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STUDENTS SOLVING REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS

Companies that want to shape the future should focus on technological leadership and digitalization to be able to promptly react to any market demands and changes. It is digitalization that has mitigated the effects of the pandemic on business and helped stabilize the labor market. However, technology also plays a significant role in education. It has enabled us to keep and even expand interactions with students.

A few years ago, my colleagues and I started discussing how to reach college and university students. We used to attend different events where we had just a few minutes to introduce young people to what it is like to work at Accenture. While this format offers an interesting opportunity to present some of the benefits that your company offers, you still have extremely limited time. Since we can talk about technology for hours and we enjoy anything that is new, we decided to share our vision with students directly on the campus.

CAMPUS LAB CREATES JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

The result of our joint efforts was the opening of the Campus Lab at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology in Bratislava. In recent years, the market situation has changed dramatically and the demand for technical positions is unparalleled. However, gaining experience while studying can be challenging. This is where the Campus Lab fills the gap. For students at the faculty, as well as neighboring universities, it creates a place to attend spectacular lectures, workshops, start networking or just come to play Xbox and simply chat with friends. But it is not just a branded classroom. Our goal is to enable students to gain experience

while they are still studying by making them part of a team of experts from our Accenture Advanced Technology Center in Bratislava.

> **The Campus Lab created a platform that showed how academic knowledge can be used in business practice.**

How do you organize a lecture that students volunteer to come to during their busy schedule at school? In the end, the answer turned out to be much simpler than we had thought. We created so-called Brown Bag Tuesdays. During lunch time, students had the opportunity to join our lectures on technologically appealing topics including artificial intelligence, video analytics, automated services, and augmented reality. The audience could engage in discussions with experienced technology architects who delivered dozens of remarkable solutions to clients. The Campus Lab created a platform that showed how academic knowledge

can be used in business practice. What I perceive as the biggest success and achievement is that 100 students came to listen to us before the pandemic broke out and were increasingly interested in internships at Accenture. The internships were the key component of our collaboration with students. By actively involving them in real Accenture projects supervised by experienced technology professionals, they were able to gain valuable experience.

LINKING ACADEMIC RESEARCH TO BUSINESS CHALLENGES

However, it was not only students who came to our lectures. The Campus Lab also grabbed the attention of professors. We are pleased that based on this initiative we were able to establish professional cooperation with some of them. The fusion of our expertise and academic skills has been manifested in patent-pending projects.

Another activity we have been working on at the faculty has been the leadership and guidance of students' annual projects. We have carefully selected topics to reflect the current technological requirements in the market as much as possible. Students worked in teams with our technology architects, who introduced them to working in an agile environment while they discovered new tools. If during Brown Bag Tuesdays they heard from

experienced colleagues how to apply theory to practice, they also got to try it out during the annual projects.

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For our other CSR activities, we allocated a special space in the Campus Lab, which was available free of charge for non-profit organizations. We supported activities that raised awareness about the importance of women in the IT industry or

children's summer camps focused on programming.

All the positive responses and feedback the Campus Lab has generated are a strong motivation and at the same time a commitment to continue working with students online.

WE ARE STAYING TOGETHER - ONLINE

At the start of the pandemic, enterprises ignited the biggest workforce shift in living memory by sending people home and doubling down on technology solutions to keep them productive. In doing so, they have made work possible not just from home, but from anywhere. We believe the same applies to education. Students proved they are effective and reliable even though they are not physically present at the Campus Lab. The idea thus lives on even in times when physical contact is limited.
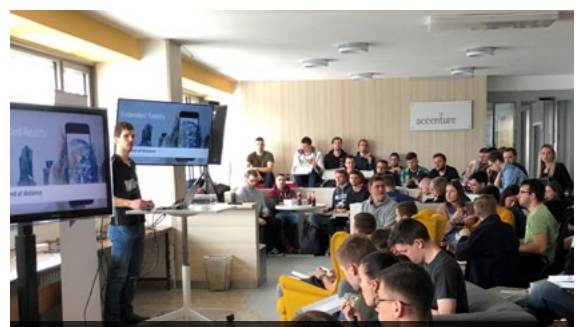
Accenture's Campus Lab at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology in Bratislava before the pandemic.