



IBM interview with Digital Opportunities Trust

THOMPSON: Welcome to this IBM podcast series on Corporate Responsibility and Global Leadership in the 21st century. I'm Kevin Thompson, and I'm a member of IBM's Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs team.

IBM has just launched the Corporate Service Corps, a program to develop leadership skills while addressing socioeconomic challenges in key strategic emerging markets. The Service Corps is part of the Global Citizen's Portfolio initiative announced by CEO Sam Palmisano last July.

Today's conversation is part of a series where we talk with the non-governmental organizations we've teamed up with to identify the projects and areas in the world where IBM skills can best be applied to benefit local communities. Today I'm joined by Janet Longmore, President of Digital Opportunities Trust. Welcome, Janet.

LONGMORE: Thank you, it's great to be here.

THOMPSON: Wonderful. Janet, listen could you start us off by telling everyone a little bit about your organization?

LONGMORE: Absolutely, sure. Digital Opportunity Trust or DOT as we like to be known by, it's nice and short and sweet, we are an international, non-profit charitable organization. We are headquartered in Canada in snowy Ottawa in a lovely 19th century home in Ottawa.



Our programs operate in the Middle East, in Africa, in southern Europe and also in the Katrina affected communities in Mississippi and Louisiana.

DOT is an organization that is dedicated to creating economic, educational and social opportunity for people in the developing world and emerging markets.

We have a very innovative approach that we think in terms of how we deliver our programs, and that is through mobilizing and tapping into the talents of university graduates in these countries that we work in and there are nine countries throughout the globe today.

And we work with these young people, put them through a very innovative training program where they learn to be facilitators and communicators and project leaders. And then they work in their own communities to address urgent issues such as the ones the IBM Service Corps will be addressing: working with budding entrepreneurs, helping small businesses, figure out how to integrate technology effectively into their day-to-day lives so that they can create some form of sustainable livelihood for themselves.

And we have seen over the past six years a tremendous impact in multiple numbers of communities where people are discovering creative ways to use technology to improve their lives. DOT is very, very passionate about connecting people with the enabling power of technology.

THOMPSON: Can you share with us a little bit about the work that you and your organization have lined up for us in Turkey?



LONGMORE: Yes, sure. Turkey is, you're absolutely right, I mean, it is a country a lot of international organizations and companies are moving heavily into the Turkish market. It's a country of 78 million people and very strategically situated.

DOT established a satellite office there in 2005 and we are now launching our program throughout outside of Istanbul and Ankara, but it will be focusing working with small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Again, as I mentioned earlier, helping them to use technology effectively to grow their business or even to set up a business and create those opportunities that they may not have realized existed before in their community.

And so where we're very excited about deploying IBM executives and volunteers will be into these programs working with small businesses and entrepreneurship development, working side by side with our young dynamic talented university graduates that we refer to as DOT interns. These will be Turkish young people.

And also another opportunity through a partnership that we have with UNDP Turkey -- which is the United Nations Development Program in Turkey -- to do some interesting work in democratic governance in communities outside of Istanbul and Ankara again in a very special leading-edge project that's dedicated to working with youths and entrepreneurs and marginalized groups throughout Turkey.

THOMPSON: And Janet, you mentioned a couple of times about how we're looking outside of the major cities of Istanbul and Ankara, and that was



intentional on our part that we wanted to give our IBM Corporate Service Corps participants a real, more culturally immersed opportunity outside of the capital cities where they maybe could fall back on expatriate services in some of those locations.

Could you just speak about perhaps some of the challenges you might see more commonly in some of the locations we're going to as opposed to the capital cities which tend to have all of the major services provided in many other capital cities throughout the world?

LONGMORE: Sure. And you know, it is very true. I mean, we all know about Turkey and their efforts to join the European Union and Istanbul absolutely is a European city and we'll see all those services there. And the prices that accompany it. And then Ankara and in the capital.

Our interest as we all know is in technology. So these two cities are connected and everything is operating very, very smoothly. But outside of the cities it is like night and day sometimes. And Turkey there really is a divide within Turkish society.

It's an economic divide and center regional sort of relations divide, not just digital, but it's based on historical difference, access to education, different levels of economic development in the country, huge gender issues and a gender divide.

Turkey is one of the largest illiteracy rates among women in the world. And there are ethnic issues that they also face. So it's really sometimes almost going back in time when you move out of Istanbul and Ankara.



