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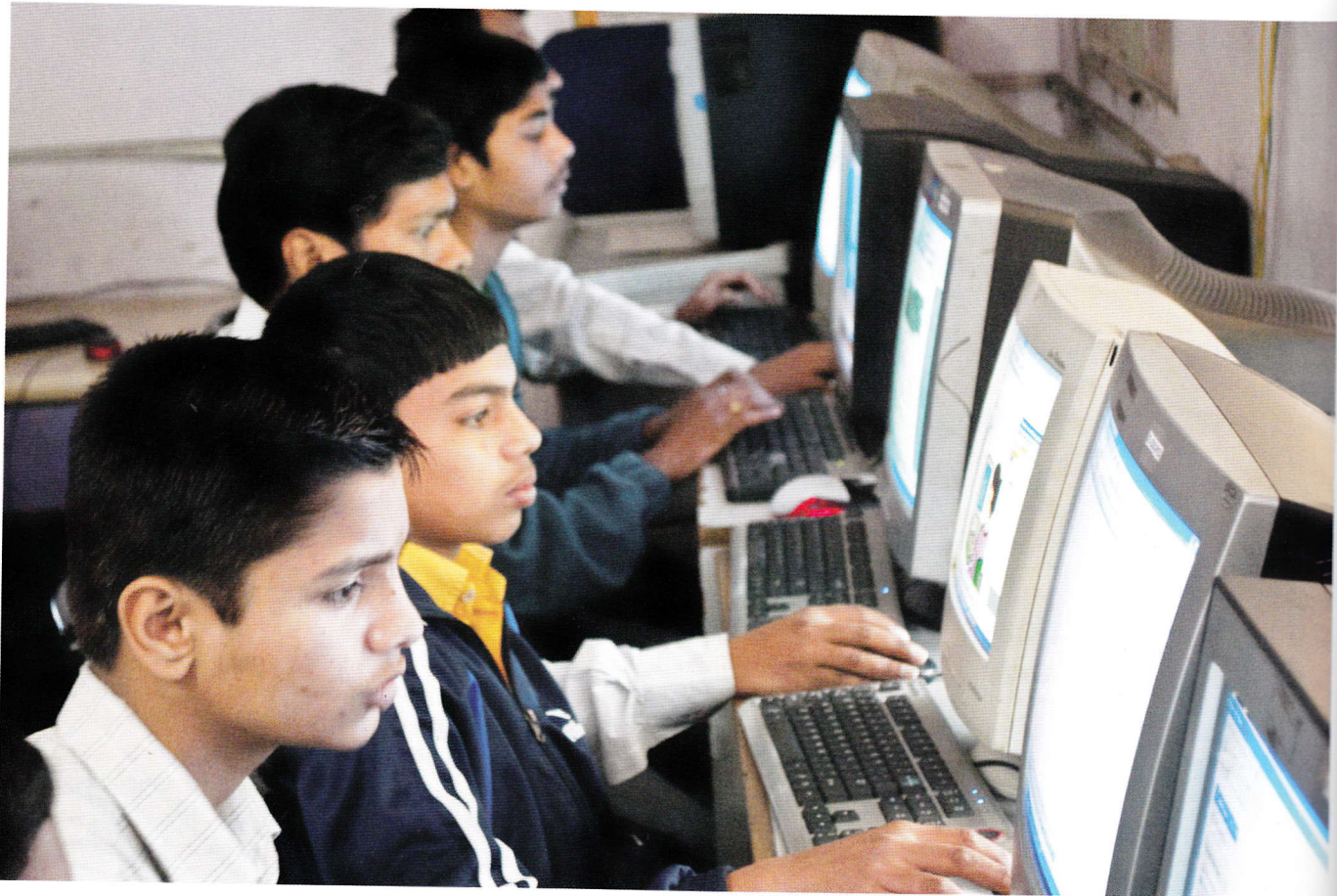
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Helping Corporates Be Socially Responsible

While some companies firmly believe in their mission of promoting Corporate Social Responsibility, others adopt CSR to simply enhance their company image. We decided to look at the other side of the coin and talked to ETASHA, an NGO that ties up with corporates for their CSR initiatives.



ETASHA Society is a non-profit organisation, based in Delhi, that provides career guidance, skills training and placement to young people from disadvantaged communities in India. The NGO is frequently approached by corporates who want to do their bit for society by engaging ETASHA as part of their corporate social responsibility programme.

