

Giving wings to the dream

Sep 13, 2020



Among the many qualities that unite IBMers, one attribute is our desire to be essential. In the Community Connect series, you will read stories on how IBM is helping the society take on challenges with the power of our technology and people.

Chandra Shekar Baljagudem, a student from National Skills Training Institute (NSTI), Telangana walked into IBM Bangalore campus with a lot of dreams, for a five-month internship program. Chandra Shekar, who hails from Vikarabad, fought many a battle to reach NSTI. He had to quit his Bachelor of Science (BSc) course midway and take the job of a data entry operator to support his family. He was hoping this internship would provide the right platform to secure the much-needed job during the campus recruitment. An ambitious young man, with a penchant for computers, he worked hard to get admission in NSTI.

Matching market expectations

While the entry to NSTI was a great breakthrough for Chandra Shekar, he was concerned that the course completion alone would not guarantee a suitable job.

"Most of us did not have a clear idea about what companies look for in students in terms of skills. We were aware of the gap in industry readiness but could not fathom its depth. We were very worried," **said Chandra Shekar.**

Bridging the gap

There is a significant skills-gap among students to be industry-ready. As per the seventh edition of India Skills Report (2020), the employability of India's youth has remained stagnant, with around 46% being job-ready.

Aligned with India's Skill India mission, IBM and Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship co-created an industry-relevant 2 Year Advanced Technical Diploma on IT, Networking and Cloud Computing in 2018. Students

further deepened their technical skills when IBM's SkillsBuild program was launched in India in November 2019.

An IBM team, spearheaded by **Medha Desai, Manager - HR Partner**, went to the NSTI to assess the skill levels of students and understand their skills-gap before designing the first-ever five months paid internship at IBM. The aim was to address the gap in future technology areas such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), and user experience designing. Twenty students from Hyderabad and Bangalore NSTIs came to work with IBM mentors and subject matter experts (SMEs) at the Embassy Golf Links campus of IBM in Bangalore.



Meaningful interactions and engagement

Vignesh Kamath, *Practice Leader, Enterprise Hybrid Cloud Services* and **Amit Singh**, *Delivery Operation Manager from IBM Global Technology Services (GTS)* took the lead in mentoring these students during their internship. The intent was to make the training meaningful for the students and get them industry-ready.

During the training, students were taken through real client scenarios – how businesses operate and what they look for from their employees or service providers.

"The students also attended technical skills development sessions offered by IBM mentors. Besides the technical session, IBM also organized soft-skill training programs for these students, including mock-interview sessions," said **Vignesh**.



A new beginning

Chandra Shekar continued his learning journey after completing his internship, through the SkillsBuild portal, picking up skills such as networking, web development, and cloud application development.

"The internship program and SkillsBuild Innovation camp, as part of the Advanced Diploma and SkillsBuild initiative, was an eye-opener for my friends and me. It helped me tremendously in improving my technical knowledge, gaining exposure to business environments, and getting me ready for the industry. And most importantly, it helped me land a job," said a smiling **Chandra Shekar**.

He is now working as a Quality Analyst in a reputed technology company, specializing in the Telecom domain. Several other students from the batch have also secured jobs.



"India has a huge demographic dividend, and we need to capitalize on it by developing the skilled workforce for the future. Each of us can play a role in this journey and help aspiring students like Chandra Shekar build a promising career and contribute to the development of this country," said **Amit Singh**.

Watch Chandra Shekar share his journey.

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