the graduates study at colleges and vocational schools.

Cisco and Corporate Social Responsibility

At Cisco, our commitment to education has a long and rich history of changing lives for the better. We believe in education as a means to achieving personal fulfillment and securing a place of value in society so that all will benefit. Education is the passport to a productive and rewarding life. Our corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach is to partner with education communities to demonstrate the networked platform’s ability to increase access to education and improve quality. Our multistakeholder partnerships include government, education, and private sector leaders, as well as NGOs capable of addressing basic needs and barriers to education.

Learn more about Cisco’s social investment in education: http://www.cisco.com/web/about/citizenship/socio-economic/index.html
Learn more about Cisco Networking Academy: www.cisco.com/go/netacad/usc
Join a dialogue with education system leaders on education transformation at: www.GETideas.org

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— Yuriy Boyko

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