IBM Accessibility Facebook Expert Hour on Closing the Skills Gap with Inclusive, Anytime-Anywhere Learning for Smarter Cities Transcript 04/25/2012

IBM Accessibility Leveraging the expertise of IBM consultants, the city of Philadelphia, P.A., is developing a Digital On-Ramps initiative to help close the workforce skills gap and create a sustainable model to drive employment. The DOR helps integrate the city's existing literacy, digital literacy and employment programs and offers an 'anytime, anywhere' learning model that combines traditional classroom education with virtual, online course work that individuals can access on the device of their choice.

Learn more on today's expert hour!

Putting inclusive learning to work in Philadelphia. A Smarter Cities approach to closing the workforce skills gap.
3 people like this.

IBM Accessibility Greetings everyone. Welcome to the April IBM Accessibility Expert Hour and thank you for joining us. Our topic today is "Closing the skills gap with inclusive, anytime-anywhere learning for Smarter Cities." And, please welcome our experts:
* Mary Olson, IBM Education Solution Specialist, West & Mid-West
* John Evans, IBM Americas Business Consulting Executive, Worldwide Human Ability and Accessibility Center
Puratchidasan Munusami likes this.

John Evans Good morning/afternoon/evening

IBM Accessibility If this is your first Facebook Expert Hour, here's how it works: To participate in the real-time Q&A session, "Like" IBM Accessibility (the Like button is at the top of the page in the center). Then to ask a question, type it into the box on your screen that says, "Write something..." and press Enter. Our experts will answer your question as a Comment, and it will show up underneath your question.
IBM Accessibility If you're using a screenreader, we suggest using Facebook's HTML-only mode:
http://m.facebook.com/home.php
2 people like this.

IBM Accessibility Please remember to refresh occasionally -- sometimes Facebook has trouble keeping up with the pace of our Expert Hours.
WolfPak Computers likes this

IBM Accessibility The page layout this month will be a little different because all of the brand pages are now on Timeline which segregates user posts from the IBM Accessibility moderator posts. To work around this, in the middle of the page, under the About/Photos/Likes etc section there is a dropdown menu control which is most likely set to "Highlights". Please set that option to "Posts by Others" to display the Q&A session at the top of the page.
Rukhsana Syed likes this.

IBM Accessibility Okay, let's open the wall for questions. :-)
3 people like this.

John Evans Hi everyone, let me give you a quick overview of the Smarter Cities Challenge:
As IBM aligns its citizenship efforts with the goal of building a Smarter Planet, we realize that city leaders around the world face increasing economic and societal pressures. Given the increased demand for services, they have to deliver new solutions ever more rapidly.

With this in mind, IBM Corporate Citizenship has launched the Smarter Cities Challenge to help 100 cities

around the world over a three-year period become smarter through grants of IBM talent. The City of Philadelphia was selected through a competitive process as one of 24 cities to be awarded a Smarter Cities Challenge grant in 2011.

IBM Accessibility shared a link.

Laura Lanham Kelley Hi. Isn't human capital management typically associated with human resources departments? Can you help us understand what the city of Philly was looking for when they asked for a 'first-of-a-kind human capital management system?'

> Mary Olson Laura good point -- IBM was asked to help the city of Philadelphia tackle a really difficult issue --high unemployment in the segment of their citizens who are low skilled. There are a many established groups trying to address this issue and the mayor wanted to find a way to build synergy, coordinate their efforts and make them all more effective.
> 2 people like this
>
> Mary Olson it is much broader than an individual company or organization
>
> Laura Lanham Kelley Ah, that helps clarify. Thanks, Mary!
>
> IBM Accessibility How many organizations did the IBM consulting team work with in the city?
>
> John Evans We worked with 60+ people from over 30 organizations in the course in the engagement.

Georgina Riddoch Hello. What are some of the major skills gaps and what are you doing to "close the gaps"?

> Mary Olson huge gaps in all types of literacy - reading, digital, financial, etc.
>
> Mary Olson many groups are addressing these, and we wanted to find a way to coordinate their efforts
>
> Fran Hayden Mary - did we use technology to address the skills gaps or are we using our expertise in services to help get all of these groups working together (or some combination)?
>
> Mary Olson the technology is anywhere anytime learning – it is designed to make use of mobile devices, computers and mentors to provide the right learning opportunities – so it is a combination.
>
> Fran Hayden THANKS!

IBM Accessibility If you've just joined us, or you're having trouble following the conversation due to the new "Timeline" layout, in the middle of the page, under the About/Photos/Likes etc section there is a dropdown menu control which is most likely set to "Highlights". Please set that option to "Posts by Others" to display the Q&A session at the top of the page.
2 people like this.

IBM Accessibility Mary & John -- How did the team identify and coordinate existing city resources, and which new resources needed to be developed?

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John Evans The city established a steering/executive committee to work on the project with us. That committee did an enormous amount of preparation prior to the start of the project to identify our initial contacts. Once we started meeting with the initial round of interviewees, those naturally led us into other areas and the committee was equally helpful in connecting us to the right people.

Fran Hayden Hi Mary, John, Holly:
Just want to say that this is an exciting topic. Can you talk a little bit about what IBM did for the City of Philadelphia and how it relates to people who have disabilities, or who are experiencing age-related disabilities?

Mary Olson many skilled jobs in Philly are unfilled - people with disabilities represent a pool of talent to draw from.
1 person likes this

John Evans Hi Fran, A key component of our work with the city was ensuring access for all to the new programs and offerings we proposed. Philadelphia is very aggressive in supporting its citizens with disabilities and is keen on making sure this effort is accessible to all as well.
1 person likes this

Fran Hayden Thanks! Interesting that there are many skilled jobs ready for workers. That's encouraging in terms of the economy. I think it also sounds so logical/efficient to get tapped in to that pool of talent and to do it with accessible programs and offerings.

