



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

The Case for: Embracing Global Cultures

IBM & Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Joining forces with empowering results.

2009

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▶ THE PLAYERS

IBM's facility in Rochester, Minn., has a rich heritage of business computing innovation and client satisfaction – a tradition that continues today. The site plays a key role in the company's business strategies, with a focus on systems and services.

Employees representing more than 30 IBM divisions work together to provide innovative business solutions to clients around the world. Although employees at the Rochester site have a wide diversity of skills, its predominant mission is the development, manufacture and support of IBM's collaborative business systems, which provide a broad spectrum of solutions and technology for clients worldwide.

Rochester Community and Technical College is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, a network of 32 institutions across the state. The college's Business and Workforce Education division, located at the Heintz Center in Rochester, supports the continuing needs of the community and the area's workforce. Customized programs are designed to meet the needs of local industry for training and retraining.



► THE STRATEGY

In a joint effort, IBM and Rochester Community and Technical College applied for funding from the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership in 2006 to address IBM's specific workforce needs. IBM then supplied the subject matter expertise while the college supplied the educational know-how to create two custom training programs: IBM's Understanding and Working with Other Cultures program, and a Business Acumen class or "mini MBA."

The global cultural training program consists of four individual classes focusing on four different countries, one country per class. During the one-day training intensive, employees cover a wide range of topics, including discussions about the working habits of people in a particular country, gift giving, women's issues, e-mail etiquette and travel tips. A "country expert" leads the class, giving first-hand, personal perspectives and insights, as every IBM employee gains greater appreciation for each culture and its people and a deeper understanding of how business is conducted there.

IBM's "mini MBA" program was created to offer high-level chapters of an MBA program. Its goal is to assist management and technical leaders in developing and using business tools for better managerial analysis and corporate decision-making. IBM's annual report proved to be the inspiration that led to developing the program's curriculum. IBM leaders and Rochester Community and Technical College instructors worked closely to create the five-day, three-hour sessions that cover topics such as break-even analysis, interpreting financial statements, and market segmentation and product position.



► THE RESULTS

More than 500 IBM employees developed a better understanding of business practices in various cultures and strengthened their financial knowledge from IBM's Understanding and Working with Other Cultures program and its Business Acumen class, or "mini MBA" training programs. The culture adaptability classes have been so successful in Minnesota that IBM has been inspired to globally educate their IBMers in other countries and those on assignment to the U.S. by introducing an American culture class, which will be launched later this year.

"Building on the premise that an organization is known by the company it keeps, IBM's contributions to the college have enhanced access to quality learning services, fostering student success for a diverse community of learners. Rochester Community and Technical College was proud to collaborate with IBM in the creation of custom training programs to enhance employee understanding and appreciation of their clients' cultures."

– Donald Supalla, president of Rochester Community and Technical College

One participant noted that the real-world examples not only made the class more interesting, but helped with understanding the global concepts being discussed. "The class was thought-provoking and right on with today's world and increasing global business," she added.

The Business Acumen attendees cite the interaction between fellow employees and subject matter experts as invaluable. The hands-on coursework offers a real-world application by focusing on the fundamental building blocks of business: planning, economics, marketing, finance and accounting. IBM participants report close to a 90 percent satisfaction with the program. Plans are underway to offer an online prerequisite course to be taken before a classroom session to apply the learning.

Another class member said it was one of the best classes he'd taken thus far at IBM. "I like how they used multiple instructors to share their stories and viewpoints on the cultural differences found throughout India. The instructors were very easy to listen to and follow. I cannot think of one thing I'd change about the course."

► Let us empower you

Rochester Community and Technical College is just one institution of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities that is making a difference in the business world and empowering Minnesota.

With 32 public colleges and universities—that's 54 campuses in 47 local Minnesota communities—we're the one educational system that makes it easy for businesses to get the mission-critical, customized training and key services they need to remain competitive.

For more information about how we can empower your business, call **1-800-366-7380** or visit our Web site, **www.business.mnscu.edu**



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**At Minnesota State Colleges and
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