

From Prison to Jobs



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Although very uncomfortable with the title of “education and training leader,” Neville Cavendish possesses the experience that informs an expert in effective welfare-to-work initiatives and training programs that prepare inmates for successful employment following prison.

Cavendish’s résumé includes more than a decade of service in the U.K. Department of Work and Pensions, including the post of Director of the London Employer Accord: “For the last 12 years, I have worked on a range of welfare-to-work and employment-focused programs for the hardest to help people in communities—whether they are long-term unemployed youth, people with criminal

records and prison time, single parents, or particular ethnic minority groups who may be disadvantaged in the labor market.”

Business Input Essential for Training Program Development

A common emphasis runs throughout all the programs Cavendish has managed: the involvement of employers in designing education and training programs that fit business needs. Cavendish says: “If we do not involve businesses, if we just develop training courses without involving them, the training is not going to work. It needs to be demand-driven and employer-led—especially in the IT sector.”

Networking Academy Prepares Prisoners for Work

To address reducing prisoners’ reoffending rates, Cavendish began collaborating with Cisco in 2005 to enhance the existing Cisco® Networking Academy® courses in U.K. prisons. The particular focus was a prison in south London. As a result, Prisons ICT Academy (PICTA) was set up in 16 prisons and has expanded to date to 36 prisons in the U.K. and one in Ireland. Approximately 2200 prisoners have taken Networking Academy courses. Cavendish says: “We connected employers with prison resettlement units, so Networking Academy graduates have real opportunities when they get out of prison following their time studying while serving a sentence.”

Additionally, a mentoring program was introduced in 2006 in Wandsworth Prison, one of the largest prisons in Europe with 1200 prisoners. This program addresses and reduces reoffending by offering Cisco employees as mentors to provide prisoners with additional support outside of the workplace after they have left prison.

According to Cavendish, by 2020, 90 percent of jobs will require some basic level of IT knowledge—ranging from using email, the Internet, and basic word processing and spreadsheet software. He says it does not matter whether someone is going into construction with a need to use

U.K.

Situation

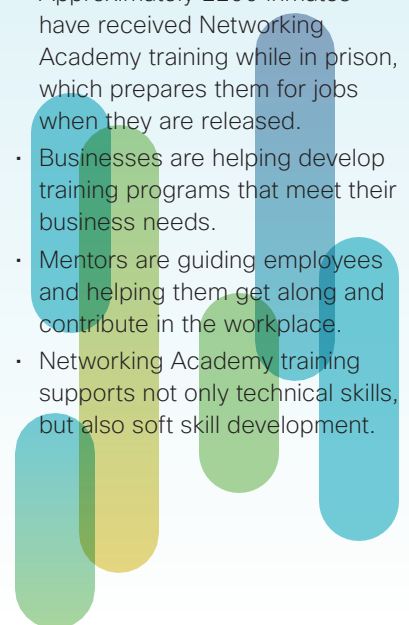
- 43 percent of adult men in U.K. prisons have extremely low or no literacy or numeracy skills. IT skills require a foundation of these basic skills.
- 60 percent of women in U.K. prisons have no literacy or numeracy skills.
- 120,000 children in the U.K. have at least one parent in jail.

Challenges

- By 2020, only 10 percent of jobs will not require some basic level of IT knowledge.
- A high proportion of workers lack basic “soft skills,” such as how to get to work on time and how to work well with managers and coworkers.
- Some would-be employees are third-generation unemployed in their families, so they lack successful role models.

Results

- Approximately 2200 inmates have received Networking Academy training while in prison, which prepares them for jobs when they are released.
- Businesses are helping develop training programs that meet their business needs.
- Mentors are guiding employees and helping them get along and contribute in the workplace.
- Networking Academy training supports not only technical skills, but also soft skill development.



computer-aided design programs, or basic spreadsheet software for billing and logging invoices—IT skills are necessary.

Success Stories: From Prison to Jobs

One inmate in South London came out of prison, was placed in a university for a five-week work experience, and the university staff members were so impressed by him they offered him a permanent position. He is now one of the university's networking engineers. Cavendish says: "He would never have had that opportunity if he had not been able to take Networking Academy courses in prison and had the additional support provided through Cisco's mentoring."

In addition, Cisco recently offered a graduate of the Cisco CCNP® Networking Academy course at Springhill Prison a job as an intern in Cisco's Reading office.

Taking Prison Program to the United States

Cavendish has also participated in various international projects, including one in the U.S. prison system introducing Cisco Networking Academy to colleagues in the State of Colorado Departments of Justice and Labor. Hosted by Cavendish, representatives from each department came to the U.K., where they visited two PICTA workshops: at Wandsworth Prison in South London and at Olyney Prison in the West Midlands. Neville made a reciprocal visit to Colorado with some employers and the state has since launched Networking Academy courses with 20 female inmate students in one prison.

Teaching "Soft" Skills in Addition to Technical Skills

Cavendish says: "Some businesses are willing to teach the 'hard skills,' which are the job-specific skills for a job. What some employees lack are the 'soft skills'—the basics, such as being able to work on a team, the discipline of getting up in the morning for work, and arriving at work on time and suitably dressed." Cavendish continues: "Some students are coming out of school with little or no confidence and no experience with the real world of work. In some cases we have three generations of unemployed, so why would they know how to get up for work or how to behave or dress when they go to the workplace?"

These skills come along with 21st century skills, such as collaboration and problem solving. They include how to deal with your manager and how to communicate with your team. Networking Academy instructors coach students in these skills as they are taking courses.

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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: <http://www.cisco.com/web/learning/netacad/index.html>

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