Accenture & Corporate Citizenship: Building Skills

The Need

Every day, individuals and communities struggle to access the resources they need to meet their basic needs, much less improve their situations. The governmental and non-governmental agencies that serve the social, environmental and cultural needs of their constituents are challenged to respond, and they face increasing demands for help in difficult economic times. These organizations need to reinvent their operations to deliver greater variety and depth of service more efficiently and economically. Burdened by day-to-day activities not directly linked to delivering on their mission, these organizations may lack the strength and resources to keep pace and get ahead.

Accenture believes it has a responsibility to “engage proactively with the communities in which we live and work.” Corporate citizenship is a fundamental component of Accenture’s character, reflected in both its core values and in the actions of our people. From our focus on Skills to Succeed, which concentrates our efforts on building skills that enable people to develop themselves to participate in and contribute to the economy, to our environmental stewardship, Accenture supports our people’s energy, enthusiasm and passion to make a difference in the lives of others and in communities around the world.
Accenture Development Partnerships (ADP)

In 2003, Accenture established Accenture Development Partnerships (www.accenture.com/Global/About_Accenture/CompanyOverview/CorporateCitizenship/Time_and_Skills/ADP/default.htm), a group within our company that provides strategic advice and technical project management support to nonprofit organizations, NGOs, foundations and donor organizations operating in the development sector, helping these organizations achieve social and economic development goals.

Through a first-of-its-kind business model, Accenture Development Partnerships, designed to operate on a nonprofit basis, is able to deliver affordable world-class management and technology consulting services to these critical organizations while providing Accenture people with an unparalleled personal and professional opportunity as part of their careers.

These projects are run like other Accenture client projects, while addressing the needs of this client segment. Each stakeholder in an ADP project has “skin in the game” and makes a financial investment for the success of the relationship and project. Accenture reduces its fees and participating employees take reductions in salary and expense allowances to make the projects affordable for clients, who pay fees and expenses. ADP assignments typically last three to six months. Employees participating in ADP projects become immersed in the community, often in small villages of Africa or South America, to work on projects with a direct impact on the local people. ADP projects are similar to standard consulting projects, such as assisting with technology upgrades and improvements, building a new production facility, establishing a data governance model or defining the functional and technical requirements for an accounting or other business solution. While most ADP projects are located in developing countries, they also offer opportunities in developed countries with leading global NGOs.

ADP is a selective and competitive program. Participants must have a minimum of two years of employment with the company and three years of professional work experience. In addition, participants must be rated among the top 50 percent of their peer group. Because ADP projects are managed as chargeable client work, employees must apply and be interviewed for specific roles after being accepted into the program.

Colleen Bramhall, a manager within the Public Service practice, participated in two ADP field projects. The first project was with an NGO in Sri Lanka after the Asian tsunami of 2004, where thousands of people lost all personal documentation. Colleen supported a review of the Civil Registration system and provided a high-level design for an improved, modernized system driven by technology. In 2006, she participated in a second ADP project to support a local government effort to improve basic service delivery in rural South Africa. Of her ADP experiences, Colleen says, “I had volunteered on an individual basis in the past... with ADP I was able to bring not only my own skills to the table, but also Accenture’s network of resources and methodology to make a much more profound impact for my clients. This program let me give back as an integrated part of my Accenture career.”
Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO)

VSO (www.vsointernational.org/) is the world’s leading independent, international development charity that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries. Accenture began working with VSO in 1999 by supplying five volunteers. Accenture also helped VSO create the VSO Business Partnerships program, which focuses exclusively on placing volunteers with certain business skills that are desperately needed in developing countries. More than 100 Accenture employees have now participated in VSO projects around the world. Example projects include improving education systems, educating communities on AIDS/HIV and building local governments. The volunteer experiences are varied in complexity and duration, but center on providing business skills. Participants live in the local community, which provides the opportunity to see improvements first hand.

While ADP and VSO have many similarities, there are key differences. Participants in the VSO program take a formal leave of absence and receive a monthly stipend instead of their regular salary. Volunteers receive a salary from the NGO appropriate for the location to which they are assigned. The commitment made by participants in the VSO program is typically 6-12 months, longer than that of a typical ADP assignment.

Jason Archer, a manager in Seattle, spent six months in Ethiopia working as a VSO volunteer for a nonprofit organization that empowers Ethiopian women in business at the local, regional and national levels. The association involves women who are active in metalwork, woodwork, handicraft and textiles and food processing amongst others. Jason’s project was focused on capacity building, to identify and develop projects to improve the sustainability of the organization. Jason says about his VSO experience, “I'm very proud that Accenture is able to apply the tools and experience from our workforces for meaningful and sustainable results. There is potential for so much more, and my personal experiences in Ethiopia with International Women's Day, the Women Entrepreneur’s Association and the Agro Business Fair are just the beginning.”

Skills-Based Volunteering (SBV)

Nonprofits in the United States benefit from the skills of Accenture people in many ways. One of those is a Skills-Based Volunteering (SBV) program where employees volunteer in their local communities. This program does not require a salary reduction or relocation.

Each SBV project is planned and executed by a team of Accenture employees who voluntarily commit a specified amount of time - typically a few hours per week or month - to its successful delivery. Accenture employees and nonprofits collaborate closely to determine a work plan that meets the needs of everyone involved. The nonprofit’s leadership team, key members of its board of directors and its staff are involved in each SBV project and often contribute as much time as Accenture employees donate. In many cases, there are opportunities to get our clients involved in these projects.

Projects are generally small in scope and duration. Examples include developing content and delivering workshops on project management; creating a SharePoint site; developing a five-year strategic business plan; enhancing a nonprofit’s website; and providing Six Sigma training to drive operational efficiencies.

Kristy Jordan, a manager from Atlanta, appreciates how Accenture has created an avenue for its people to enhance nonprofit organizations. “Initially, I simply wanted to get involved in an activity where I could make a difference on a regular basis since I really enjoyed the individual day of service events and didn’t think I could make the commitment for ADP,” she says. “I worked with a local nonprofit, which supports 250+ other nonprofits in our community by delivering IT services on an affordable scale. Through Accenture’s efforts, we’ve been able to help with many initiatives. One of the efforts that really resonated with me was a customer segmentation and market penetration analysis. I was able to see the actual nonprofits that were helped through their IT services.”
The Benefits

Each program provides benefits to the community, employee participants and Accenture. Accenture delivers on its corporate citizenship commitment in a way that showcases its business capabilities and attracts and retains the best talent. Nonprofits benefit from teaming with Accenture and experiencing the value delivered by successful projects. Employee participants are enthusiastic about the opportunity to deepen their business skills, and the experience results in a greater appreciation for the company, higher morale and employee engagement. Employees in general become more community-focused citizens who bring a diverse portfolio of experience and education to everything they do, thus giving Accenture an edge for its clients.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. With approximately 180,000 people serving clients in over 120 countries, the company generated net revenues of US $23.39 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2008. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

For more information about Accenture’s Corporate Citizenship Initiatives, please visit www.accenture.com/Global/About_Accenture/Company_Overview/Corporate_Citizenship/default.htm