

Taking the Express route

What makes ACS Foundation scholarship students such great candidates for employment? In the experience of Corporate Express Australia, our students are switched on, eager to learn and add tremendous value.

Corporate Express is partnering with the ACS Foundation to expand its professional services team with talented young ICT students. While best known as a single source supplier of business essentials such as office products and consumables, Corporate Express also operates a successful IT solutions business, supporting SME and corporate clients with a wide range of professional services encompassing server consolidation, connectivity, lifecycle management, data storage, recovery and more.

It's here that two ACS Foundation students, Chris Papallo and Ben Czambol, have gained invaluable practical experience while establishing themselves as outstanding young professionals.

Corporate Express's IT Solutions national business unit manager, Ravi Krishnan, has been an ACS member for over 12 years. In 2006, he signed up for the ACS Professional Partner Program, which helps organisations to manage and develop their ICT professionals.

"As part of this program, we were invited to sponsor a candidate through the ACS Foundation, which I was happy to do," he said. "We worked with the Foundation to identify the right candidate and Chris Papallo joined us on a 12-month internship in April 2007."

Chris, who had completed his second year of a Computer Science degree at Macquarie University, spent several weeks in Corporate Express's configuration centre before moving into subsequent roles in service coordination and programming.

"We knew all along that Chris's focus was programming and even as an intern he wrote some great applications and scripts to improve the way we operate. He really added lots of value," said Ravi.

One application Chris developed significantly increased the level of information Corporate Express tracks on customer orders and made it available across the organisation.

"Instead of just saying an order was picked and packed, we can now see who was involved, the status of the order and more. This has improved accountability and communication within the organisation, saved a lot of time and provided greater insight into the cost of different tasks," Chris said. "Being able to see an opportunity where I could improve the current processes made me want to create a solution and I had the support of the company in doing that."



ACS Foundation scholarship students Ben Czambol and Christopher Papallo impressed at Corporate Express.

After successfully completing his internship early last year, Chris was offered full time employment with Corporate Express and is finishing his degree part time.

"Chris is now working as part of our SAP programming team, doing exactly what he wants to do and using his skills, passion and strengths to their best extent," said Krishnan.

For Chris, the decision to apply for an ACS Foundation scholarship has opened new doors.

"At first I was concerned about slowing down my degree, but I've since realised that taking up the ACS Foundation scholarship was one of the best decisions I've ever made," he said. "I've learned so much through working with Corporate Express. It's a completely different atmosphere from the theoretical culture at university and you have to consider a much wider range of issues - from HR to accounting and finance - before you present a solution.

"My role as service coordinator was really challenging. I learned how to push my limits and really grew in confidence. It was great to be offered a choice of three roles with Corporate Express when my internship finished and I'm now one of the company's key people supporting our SAP systems," he said.

After such a successful experience with Chris, Corporate Express was keen to try again and Ben Czambol became its second ACS Foundation scholarship intern last August. Originally from Poland, Ben has worked as a systems engineer with Cap Gemini in the UK and is part way through a Masters of Information Technology at UTS.

"I'm currently working as a senior systems engineer with Corporate Express, doing project work for IT infrastructure implementations, desktop rollouts and server utilisations," he said.

"Ben is gaining skills and experience as a fully fledged engineer, spending two or three days at a time at customer sites and we're getting fantastic feedback about him. We couldn't be happier," said Krishnan.

While both Chris and Ben are based in NSW, Krishnan said Corporate Express is currently looking for a worthy scholarship candidate in Adelaide and plans to also extend its involvement in the ACS Foundation scheme this year to other states.

"I used to work with airline crews and switched to IT about 13 years ago, so I know how difficult it can be to get that first job. Everyone wants someone with experience. I absolutely recommend this approach and we will continue to work with the ACS Foundation to promote candidates with the skills we need and take them on board," he said. ♦