Capgemini: driving digital inclusion through corporate volunteering

In a nutshell

For Capgemini, a global leader in digital technology and transformation, digital inclusion – ensuring everyone has access to the benefits of the online world – is a cornerstone of their corporate social responsibility programme. In 2020 they began working with Digital Unite to craft a programme to encourage employees to become Digital Champions, able to help those around them to embrace digital technology. The resulting platform, Inspire, uses a bite-sized, nudge approach to raise awareness about digital exclusion and its impacts. This boosts employees' confidence in being able to help and galvanises them to pledge to take action. The programme has already motivated hundreds of staff, including many who had never volunteered before, to give vital support to those at risk of being left behind by the digital world, including family, friends and local communities.

Recognising the challenge

> "We are a technology company; we help large organisations to deliver digital transformation So we feel a strong social responsibility to ensure no one in society is left behind in this move to digital automation." Sally Caughey, Head of Digital Inclusion, Capgemini UK

At Capgemini, supporting people's digital skills is one of the main pillars of their corporate responsibility agenda. According to Digital Inclusion Manager Bethan Richmond: "We had an existing programme with partners 'Code Your Future' to change the lives of marginalised individuals who were unable to gain traction in the job market. However, we also understood the wider challenge, starkly revealed by the pandemic, where a lack of basic digital skills causes a fundamental barrier to the benefits of online services including health, finance and education, not to mention the simplest act of remaining connected to family and friends."

There was also an operational driver for Capgemini. "We made a pledge in 2020 to deliver over 100,000 hours of volunteering worldwide" says Alex Meuniere, Engagement Director for Cloud Services. "This ambitious target made us look around to see how we could make our contribution here in the UK with maximum impact."

This led Capgemini to Digital Unite, and to the genesis of the Inspire platform.

Planning a solution

> "We needed an offer that provided a framework for volunteers to become effective Digital Champions and a simple and quick set of steps to kick-start our employees on their volunteer Digital Champion journey" Bethan

Capgemini knew that they needed a solution that could scale, and that would enthuse employees to volunteer. And the engagement needed to be instant, as Inspire project manager Toby Leonard points out: "Our employees are really busy, they have a lot of demands on their time, so we have to get people's attention immediately."

According to Sally, there was a strong cultural fit between Capgemini and Digital Unite. Both organisations are delivery-focused and interested in impacts on the ground. "Digital Unite helped us to shape the work, to understand the details of the issue, the facts about digital inclusion, and to envision a practical way in which we could use our volunteer resource to help."

Both organisations also have a flexible and learning-centred approach: 'test learn iterate' has been the mantra for the development of Inspire, alongside a partnership approach. Alex sees this as an important part of the successful recipe: "While we are technically a client for Digital Unite we work like partners. They are not just delivering a solution, they got to know us and helped us shape the model and develop a platform that suits our needs."

Capgemini is a large, and sponsors within individual business units are essential to make the case for employee volunteering. Alex and the Cloud Services unit provided the test bed for the roll-out of Inspire, and a series of iterations resulted in a platform offering mobile-enabled, bite-size e-learning modules, introducing digital inclusion and the importance of digital skills. The learner journey culminates in a pledge, where participants make a commitment to help someone improve their digital capability.

While the initial planning of the programme predated the pandemic, the 2020 lockdown gave a huge an added urgency and impetus to the rollout.

Rolling out the programme

Recruitment and training

Staff are introduced to the Inspire programme through in-house 'Digiday' events. The Capgemini Digital Inclusion team present the programme to a group of employees, ranging from 20 to 100, usually from the same team or business unit. Existing Digital Champions talk about their role and what it means to them, and a senior manager talks about the importance of the programme in the context of Capgemini. Everyone in the group then registers on the Inspire platform and goes through the learning modules, with the Digital Inclusion team on hand to answer questions. The group reconvenes to discuss learnings and share the pledges participants have made. The whole event takes less than two hours.

"The Digidays are key to making this project work" says Sally. "Going through the Inspire modules together builds momentum and means that from the start there is a sense of community, employees working together on a common social cause. And the Inspire training doesn't just build awareness but also, crucially, employees realise they already have the skills to make a difference straight away."

Capgemini also work hard to consolidate and sustain the community of Digital Champions through their Digital Inclusion Ambassadors Network (DIAN). Here the volunteers exchange ideas and discuss what they have done, as well as accessing Digital Unite's extensive bank of resources to help champions in their role.

Volunteer activities

Helping family

Participant pledges of action take a variety of forms. A very common pledge in recent months – super-charged by the pandemic – is to help family members. Sam Smith, a recent starter at Capgemini, pledged to help her 12-year-old niece Phoebe:

> "Phoebe started secondary school in lockdown. I knew she would need help with her digital skills, and her Mum was busy adjusting to the pandemic. So I took on helping Phoebe two evenings a week. We chose a suitable laptop, and then worked on how to join online lessons, using MS Teams, sending messages to her teachers, using email, navigating all the websites she has to use to do her homework. She picked it up really quickly."