And at the same time, though, these are communities that reflect many other communities in emerging markets. There's their populations can be significant. And if we can help and tap into these more marginalized groups such as women and young entrepreneurs and budding small businesses and help them recognize the power and how to use technology effectively, it does make a significant difference.

And so those are some of the issues that certainly IBM volunteers will be seeing in these communities or cities outside of the major centers in Turkey.

THOMPSON: So, Janet you've obviously had a lot of experience working in the international development space and most specifically the intersection that we live in which is the intersection of technology and society.

And you've also seen a number of companies are doing programs fairly similar to the design of the Corporate Service Corps, whether they be paid leaves of absence or paid sabbaticals or other types of volunteers and programs. Could you just speak about the differences you see between IBM's programs and others that you've seen in the past?

LONGMORE: Sure, sure and in fact DOT has worked fairly extensively with a number of different corporate partners. And one thing I would like to say is that the...what's quite fascinating about IBM's approach is that in my opinion IBM is taking a global and a long-term view of ways to address some very, very urgent issues that are facing both the developing world and emerging economies.



And they're taking that view and aligning it very strategically with both IBM's business interest in these emerging markets which makes absolute sense for IBM, but on the other side of it, it isn't this, you know, what can I say, like this one off approach which we see frankly far too often where someone's dropped in and comes out or it's a volunteer experience.

This is well thought out, it's very strategic, it's about consistent deployment of volunteers to consistent locations in key areas. It's about the way you're working, you're working with a network of non-profit partners which is fantastic.

And to me, it really, it speaks to the essence of what a public private partnership is all about. There are huge issues out there and we really need to come together so let's leverage each other's expertise.

And so I would say that IBM's, that long-term view we're going to test this out, we're deploying into key markets and we're going to learn from there and we're there for the long haul and sharing our expertise with really well identified needs because you're working through local partners.

THOMPSON: Yes, and I think that's exactly right. And the local partner network is really also why it's so important that we're partnering with you and why we're partnering with these leading global NGOs that have the on the ground experience to help us make those connections and find the right projects that are skills based opportunities for our employees.

THOMPSON: I just have one final question Janet and that is can you just describe for us what you think the definition of success is for this program? That



we're going to be doing four teams in Turkey with you over the first 18 months of the program.

Our first team will go to Turkey in October, and we'll send an additional three in 2009. At the end of sending those four teams to Turkey and working with you, what does success look like?

LONGMORE: Well, you know, I think there's some key things I can talk about there. Certainly, it's successful if we have what I would talk about is a win/win for both the experience that the IBM volunteers have personally had in learning about the country and the communities and the people that they're working with and supporting.

And on the other side, that the projects and the people who are running projects DOT projects and our other partner projects that they've benefited from this tremendous opportunity of expertise coming in from IBM volunteers.

So really, you know, and we're going to have to make sure that we monitor that carefully, that we work openly and transparently and approach this as a learning effort, learning from what's working, what isn't working.

But that people come away with that win/win feeling, that it's worked well and we're beginning to see some impact. We all know that change takes time, that we can truly speak to the local people and they can speak very positively about the experience.

I think another component of success is that we really should be seeing some



beginnings of the awareness and understanding on all levels of the Turkish or the private sector and the public sector of this program of a positive impact that it's beginning to have, of its acceptance and welcome into the Turkish communities.

You know, we all know that that takes time to build, but we want to see the beginnings of that. I think that would be absolutely tremendous.

And then, I mean, the *pièce de résistance*, right, I mean, that people are asking for more, you know. And word has spread, and there's more opportunities for more volunteers in Turkey. And that's certainly the experience is understood and known within IBM and certainly within DOT and all its partners.

THOMPSON: Well, we certainly agree with all of that Janet. And we hope that we have the same results which you're wishing for and more. And also that we can find more opportunities to work with DOT in Turkey and in other countries going forward. I'd like to thank you for taking the time today, Janet.

THOMPSON: And we really look forward to this continuing to develop our relationship with Digital Opportunities Trust. And most importantly to start sending some of our best and brightest IBMers to Turkey to work with you.

LONGMORE: Oh, thank you so much Kevin, and likewise. I mean, we're thrilled about the partnership very much, looking forward to working with all of the IBM people who join us in Turkey and really focusing on some real solutions that will help real local people improve their lives. So thank you very much for this opportunity.



THOMPSON: Wonderful. Great, great, thank you again
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