

Driving Value in the Community: How Atos Invested in Hope TEC and Gained Business Value

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Having strong technical expertise is an essential competitive advantage in the field of Information Technology. While finding and retaining the right people matters for niche positions, it is also critical for entry-level IT positions.

In early 2010, Reverend (Rev.) Sanders, a senior pastor of the Hope Presbyterian Church of Chicago, met with Atos leadership (formerly ACS/Xerox), led by Chad Harris, Chad recognized the need to discuss the value of identifying resources best suited for IT training programs in the Englewood Community which was hit hard by the downturn of the economy. With \$13B of IT services, Atos performed annually \$13 billion. Atos deals with the impact of these resource constraints every day. And together, Sanders and Harris discussed ways in which ATOS's tremendous resources could be used to make a positive impact in a community desperately in need of IT training for unemployed and underemployed residents to be lifted out of the grips of poverty.

Cook County Health & Hospitals System (CCHHS), a long-term client of Atos, was another natural partner to create an innovative and effective program. Atos, CCHHS, and Hope Presbyterian Church all committed funds, resources, and leadership to the cause. They identified Chicago's South Side as a community in need of computer and technology training for low-income residents, youth education, and adults' job readiness. In September 2010, Rev. Sanders founded Hope Technology and Education Center (Hope TEC), a not-for-profit 501(c) (3). Atos committed funding and resources to the program, hiring Julie Collier as the Executive Director. Julie enrolled 20 adult students in the first Beginners Computer Class; it proved to be a small start that quickly gained momentum.

Today, Hope TEC provides digital literacy, essential life skills, job readiness, job placement, and career planning for adults and youth. Julie Collier has grown the program from one Beginners Computer Class into a broad set of training programs that provide skill development from beginner to advanced levels, including Microsoft Office certifications. The current phase of Hope TEC is leading students to job to internship/job placement components. Because of the program's widespread success, Hope TEC has a far reach and serves participants throughout the Chicagoland area. Hope TEC helps more than 100 students annually. Julie manages curriculum development, implementation of offerings, tracking of progress, and train-the-trainer programs. Her passion moved the program beyond just job training to job placement combined with career development, a unique aspect of the program.

"Hope TEC was a godsend," says Alisha, who completed 14 weeks of training in Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel. "Now I have the computer skills and the confidence to move forward in my job search." Alisha earned a high score of 99 percent on the PowerPoint skills test administered by the City Colleges of Chicago, and Alisha was hired as a Clerical Assistant.

Hope TEC has partnered with organization Easter Seals, and in the fall of 2018, will begin a partnership with Catholic Charities through their Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). This organization provides its hired trainees with the opportunity to train and

work at Hope TEC with the ultimate goal of achieving gainful employment. These senior age adults benefit from learning and teaching new technical skill sets.

Hope TEC also provides year-round youth programs [After school program needs funding] for students at the kindergarten through 8th-grade levels. During the summer months, they enroll 60+ children. Hope TEC also partners with Chicago Mayor Emmanuel's sponsored program, called One Summer Chicago. They hire, train, and mentor more than ten young people, ages 16 through 24, to work in their youth program. The majority of the children enrolled in the summer program are from families in a low-income bracket who enroll in their school's free lunch programs, and 85% to 90% of the children live in the community. The program is operated by adults who have professional early childhood education experience and credentials. The program consists of educational learning, such as anti-bullying and self-confidence; basic computer training; robotic programming; PowerPoint presentations; 3D printing; and extracurricular programs. They culminate the summer program with a celebratory event where students give parents and sponsors presentations about what they have learned and receive book bags and school supplies.

Hope TEC also established a partnership with Chicago State University allowing students to serve as mentors and instructors. CSU students can perform volunteer Service Learning Hours through Hope TEC. The students assist with the Beginners Computer Class and the youth programs.

The outcomes from Hope TEC demonstrate how innovative IT retraining programs provide value in the community and to potential employers. Hope TEC educates and empowers more than 100 adults and youth each year with computer training programs, essential life skills workshops, job readiness training programs, and a host of youth enrichment programs.

Benefits for Adult Students:

- Utilize technical skills to compete for and secure employment or to enhance existing employment status.
- Continue education by enrolling in Junior College to pursue an undergraduate degree.
- Empower those who are raising children to effectively utilize computer skills, assist their children with homework, extend their overall means of communication, and conduct online transactions or business.

Many of our Hope TEC students have stated that in addition to the exceptional educational program, they also enjoy Hope TEC's safe and genuine services that lead the way to successful individual outcomes.

Benefits for Youth Students:

- We provide a safe, educational, and engaging environment for our school-aged children.
- We equip youth with essential advanced computer skills, including basic Windows operations, keyboarding, internet browsing, introduction to PowerPoint, 3D printing, and more.

- We help connect youth with summer employment opportunities.
- Our after-school homework assistance program serves as a protective function for youth at risk for failing school, particularly those who do not have other structured after-school activities or those whose parents do not have the education required to assist their children.
- We educate our students with the necessary anti-bullying and other social skills to help them use critical thinking skills to diffuse delicate situations they may encounter in everyday life.
- We provide a place where children experience how to bolster their range of coping strategies. They master the simple challenges of learning how to follow basic instructions, create things as a team, or conquer physical challenges.
- Our youth demonstrate their mastery of the complex challenges associated with getting along with new groups of peers, learning how to ask for help from others, and taking manageable risks without parental guidance.
- We broaden our children's horizons via field trips, exposing them to the City of Chicago. The trips include visits to ComEd Youth Energy Assistance Program, Chicago's Water Taxi ride for sightseeing through the downtown Chicago Canal, Afterschool Matter Exhibits, museums, farms, and many other exciting and educational places.
- Our program empowers youth by giving them new skills, ideas, strategies, relationships with their peers, and trusted adults. Our youth view themselves as competent and continue to be better problem-solvers in new situations long after leaving Hope TEC.

Hope TEC is making a difference by providing essential life skills, job training, professional development, and career paths to low-income youth and adults in Chicago. The partnership between Atos, Hope Presbyterian Church, and CCHHS should be a model for other communities to support, fund, and lead similar essential initiatives. To learn more about Hope TEC, visit us at www.hopetec.org.

"I had some experience with Word, but I had no idea Word was this in-depth," says Ken, who completed a three-part advanced study of the Microsoft application suite at Hope TEC. "This is a great benefit that's much needed. With all that's going on in Englewood, Hope TEC is a blessing. It's a blessing for Englewood. It's a blessing for Chicago, and more people need to know about it." After completing the Hope TEC program, Ken was hired by SCR Transportation as a desktop support analyst.

About Hope TEC

Hope TEC, dedicated to serving some of the most technologically disadvantaged communities in America. They recognize the need for accessible real-life training in inner-city neighborhoods and the need to prepare its residents in the emerging global economy. Hope TEC believes in empowering people with computer training programs, educational classes, and employment opportunities. Hope TEC's goal is to transform individual lives, enhance family lifestyles, and impact both individuals and their neighborhoods.

About the contributors:

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