



## Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Vocational Education

### Customer Profile

Texas offenders participate in the Wynne Computer Recovery Program to acquire high-demand job skills for a better life after prison.

### Business Situation

The Wynne Computer Recovery Program trains and certifies up to 45 offenders a year with hands-on computer technician skills.

### Solution

Participants refurbish computers donated by various state agencies, which are then put into service in Texas schools.

### Benefits

- Provides world class computer technician skills for offenders
- Improves offender confidence and self-worth
- Creates talented and empathetic instructors for the Wynne Program
- Provides thousands of computers for Texas schools
- Enables a promising future

## Texas Offenders Acquire Technical Skills and Renewed Hope for the Future

"IT is an industry that doesn't discriminate. If you have the skills, you find work. Being Microsoft certified and having the skills behind it, opportunities are abundant. I'm so grateful for that."

*Leonard Ramirez, Microsoft Certified Professional and ex-offender*

The Wynne Computer Recovery Program provides offenders in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice with technical computing skills, which they use to refurbish computers for Texas schools. In 2008, the program trained 45 computer technicians, and these offenders refurbished 3.3 million pounds of computer equipment, achieving 45 Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) credentials along the way.

To date, the Wynne Computer Recovery Program has delivered more than 23,000 computers at a US\$12M fair market value (FMV) to Texas school districts.



Bob Stoudt serves as the Wynne Computer Recovery Program plant manager

"One offender started by unloading trucks. The furthest thing from his mind was learning to be a computer technician. He's been here four years and recently passed his first Microsoft Certification exam."

Bryan McGann, lead instructor and offender

## Education Needs

When ex-offenders return home from prison, finding a job can be very difficult. Studies show that released prisoners who find gainful employment are less likely to return to crime, but finding steady and financially rewarding work is a challenge. As a result, more than two-thirds of released prisoners are re-arrested within three years.<sup>i</sup>

Offenders who participate in correctional education programs have a 20 percent lower recidivism rate.<sup>ii</sup> The Wynne Computer Recovery Program provides offenders with world-class skills for high-demand computer technician jobs, boosting their chances for success when they leave prison, and providing them with the confidence that they can beat the odds and succeed in a competitive job market.

## Solution

Participants in the Wynne Computer Recovery Program are offenders in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. These offenders master computer technician skills by refurbishing old PCs donated by various Texas state agencies. Participants are carefully screened and closely supported throughout the program. If they do not have prior experience, offenders first take essential computing skills courses like Microsoft Digital Literacy, then start learning about computer maintenance. After that, they move on to industry-standard certification curriculums like Microsoft Certified Professional, Microsoft Certified Technical Specialist, and Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. Participants use standard curriculum and pass universal certification exams that ensure their skills are on par with certified candidates worldwide.

Along the way, many participants garner newfound confidence and other life skills like collaborating, problem solving, coaching, teaching, and learning, which broaden their

feelings of empowerment and self-worth. The fact that the PCs they refurbish go back to help Texas school children is icing on the cake.

## Benefits

### **Provides world-class computer technician skills for offenders**

Offenders participating in the Wynne Computer Recovery Program come from all walks of life, and all levels of experience. Some have technical skills already, and some start from scratch. "One offender started by unloading trucks. The furthest thing from his mind was learning to be a computer technician. He's been here four years and recently passed his first Microsoft Certification exam," said Bryan McGann, lead instructor and offender.

The program stresses hands-on experience and certification to ensure that graduates have the skills and industry credentials to compete for rewarding computer technician jobs on the outside. By focusing on the intrinsic value of computer skills as a means of individual transformation, the program sets high expectations, and students deliver. "Supervisors expect a lot from us. They put a lot of responsibility in our hands," said Sergio Salinas, instructor and offender. The result is highly qualified and experienced computer technicians ready to step into rewarding careers upon release. "Five years ago, I never dreamed I would be this far. It's opened new doors, and has made my goals endless. Now I believe I can go out and get meaningful employment as an IT pro or technical instructor," said Terry Brewsaugh, instructor and offender.

### **Creates talented and empathetic instructors for the Wynne Program**

A key success factor is that qualified offenders become program instructors. They understand and support their students by working closely with them and collaborating



Wynne Computer Recovery Program graduate Leonard Ramirez at work

"Supervisors expect a lot from us. They put a lot of responsibility in our hands."

Sergio Salinas, instructor and offender

on difficult concepts and problems. Instructors and students alike continue to develop their technical skills, and along the way learn more about working in teams, problem-solving, and sharing investment in each other's success. "When I administer an exam to a student, the instructors all wait outside the door like expectant fathers. They take it very personally that their students pass the exam and get a great score," said Bob Stoudt, Wynne Computer Recovery Program plant manager

#### **Improves offender confidence and self-worth**

Participants in the Wynne Computer Recovery Program discover more than computer technician skills as part of the journey. By being tasked with tough problems and held to high expectations, offenders find new meaning for their lives and hope for the future. "Many of us long timers came into prison at an early age and had no real skill set. This program helps us go out and do something with ourselves which builds our confidence," said Jon Buice, instructor and offender.

#### **Provides thousands of computers for Texas schools**

The refurbished PCs from the program are sent to Texas schools, where local students then discover the world of computing for themselves.

#### **Enables a promising future**

Program participants, instructors, and graduates alike take away a new perspective for their futures. For some, it is about becoming a teacher and enabling others to discover new possibilities within themselves. For others, it is finding the excitement of learning new cutting-edge skills and expanding career horizons through continuous learning. Many reveal a different side of themselves through the power of giving back to the community, even from

inside the walls of a prison. "It's not only about our skill set or getting out. It's about redemption and changing our lives. It's about helping not only our families, but our communities, and helping the program move forward," concluded Buice.

## For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

For more information about Wynne Computer Recovery Program products and services visit the Web site at: [www.tci.tdcj.state.tx.us/services/cr](http://www.tci.tdcj.state.tx.us/services/cr)

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<sup>i</sup> US DOJ Bureau of Justice Statistics  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/reentry/recidivism.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Slambrouck, 2000, *Push to Expand Book-Learning Behind Bars*.