



IBM interview with Australian Business Volunteers

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

IBM has just launched its Corporate Service Corps, a program to develop leadership skills while addressing socio economic challenges in emerging markets. It is part of the Global Citizenship Portfolio initiative announced by the CEO, Sam Palmisano, last July.

Today's conversation is part of a series where we talk with the non-governmental organizations we have teamed up with to identify the projects and areas in the world where IBM skills can be best applied to benefit local communities.

Today I'm joined by Michael Lynch, CEO of the Australian Business Volunteers located in Australia's capital city, Tamba. Welcome, Michael, it's great to have you here.

LYNCH: Hi, Julie, it's great to be here, too.

COYNE: Thank you. Michael, well, could we kick off with perhaps you telling us a little bit about the Australian Business Volunteers and what they do.

LYNCH: Okay, that would be good and I will call it ABV because it's a bit easier to say than Australian Business Volunteers.

[LAUGHTER]



COYNE: What a good idea.

LYNCH: It's a bit of a mouthful otherwise. Well, ABV has been around since 1981 and it was an initiative set up by the Australian government and one of the business councils in Australia.

It was supposed to at that stage take retired Australians and place them in countries around the Asia and the Pacific to assist developing communities in building up their skill base.

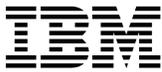
The Australian Business Volunteers has placed thousands of people over the last 27 or so years that it's been in existence in all sorts of functions all the way from things like basic trades.

Over the years, though, we've actually started to get younger people -- and younger means 35 and above to us -- being involved in this volunteer program.

COYNE: Well, that's great Michael and obviously with what you have just described there maybe they do bring to us a wealth of experience in this area. And of course not only looking at retirees as you say, but now targeting people of all ages who believe that they have something to contribute across Asia Pacific.

Could you perhaps tell us a little bit, give us a little bit of insight perhaps into some of the projects that have been underway across the Asia Pacific?

LYNCH: What we will do is we actually work with the business or the



organization, impart the skills and then they take those skills and actually grow the organization through that.

Agriculture, of course, is a big commodity in a lot of the, especially the northern Asian areas that we work within as well. And so we've worked with rice, we've worked with other grains, we've worked with just general crops to help increase their efficiency and production.

But on the other side of that we've also then helped with those communities in marketing their crops, putting IT and putting a bit of business governance work in there as well.

ABV works with people on the ground. We have in various countries what we call In Country Managers or ICMs and they go and talk to the various communities and the governments in the area to see where the gaps are in their skill base.

We then take that information, send that back to Australia and we look through our database of a couple of thousand volunteers to see whether we can match up the skills on our database with the skills needed in those particular areas.

COYNE: That's great, Michael, and it certainly gives us a good insight into the breadth of work that ABV do do across the region. I guess IBM perhaps brings a different perspective perhaps on how we, how an organization like IBM could work with an organization like ABV and how we actually match the skill sets of our people to meet the needs in some of our countries.



And as we know, we have identified two countries in Asia Pacific where we would like to commence projects for the Corporate Service Corps, those being the Philippines and Vietnam. Could you perhaps share a little bit of insight about how you see this relationship working?

LYNCH: Yes. As you said we've spent a lot of time trying to work out the best fit between the IBM people and the needs in the communities you just spoke about.

But the two main projects we're looking at at the moment where we'll probably place three teams of eight is in area of the Philippines with a group called Prime which is Promoting Rural Industries and Market Enhancement program. And that's in northern Mindanao.

What that actually is, it is a small development assistance program where we're trying to build up sustainable development. Now, of course, IBM people even though they do lots and lots of things aren't necessarily experts in agriculture and cropping.

But what we're actually asking the IBM people to do there is to use their skills in business and IT to assist in the marketing and the general business development of this organization, because it's working through a community business development program, I suppose you could say.

So it's a micro enterprise, a very small enterprise, but there are a number of these micro enterprises that have come together under this prime location, I suppose you could call it.



