



REAPING THE REWARDS OF VOLUNTEERING

CISCO NETWORKING ACADEMY PROGRAM

SUCCESS STORY

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Kevin Poh
Cisco Networking Academy Program
Graduate

We've all heard it before... "I'm sorry we are looking for experienced applicants". That's great, but you might well ask; *how do I get professional experience, when no-one is willing to give me a go?* Now more than ever we live in an increasingly competitive work environment, and as a graduate trying to find that ideal work situation, it can be extremely difficult to get that first break into the IT industry.

One way of obtaining industry experience is offering your skills as a volunteer. It is important to remember that whilst recruiters and employers alike have a preference for taking on "experienced hires", volunteering is a great way to gain that elusive practical work experience. Voluntary work gives you the ability to demonstrate your practical abilities and your communication skills in the work place for an interview and ultimately a job offer.

An Interview with a Monash IT Networking Academy Program Graduate at Urban Seed, Australia

Kevin Poh graduated in January 2006 with a Bachelor of Computing at Monash University in Australia. As part of his Bachelor Degree, Kevin completed the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) qualifications through the Cisco Networking Academy Program. On completion of his course, Kevin was confident that he knew he had great "hands on" experience with Cisco Products and technology due to the huge practical component of the program. He was however conscious that he had to get some "real life" industry experience to make it relevant for potential employers.

What gave you the idea to work as a volunteer?

"I heard about a voluntary work opportunity with Urban Seed, a not-for-profit welfare agency, through the Networking Academy Program and the Course Manager at Monash IT, Melbourne. I recognized this as a fantastic opportunity for me to gain some valuable skills for the work place."



SUCCESS STORY

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What do you do at Urban Seed?

“Urban Seed is an incredibly rewarding place to work - I have been put on the 'spot' many times to solve my colleagues' questions and offer some expertise. I solve problems from technical networking issues right through to general IT enquiries on everything and anything,” Kevin stated. “I was confident in my networking skills through my studies, but working forced me to constantly look into problems and research them to come up with the right solution.”

As well as learning on the job, Kevin has seen that Urban Seed has given him a valuable experience in dealing with people. “Not everyone knows that you are a volunteer, and I am expected to perform like a regular employee. I am accountable to the organisation and I must abide by the companies policies and regulations. It's great in understanding team work and has made me more confident in my professional communication skills.”

Kevin supplements his voluntary IT work with paid employment as a part time assistant at Monash IT's training rooms. After six months working as a volunteer he is ready now to start in a full time position.

What advice would you give other students on volunteer work?

“Don't just look at paid employment, look at the options that volunteer work can give you, and treat it like you would any other regular job. Make sure once you give the organisation a commitment, that you keep it.”

“My lecturer has asked me to share my experience with others, and I hope that they may gain as much as I have through organisations like Urban Seed. It's great to work as part of a team and be able to share my knowledge.”

MAKING A SUCCESS OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Volunteering is a commitment where you can contribute to an organization and learn from it. It can provide you with:

- **Confidence in your practical skills**
- **Improve your professional communication**
- **Demonstrate your work ethic and reliability**

To search for volunteer work, internships and jobs, visit the Cisco Networking Academy job site today!

www.cisco.com/go/acadgrad/monster