Phoebe told us that Sam had helped her and her friends make a difficult transition to online learning:

> "I had just started a new school and then at a random time they said everyone had to go home and work online. They started throwing all this online stuff at me, it all felt a bit much. Mum had just bought me my first computer and I hadn't done anything on it before. The teachers don't have time to help us, they are so busy preparing lessons. Then my Auntie Sam taught me how to use Teams, and how to email the teachers, how manage the passwords to all the different sites the teachers were sending us. My friends found it hard too. Sometimes we have calls to help each other out, and Sam joins, we sort out the online homework together."

Gail Watson, Capgemini programme manager, wanted to help her mother to stay connected with her children when lockdown started:

> "I had seen how much my mum had struggled to maintain her social interactions, especially when her family weren't able to visit her, she felt very very alone. Then I saw we were running this Inspire programme corporately, so I thought well I will put my money where my mouth is and do something practical to help Mum.
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> She already had WiFi, so I bought her an iPad, set it up myself at home and posted it to her. At first I tried to go too fast! Then I learned to slow down and express things in my Mum's terms, not computer words. I needed to convince my Mum that being able to use Messenger would be useful. My sister suggested that we use Messenger to do a crossword together every Sunday, my Mum likes crosswords. That was a really good motivator – she got really enthusiastic about using the iPad. Now we are at the stage where she will call us."

Doris, Gail's Mum told us that she didn't initially want to go online as she did not see the point:

> "I didn't have any digital skills, I use the phone a lot and I like seeing people face to face. During Covid Gail wanted to set me up with an iPad but I was not really into it. But then Gail taught me how to use the iPad to do a videocall with them. Now I can see my daughters which is wonderful, we all live in different places around the country, so it brings them closer to me."

Application consultant Jamie Gilbart was already helping his dad with digital skills when the Inspire programme launched:

> "The Inspire course helped me understand the importance of good digital skills for everyone. The pledge was a good way to make what I was already doing official. My Dad is an auditor and during Covid he had to do much of his work online, including setting up spreadsheets and doing auto-calculations. He is not very computer savvy, he has not been exposed to computer technology in the same way I have, so he needed help. I passed on what I have learnt at Capgemini. He can do his work better and more easily now, and his Excel skills will help with some qualifications he is doing. It is very rewarding to see the difference my help has made."

Mark, Jamie's dad, told us:

> "I already knew my way around a computer, but I did not have the specific skills for a new role which involved doing calculations using Excel. Jamie assisted me with new functions on Excel and using my iPad to make my workspace more efficient. If I had done it myself using trial and error it would have taken a lot longer. If you are having difficulties with technology, having someone to guide you makes the process much easier."

Helping in local communities

Inspire participants are also connecting with local community charities to promote digital inclusion. One employee already had links with a local employment support charity. A group of Capgemini champions got together to create a session showing someone who had never used MS Teams before how to attend a job interview online. Another champion helped a tradesman friend of his who does not speak good English to use social media to advertise for work. He went from struggling to find customers to being booked up months ahead.

The impacts

The numbers

In its first nine months of the Inspire programme:
- More than 600 Capgemini employees have taken part
- More than 1750 Inspire modules have been completed
- More than 350 hours of employee learning have been logged
- More than 250 employees have pledged to take action to support digital inclusion

The outcomes

The Inspire programme has evidenced impact at three levels: organisational, employee and beneficiary.

For Capgemini as an **organisation**, the Inspire initiative has spread the message about corporate digital responsibility across the company: "We have got the message out that digital exclusion is a big problem, that we as a technology company have a responsibility in this area, and that you don't need to be a tech person to make a difference" says Sally.

Furthermore, adds Sally, Inspire has had an amplifying effect on existing volunteering: "Inspire has surfaced pre-existing digital championing by our employees which we would not have known about, and it has meant that staff who were already volunteering have added digital championing to their existing activities. And the remote delivery model means we can now offer the service across the whole country, including rural areas, which we could not do before."

Operationally, Inspire has glued together Capgemini efforts, according to Inspire project manager Toby, creating a community feeling and giving structure and focus. Bethan has seen Inspire widen the overall corporate social responsibility offer at Capgemini: "We can now support the whole spectrum of skills, from helping someone turn on a device for the first time to training someone in full stack coding."

For Capgemini **employees**, Inspire impacts have been tangible and various. Digital Unite's extensive data on learning impact shows marked increases in knowledge about digital exclusion and its impacts, and the importance of digital skills. Participants also report feeling more confident about being able to take action themselves to support someone's digital skills.

> "I learned a lot from the Inspire courses and they showed me how I could support not just my family but others too. My skills were good before but Inspire has improved them. It's shown me that just because it's easy to me doesn't mean it is easy to others. It's allowed me to take more credit for the work I do, so it has helped build my confidence as well." Sam

> "Through Inspire I understand now the importance of everyone having good digital skills in today's society. I had not thought of myself as an Inspirer and had not thought about helping someone like this before. But I do feel I have a new string to my bow now." Jamie

Capgemini managers also report skills and confidence boosts associated with Inspire. "We have noticed the Inspire programme is boosting transferable skills" says Bethan. "When a champion helps someone improve their skills, the act of doing that improves a variety of business transferable skills, including their own communication skills, active listening skills, coaching skills and ability to work with people from a range of backgrounds. A great majority of our volunteers are managing the performance of people in their teams, and being a Digital Champion helps them to be a more effective manager."