But as I said, northern Mindanao. The other one is in a place called Davao, which is also in Mindanao, and that's working with the Davao City Chamber of Commerce. Like most other chambers of commerce that people would be aware of, they work across the diversity of different programs and are representative of the businesses in the particular area.

Again, they operate small and medium enterprise centers where the communities themselves acting together can make the most of the opportunities that are there to market their product.

What we're asking the IBM people to do there is to help them with their finance work, their marketing, their human resource development, and also their information systems and general advocacy and communications exchange -- because remember, these are rural communities. They're large communities but they're not...they're rural, they haven't got all the skill bases that say the capital of Manila would have in the Philippines.

So we're asking the IBM people to go in, utilize their skills that they have, work closely with the community to again understand the need, because the needs change.

So one of the things we want the IBM teams to do is be very flexible, so when they hit the ground, they need to examine the actual project itself to make sure that it still has the same outcomes required in the initial proposal.

But, the IBM people will be living in the community itself, away from the major



capital areas and the really big centers and becoming part of the community, too. So they'll be interacting on a daily basis with the communities in the Philippines.

Now, if we travel west from the Philippines across to Vietnam, the next proposal we're looking at, the next assignment, is in Danang, and that's working with the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce in Industry, and they have a chapter in Danang.

Again, it's a chamber of commerce, a bit like the Davoe one in the Philippines, where we're going to actually work with the chamber of commerce to assist them in building up their general business acumen that they already have a number of projects running.

Again, it's an agricultural area, so it's in agriculture, generally. That's the basic product. But we're looking at assisting them in their marketing, their business development, their information technology, HR, financial skills, all those sorts of things.

In the Danang area, there will be a lot of travel involved, because we are talking about working with small communities around the area. So the IBM people on a daily basis will be traveling a number of kilometers around Danang visiting various communities, working with them together and trying to impart some of those skills through there.

I suppose the biggest...one of the biggest challenges that the people will have -- the IBM people -- will be just the different communities they come across and the different approaches that are necessary in each of those communities.



COYNE: And I think that that's an important point that you do make, too, Michael, considering that the teams that we will be sending to these countries will within their own right be quite diverse. They will come from all around the globe, from many, many different cultures. They will have other languages.

So, I mean, I think it will be an incredibly rich experience for all concerned, and particularly for the communities where they will be going.

LYNCH: That's, and Julie, I think that's one of the...it's not just the challenge; it's the exciting part of it as well, that there's going to be large aspects of team building and what we call incultration as well within those different communities, because we are really aware at ABV that we're getting people from various parts of the world to form a team, and that team needs to virtually hit the ground running.

The first time they actually see each other together physically will probably be at the airport when they're first coming in from the various countries into Vietnam and to the Philippines.

COYNE: I think one of the exciting parts of this is how we work in partnership -- ABV and IBM -- to support our people to do that. And I know that we've had discussions about what some of that prework may be.

LYNCH: Exactly.

COYNE: I just want to turn, Michael, how do you sort of see this program,



this particular program and this partnership, is this something that ABV have been involved in before, or is this something perhaps new for your organization, too?

LYNCH: Well, at one level it's similar to what we already do; at another level, it's sort of the reverse of the way that we normally work. We've placed teams of people into various areas before, and I did mention about working in Cambodia with the national bank there where we had about eight people, eight to 10 people at a time going over and working with the government of Cambodia to set things up there.

The difference with the IBM work is that rather than the community themselves in this country coming to us and saying, we have this particular need, and then we source volunteers with the skills to fill that need...

What we've got this time is we've got a group of IBM people with particular skills, and then we've searched for particular programs in country to suit that. So it's slightly the reverse of the way that we normally work.

COYNE: Well, Michael, look, thank you so much for your time today. It's been great to be able to have a chat to get a little bit of an insight into what's going to be coming up for a number of our IBMers over the coming months as they embark on their assignments in these countries.

We are certainly looking forward to working with ABV and we know that we will have a very successful outcome. So, look, thank you so much for your time today. And we'll talk again soon.



LYNCH: Thanks, Julie, and we're really looking forward to it from our end, that's for sure.

COYNE: Okay.

[END OF SEGMENT]