Laura Lanham Kelley How did the diversity of Philadelphia's citizens play into the proposal you all help develop? It seems like a huge challenge in a city of that size.

John Evans Great question Laura, one of the key themes of our proposal was "anytime, anywhere" access to learning. An important driver of that concept was to be able to "right-size" access to citizens whether they had a television, a screen reader, a simple cell phone, or more sophisticated device such as a smart phone or laptop.
1 person likes this

Mary Olson Also, one of the ways Philadelphia is addressing the diversity is leveraging many community based groups to increase skills. For example the local Vietnamese center can provide English as a second language to their community. With a coordinated effort, these community based groups are more successful

John Evans Good point Mary Olson, the community support organizations were very knowledgeable about the unique needs of the neighborhoods they served and gave us a lot of guidance in developing our recommendations.

Fran Hayden Did you run into issues with different languages? Was IBM able to offer any kinds of solutions that would help level the playing field for people who did not speak English as their first language?
1 person likes this

Mary Olson The Mayor's council on literacy has a strong focus on ESL.

Mary Olson IBM helps make reading companion available as a donation, and that can be used for ESL learners.

Aldeota Consultoria Internacional Hi Fran. My question is very much like yours, except on a international level. I run a consulting business in Brazil, and sharing information in english has been a priority, but I feel that I need to support my local community with valuable information and institutional marketing as well. I am not able to do this quite properly, as an individual entrepreneur, and applying efforts into multi language publications is too time consuming...

Mary Olson there are also translation tools available but they are not as helpful as a mentor would be.

John Evans Good point Mary Olson. Providing multi-lingual services is always a challenge, particularly for smaller businesses. To help provide more inclusive materials, many communities will provide inexpensive editing/correction services of translated materials at little or no charge.
1 person likes this

Aldeota Consultoria Internacional Hi John. In Brazil this doesn't seem to be practiced, as we do not have such a multilingual community generally. I believe it's important to provide information in portuguese for local access to information, but really English gives me a broader audience in the International Relations field. I am thinking that this is a situation similar to a Hispanic small company in the United States, for instance.

John Evans I think your analogy is quite right. At that point, I think the only choice is to consider having some level of language expertise either in house or very accessible.

Aldeota Consultoria Internacional Thank you John. Internal capacity is handy indeed. I guess the challenge is to reconcile current translating technology tools for time/work optimization.

Phill Jenkins How is the Department of Education involved? or any other federal agencies?
Anil Joshi likes this.

Mary Olson the community colleges and school district were included in the discussions

Mary Olson there are also federal grant on workforce development from the Dept of Labor - coordinating those efforts and raising awareness are a key part of the effort

John Evans We considered the city department of education to be a key stakeholder. Because this effort is targeted at citizens from 16 to 65, i.e. those of typical working age, several other stakeholders, such as the universities, vocational training schools and programs, and hospitals and large employers with training programs are also involved. The state has a role both in terms of funding as well as helping coordination with surrounding towns.
1 person likes this

IBM Accessibility Please keep refreshing your screen -- Facebook can rarely keep up with us. :-)
1 person likes this

Phill Jenkins wow, that's a lot of stakeholders.

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Aldeota Consultoria Internacional Hi there, IBM Accessibility. I posted a question regarding multiethnic audience on web platforms, but somehow it disappeared. Was it deleted?

> IBM Accessibility Hi there. It was doubled, so I deleted one, but it seems to have deleted them both, my apologies. It looks like you re-asked the question in a shorter form -- did we answer all of it?

> Aldeota Consultoria Internacional Yes, thank you. I guess the debate was transferred to a post by Laura Lanham Kelley, since she had a similar question.

> IBM Accessibility Good. I was going to repost it as a question you'd asked, but then it looked like you'd asked it differently. Again, my apologies.

> Aldeota Consultoria Internacional No problem!

IBM Accessibility Don't forget --- in the middle of the page, under the About/Photos/Likes etc section there is a dropdown menu control which is most likely set to "Highlights". Please set that option to "Posts by Others" to display the Q&A session at the top of the page.
WolfPak Computers likes this.

Barrie Little What metrics are you using to determine whether the "inclusive" aspects of the project are a success, both for the initial project and the longer term use of the system by the city?

> John Evans Thanks for your question Barrie. We're working handling metrics in a couple of ways. The broadest goals of course are reducing illiteracy and increasing employment, so those baseline numbers have been taken and will be measured again on a egular basis. We also established a series of "quick wins" to prove the concepts and fine tune our recommendations, which will also help us establish a baseline set of more specific metrics around the program proposals.
> 1 person likes this

IBM Accessibility We are now at the end of our time. What a great session -- I want to thank our experts for joining us today. :-)
WolfPak Computers likes this.

IBM Accessibility The session will remain on the Facebook wall, and there will be a transcript available on the ibm.com/able website soon.

Have a wonderful day/evening! :-)

Jae Broadhurst Timeline works only for look-at-me, one-off posts, not for dialogs and actually engaging in conversation or getting to know your "friends."

IBM Accessibility The lack of linearity made this session harder to follow. We'll do something different next month that should improve the experience.

Jae Broadhurst You could check into whether the Forums feature of IBM Connections would work for you. It's not real-time, but more people can join and follow the discussion that way, and it's easier to track, linearly.