"Personal collateral is very important in Capgemini" says Sally, "recognition and accolades are a valuable currency and being a Digital Champion contributes to that."

For the champions, the most salient impact is the 'feelgood' factor of helping others:

> "I feel super-enthusiastic about every success my Mum has had with being online. I'd like to do more as a Digital Champion in my local area as I have seen how successful it can be." Gail

> "I found helping my dad very rewarding. Seeing the difference my help has given him and that he can do his work better is really satisfying." Jamie

For the **beneficiaries** of the support the Digital Champions give, the impacts can be huge:

> "I feel more confident. When we went back to school there was an awards ceremony and I got an award for being the best student because I did all my work and got good grades for it and could submit it all online. Without Sam's help, teaching me to do Teams, I don't think I would have got that award." Phoebe, Sam's niece

"My workload feels easier and I feel more comfortable taking on certain jobs, plus I have the foundations to learn more for myself." Mark, Jamie's dad

"I didn't think about [digital] before but now I would not be without my tablet. I can see my family and share lots of things with them online, it's been a wonderful way of connecting." Doris, Gail's mum

The lessons learned

A number of key factors have contributed to the success of Capgemini's Inspire programme:

1. Asking the 'so what' question. Capgemini shifted their focus from demonstrating employee engagement with volunteering, to demonstrating the social impact of the volunteering
2. Getting sponsors across the organisation. "In our business the key is to get a sponsor in each unit who will advocate for the programme" (Sally)
3. Supporting the volunteer. "We knew we needed an offer which gave our employees a structure to their activities, and Inspire does this" (Bethan)
4. Starting with existing skills. "The Inspire programme delivers on a beautifully simple proposition: 'There is a problem > You already have the skills to help > Here is something you can do right away'" (Bethan)
5. Keeping it short. Inspire training is bite-sized and takes less than an hour to work through, meaning it is an achievable task for employees with a lot of pressing demands on their time. "It's perfect. I signed up and did the Inspire course and the pledge the same day." (Sam)
6. Taking a community approach. The Digidays approach means initial training is done in a supportive group context; then a dedicated network for champions sustains engagement in a common social cause.
7. Being data driven. "We are a results and data driven organisation. Digital Unite make the reporting really easy, I can see who has done what learning and understand where to follow up." (Toby)
8. Celebrating achievements. "We are building up a library of videos of our champions talking about how they have been helping people. This is a win-win for the champion and for us, and helps us to inspire more of our people to be digital champions." (Sally)
9. Aiming for scalability. "Now that we have a structured engagement programme that can scale, and a support offer which can be done remotely, we can open up to communities across the UK." (Sally)

Alex sums up the Capgemini experience with Digital Unite's Inspire programme:

"We always have to justify any spending at Capgemini, and it can be tough to get agreement from other parts of the business. But when we showed colleagues what we have achieved with Inspire it took two minutes to get the budget signed off. Everyone across the business can see it's working – we are tackling the right problem in the right way."

Reflecting on the Inspire programme, Emma Weston, Digital Unite Chief Executive, says

"Inspire is a child of the pandemic and what a first year she's had! We've created and embedded a whole Inspire ecosystem within Capgemini. It supports the complete journey from getting new employee sign-ups through to sustaining their learning and interest, signposting them on to other digital skills opportunities, measuring impact, creating Inspire Advocates with each business unit as flag wavers – it's all in place."

Looking ahead

Emma from Digital Unite is excited about what the future holds:

> "We are very excited about the future. First, we have the opportunity to really leverage into year two, and that might include to other countries – why not?! – into the supply chain, and also into the business' partnership and stakeholder networks. Second, we'll be using Capgemini's brilliant example to inspire other corporates, to help them be at the front of a new corporate digital responsibility vanguard. Everyone can make a digital skills difference and every employer has a role to play. That feels an important, hopeful and energising thing to be part of."

And from the Capgemini perspective, Sally envisions digital inclusion and the sharing of digital skills becoming embedded throughout the organisation:

> "I would like Inspire to become 'business as usual' for us, so that sharing digital skills is part of Capgemini's DNA. Almost every business I talk to is looking for digital skills to help them build their business of this future, so this is truly something that everyone has a stake in."

Many thanks to the following people for contributing their time and insights for this case study:
The Capgemini managers: Sally Caughey, Alex Meuniere, Bethan Richmond, Toby Leonard
The Capgemini volunteer Digital Champions: Jamie Gilbart, Sam Smith, Gail Watson
The learners: Mark (Jamie's Dad), Phoebe (Sam's niece) and Doris (Gail's Mum).