

Innovation and Business

IBM ENCOURAGES GIRLS IN ICT

EXCITE Awareness Program

Company: IBM

Industry: Information and Communication Technology

Location: Ballarat, Victoria

EXCITE Awareness Program

IBM is very aware that information technology is a male dominated industry and has initiated a program aimed at raising the awareness of girls about the industry.

The work in Australia is an extension of the IBM Global program which kicked off in New York in 1999. Designed to encourage more females into the IT industry, over 5,000 school girls have passed through 51 camps.

What does the program involve?

The girls participate in a camp on either an overnight or day basis.

The camps provide students with the opportunity to participate in activities that highlight the increasing range of employment prospects in the information technology industry.

The number of girls participating in the program is generally restricted by the size of computer facilities.

The Local Learning and Employment Network in Ballarat recruited two students in Year 10 from each Ballarat district school to participate in the week-long camp.

A feature of the program is the mentoring system. Each student is paired with an IBM employee who has volunteered their time to be an e-mentor and work with the students for the remainder of the year.

A key aspect of the program is the partnerships that have been formed. The key partners are:

- IBM Corporate Community Relations and Global Workforce Diversity divisions
- The University of Ballarat
- The Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network
- The Victorian Department of Education and Training
- All Ballarat district secondary schools



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Practical career development activities

There are a number of activities associated with the program including:

- A visit to Sovereign Hill to experience science and technology in the 1850's
- A demonstration of 21st century technology at a light and sound show
- The construction and programming of robots
- The development of web pages, animations and podcasts
- An information session on how IBM investigates cyber crime
- A University of Ballarat lecture about the benefits of studying information technology and career paths in the industry

Outcomes

All partners have indicated satisfaction with the program and would like it to continue. The participating students have provided positive feedback as well.

Three of the girls have indicated that they are interested in pursuing a career in information technology.

The program has also helped create awareness about other careers in the industry besides programming.

The programs expansion to include a camp for indigenous students and new company partners, especially in the manufacturing sector, is currently being considered.

IBM's Ballarat Client Support Centre

IBM's Ballarat Client Support Centre supports Australian and Asian-Pacific clients such as Toyota, Qantas and Heinz-Wattie's.

IBM is one of the fastest growing enterprises in Ballarat and has over 400 professional employees handling over 200,000 client contacts per month. A range of services are provided including after-hours IT support, problem management and resolution and user management.

The Ballarat Centre has achieved the excellence award in the category for contact centres with over 50 seats. As part of the IBM global initiative, the Ballarat office applied to operate the program with Ballarat schools during 2006. IBM is co-located on the site of the University of Ballarat which has become a key partner and contributes resources to the program.

Key success factors

A number of success factors have been identified:

Practical Learning. All of the activities that are provided during the camp are based on practical activities such as web page design and podcasting.

Team Bonding. The camp provides opportunities for team bonding and this is a particular feature of the Sovereign Hill visit and activity.

Mentor program. There is a significant commitment from IBM to provide each student with a mentor for the duration of the camp. In addition, the mentors are available to the students beyond the camp and this has led to IBM site visits and career counseling.

For more information:

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