



Refurbishment programme bears unexpected fruit: Namibia's first vocational IT course

Fast Facts

Customer: Windhoek Vocational Training Centre (WVTC)

Country: Namibia

Web Site: www.natron.net/wvtc

Customer Profile

The WVTC is an autonomous training institution within Namibia's vocational education and training system. It offers employable artisan-level skills to school leavers, as well as skills-upgrade programmes aimed at certifying workers with experience but no formal qualification.

Partners in Learning

The establishment of a Microsoft IT Academy at the WVTC is a perfect example of the philosophy of the PiL initiative in action. Spotting an opportunity to help, PiL provided the resources and expertise to set up a sustainable partnership that will improve access to ICT skills for Namibian students into the future.

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[www.microsoft.com/emea/
PartnersinLearning](http://www.microsoft.com/emea/PartnersinLearning)

"We can now provide access to IT skills – not just for students but also for staff – in support of the government's vision to provide IT skills to all Namibians by 2030."

Paulus Haukongo, Principal, Windhoek Vocational Training Centre

Education Challenge

In 2004, Microsoft approached the Windhoek Vocational Training Centre (WVTC) to discuss installation of a Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher (MAR) centre there. The MAR centre was a planned element of Microsoft's Partners in Learning (PiL) agreement with the Namibian government, aimed at reducing the cost of access to computers for educational and non-profit organisations in Namibia. The government suggested the WVTC in Windhoek, the country's capital, as the preferred location for the MAR centre.

The WVTC was happy to host the MAR centre, which opened in August 2004. But it became obvious to Microsoft that there was an opportunity to do more. The WVTC offered no technical IT courses – in fact, nor did any of the other five vocational training centres in Namibia – a gap the WVTC was very keen to fill, but lacked the resources to do so.

Solution

Microsoft suggested the establishment of an IT Academy (ITA) at the WVTC, equipped from the MAR centre, to be used for IT courses. Although funded by Microsoft initially, the ITA would be owned and operated by the WVTC as a self-supporting, sustainable venture funded, like other WVTC resources.

Microsoft also helped create a partnership between the WVTC and the Institute of

Information Technology (IIT), a local commercial training organisation, to develop and conduct an IT junior technician course at the ITA. The course both benefits from, and assists, the MAR centre, by letting students gain work experience there.

The ITA was set up by the end of 2004, and 38 students – far more than expected – enrolled on the first six-month junior technician course from February 2005. Most had never touched a computer and, interestingly, one-third were female.

After six-months, the students have the equivalent expertise of a Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) in the use of desktop applications. They are also ready to assist with hardware and software installation, troubleshooting and repair as junior technicians in a networking environment. With very little additional work experience and training, they could pass the internationally recognised A+ certification for entry-level computer service technicians.

The course has proved so popular that its second presentation, from June 2005, had enrolments months in advance, based on word-of-mouth recommendations. And it's not just prospective junior technicians benefiting from the ITA. Every afternoon, basic computer-literacy sessions are run to enable any WVTC student to learn how to use a computer.