

Cross Fields Started Workshop For Creating BOP Business

Panasonic, Benesse and Hitachi Solutions participated in the Workshop



Cross Fields has started a workshop project for creating the ideas of BOP business plans. This workshop invites the staff of NPOs as special lecturers with the solid experience and knowledge of real-life in the emerging countries. The workshop will last for several months. During the workshop, one team consisting of four to five employees work together to create business plans, which manifest solutions to the social problems in the BOP. Panasonic Corporation, Benesse Corporation and Hitachi Solutions, Ltd. held the workshop this year and approximately fifty people from different departments and at various ages have participated in the project.

※ BOP is the abbreviation of the Base of the Economic Pyramid and defines those who are in the low-income class who earn less than 3,000 dollars in a year and business targeting people in BOP is called BOP business. The number of people in BOP is about four billion and they consist of 70% of the world population.

The workshop is held for roughly three months and there are three sessions. The first lecturer, who is one of the NPO staffs, presents an overview towards the social problems in the emerging countries and participants subsequently develop business ideas based on these problems. Throughout the three sessions, participants continue to work as a team and spend time on preparing for a final presentation. In addition, during the workshop, there are opportunities to interview the lecturers so that they can grasp the image of the real situations in the emerging countries while creating ideas.

Cross Fields send corporate volunteers to the NGO/NPOs and public administrations in the emerging countries as its main business. This is called “International Corporate Volunteering Program”, or “Ryushoku” in Japanese, which provides opportunities for corporate employees to utilize their professional skills at the host organizations to address social challenges.

This workshop aims to increase the number of people who are interested in the BOP business and collaboration with NPOs in the emerging countries so that they would, together with the participants of the “International Corporate Volunteering Program”, initiate a movement to

develop businesses seeking to solve social problems.

Each company that participates in the workshop aims to provide their employees with opportunities 1) to understand the current situation of the people in the BOP at the local level and learn the approaches to develop sustainable projects combating social problems, 2) to consider the projects that do not only provide benefits in the short term but also in the long term, and 3) to build a network and utilize the resources beyond departments and organizations.

Panasonic Corporation, which introduced the International Corporate Volunteering Program for the first time in Japan, invited a representative of an NGO active in the rural area of Cambodia as a guest speaker to the workshop. Unique ideas to solve the social problems faced by those in the BOP were proposed by the participants, such as providing micro electric energies to the houses with no electricity and gas, and controlling cold energy when producing and storing fermentation foods. Moreover, the eighty percent of the participants answered that this workshop experience would be useful for everyday business. Due to a success of the first workshop, Panasonic Corporation decided to hold the second at the end of 2012.

Benesse Corporation held the workshop from July to October in 2012, which was initiated mainly by young employees who utilized the company's system to subsidize programs for human resource development, and invited the representative of an educational NPO from Indonesia. Participants from Benesse Corporation created several business ideas to solve the problems of the rural area in Indonesia. One of the business plans that were developed during the workshop won a business idea competition organized by Benesse Corporation.

Hitachi Solutions, Ltd. held the workshop, from September 2012, and invited the representative of an NPO working in the rural area of Cambodia. The first session introduced the social issues in Cambodia and the second session followed with a midterm presentation of business ideas. Several ideas to solve educational problems in the emerging countries were created by utilizing their professional IT skills.

Organization Profile

Organization Name	CROSS FIELDS
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