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Austerity, CSR and computer skills

Posted by [rewardblog](#), 17 December 2014 at 11:39 [3 comments](#)

By Tony Hatton-Gore, Rewardhr Ltd

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It seems that whichever government comes to power next year in the UK we will have a continuing age of austerity as they seek to balance the books.

There are obvious implications for pay and resources in the public sector and knock on effects in the voluntary, arts and other sectors which depend to some extent on government funding.

The differences between the highest and lowest pay have widened and inequality is becoming more pronounced. There is a widespread feeling that we are not really "all in it together". Perhaps reward strategies can help develop cohesion between sectors?

For example, teachers are struggling with the requirement to teach computer coding skills (i.e. a new subject) because many/most do not have the technical background. The application of creativity to systems development could be critically important for economic success and we should be investing in this capability.

I heard about a former teacher who had set up a company to support teachers in delivering computing skills courses, but there must be a way to mobilise the resources of the technology industry.

I have on occasion studied company value statements in order to develop associated reward strategies. Many companies have defined values in the areas of corporate social responsibility, community and social cohesion. I am sure all these companies mean what they say but such value statements can seem like lip service or tick box exercises.

Companies could demonstrate their willingness to act on these values by supporting the technological education of the next generation. Indeed, it should be in their own interest to develop such skills.

Developing such strategies for supporting computer education could form part of leadership development or corporate citizenship programmes, enable the development of critical skills, support hard pressed teachers and could have a significant impact on local communities; as well as promoting the brand values.

Employees who participate will have the satisfaction of contributing to society beyond the normal scope of their jobs and may well feel a greater affinity to the company for which they work.

Your comments

3 comments

3 comments



Raymond Keith Naylor
17 December 2014 at 14:04

Some interesting points Tony, and I agree strongly about the need for implication of companies within their communities.

On the other hand, I remain extremely sceptical about the real need for these coding skills.

Certainly, computer coding underpins many things in our everyday lives (television and internet firmware, microwave ovens, central heating systems, cars, telephones - the list is endless). However, I cannot help asking myself if acquiring computer coding skills is any more important than the need to acquire skills to maintain an internal combustion engine (indispensable for driving a car), or telecommunication skills (needed to make our telephones work), or perhaps cryogenic skills (so our deep-freezers work).

Isn't the need perhaps more to do with the practical use of devices that are

partially controlled by code? After all, would you want to re-programme the code in your microwave oven? Should you? Could that be dangerous?

Is the need perhaps more one of understanding the basic principles of what coding is and does, rather than trying to transmit ephemeral applied skills?

Also, given the rate at which coding languages evolve, anything that is taught is highly likely to be out of date by the time children leave school.

Maybe I'm being reactionary in my thinking but I'd like to see what others think.

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Anthony John Hatton-Gore

30 December 2014 at 11:18

Keith

Thanks. Of course you are right that it is about effective development of enduring skills within the community rather than the ability to use potentially redundant devices. The term "coding" implies a relatively narrow view of technology and I was seeking to take a broader perspective.

I think it is more to do with creating a society in which we leverage the capability of different organisations to develop the disciplines and skills necessary for successful technology professionals in a constantly evolving business landscape. Commercial organisations can help the education community by ensuring the continued relevance of the material being taught and communicating insights into future applications of technology.

Tony

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Michael Marchington

09 January 2015 at 10:40

Tony

I agree about the need to ensure corporate value statements are put into effect, and worry that too often they are nothing more than tick-box exercises akin to 'hugging a huskie' to prove one's environmental commitment. The best CEOs do mean what they say, I am sure, but they need to demonstrate their explicit commitment to ensure staff take these statements seriously - including the provision of financial support to enhance technical capabilities

Mick

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