

# Turning Ideas into Impact

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*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.*

Hrishikesh Bhandari and Sanket Marathe, students of Dr. K. B. Hedgewar School, Goa, are best of friends. They studied together in this school since class VIII. The two teenagers are fascinated by technology and dream of becoming successful entrepreneurs.

Last year, they launched a start-up, The Unknown X, to develop AI-based solutions for enterprises. The duo soon realized that they need more in-depth technical knowledge and business know-how to run a start-up. They remained focussed on their entrepreneurial aspirations and continued to look for opportunities to hone their skills.



## Leap forward

Their perseverance paid off soon. Hrishikesh and Sanket received an opportunity to do an internship at IBM. NITI Aayog and IBM had introduced a first-of-its-kind internship program for students selected by Atal Innovation Mission. The internship takes select students and teachers from Atal Tinkering Labs from across the country.

As part of the program, the students were not only trained in core technology areas like AI, Internet-of-Things, cyber security, cloud, and blockchain, but also on the fundamentals of running a business.

*“The internship helped us hone our technical knowledge, provided industry knowledge, and equipped us with the basic knowledge of running a business. We realized how concepts like design thinking are critical to understand customer behavior and succeed in today’s environment,”* said Sanket.

IBM mentors, Sreekanth Kakaraparthi, Executive Architect - Global System Integrators Lab and Vijay Kumar, Program Director, Global System Integrators Lab from India Software Labs worked closely with the students and were excited to see their passion and commitment.

*“It’s amazing to witness the focus and drive among these kids. They are willing to walk the extra mile to ensure*

*that their dream is fulfilled. The passion in them is infectious,” said Sreekanth.*

## **Applying technology for the societal impact**

Hrishikesh and Sanket were eager to apply their learnings from the internship and they saw an opportunity when the world was hit by the pandemic. For the duo, it was about leveraging technology to benefit the society at large.

*“We always wanted to use technology for the benefits of people around us and the pandemic was the high time for us*

*to get into action. It was important that people get the right information on the spread of COVID-19 in a timely manner,” said Hrishikesh.*

Hrishikesh and Sanket teamed up with three of their friends and developed an app called [coronatracker.in](https://coronatracker.in) to provide information related to the pandemic. It was one of the earliest apps to feature real-time information on the proximity of COVID-19 positive patients.

The app is currently being used by more than 18 million people from around the world, with steady growth in the number of users. They also used the app to raise funds to support the needy during the pandemic. Extending their support to those whose jobs may have been impacted due to the pandemic, they collaborated with a renowned career portal to provide job options to the app users.

## **From Mentee to Mentor**

Hrishikesh and Sanket continue to champion the use of technology by sharing their learnings and experiences with a larger larger community. They recently mentored students from their school to develop an app to track grocers, which gained more than 23,000 users overnight.

*“It’s heartening to know that students like Hrishikesh and Sanket are extending their learning and knowledge to a wider audience. We need all hands on the deck to fight against some of the biggest challenges the world faces today. We wish Hrishikesh and Sanket a great success in their endeavors,” said Vijay.*

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To know how IBM India and NITI Aayog co-designed the First-of-its-Kind Internship Program to

make students industry-ready, [click here](#).

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