ETASHA believes that a well-defined CSR strategy can make the difference between a CSR programme that fails or succeeds. They feel that the CSR strategy should align with the company's business objectives and reflect the culture and values of the company. It should also make sense to the employees, especially if they are contributing financially or with their time and skills – this is crucial in getting staff buy-in. The outputs and

objectives of the CSR programme should be measurable and the company, its staff and partners should all be clear about their roles and expectations.

Founded in 2006, ETASHA has had enough experience to be able to differentiate between companies that undertake CSR because they have a genuine desire to contribute to their cause and those who do it solely as part of their communications strategy.

The former tend to have longer-term strategies and view their partners as equal partners in the business, whereas the latter are mainly concerned with completing the programme.

The organization researches companies to understand and select those whose objectives or policies align with the NGO's work in skill development and employability. The team's communication strategy includes regular active engagement with potential partners – through their website, newsletter, social media sites, and their active participation in conferences and exhibitions and seminars. ETASHA recently exhibited at NGO India and CSR Live Week, where it was crucial that they had on hand experienced well-informed staff that could engage corporates in a meaningful way.

The NGO feels that when a corporate undertakes CSR initiatives, it can have multiple advantages for the organisation. A company is likely to attract more job candidates and investors because of its CSR commitments. Its brand worth also rises in eyes of the customers who would prefer spending their money on ethical and responsible companies. CSR initiatives may also offset market negativity that other business activities of the organization may have incurred, such as environment damage.

Sometimes, there are regulatory requirements, such as in certain parts of India, where an organisation has to invest in a local community to operate effectively in that region.

The current CSR initiatives of ETASHA include work with Accenture, which funds some of its vocational programmes and provides volunteers through their Skills To Succeed Programme. ETASHA has an employability program for 600 girls funded by Sheela Foam and works with Nippon Paints to source, select and provide soft-skills training for colour matchers to join their plant in Noida.

ETASHA is excited to add a new programme to its CSR portfolio. It is beginning a project with Rinox Kauffman, who design and manufacture stainless steel architectural products. ETASHA and Rinox will together train employees sourced from local



ETASHA'S SIX OPERATING MODELS

1. ETASHA team engages with local youth and their families, community and religious leaders as well as other NGOs through their Career Development Centres (CDCs) in slum communities in south Delhi.
2. The NGO works with students of other vocational training providers to improve their employability skills through their programmes and also manage students' placement.
3. The team partners with other NGOs to train youth in their communities.
4. ETASHA open temporary "satellite centres" in local areas contiguous with but not close enough to their CDCs, to run programs accessible to local youth.
5. The team works with industry to identify their specialised skill requirements and to design and deliver joint programmes for youth recruited from low socio-economic communities.
6. The NGO is in the process of setting up the ETASHA – IGNOU Community College, offering IGNOU-accredited diplomas and certificates.

communities for employment with Rinox. All beneficiaries will be from weak socio-economic communities. This will be a perfect example of a win-win situation for a corporate. On the one hand, Rinox will invest in local communities, and train and make young people employable. On the other, it will benefit from the recruitment of trained manpower.

ETASHA has already been successful in training and placing disadvantaged young people into work across a variety of sectors. When asked about their future plans, the NGO said that they intend to increase the number of programmes they offer, increase their reach across other states and achieve long-term sustainability.

Quick Facts

- ETASHA was borne out of the belief that by helping young people develop new skills, by giving them access to relevant vocational training and connecting them with employers, we enable them to take control of their own careers and lives.
- ETASHA believes that skills training facilitates the entry of the disadvantaged into the organised sector and, therefore, into mainstream society, while also providing much needed skilled manpower to growing sectors of the economy.
- ETASHA's trainees are mainly from low-income families in slum and slum resettlement colonies, rural agricultural families and small vendors and service providers in the unorganised sector. Many are government school drop-outs, or want to work to support their families while continuing education.
- All trainees looking to work must be 18 at the time of completing a programme and be at least 10th pass.
- Many of ETASHA's successful vocational trainees begin careers at salaries higher than the combined incomes of their families.
- ETASHA believes that skills acquisition must be matched with confidence building and the development of inter- and intra-personal skills that will assist young people to interact successfully with people from all sections of society. 