

RESPONSIBLE WITH DIVERSITY

Four Computer Systems Employers Put Strategies In Place.

BY ELAINE GIBBS

AS 2009 dawns in the shadow of an irresponsible financial industry, the trend among corporations to demonstrate social responsibility takes on added significance. Even in the tightening job market, young professionals are likely to seek signs of integrity where they plan to invest their futures. And there are such signs in the multifaceted computer industry. Major players, Hewlett-Packard (HP), IBM, Intel, and Microsoft have put one or more strategies in place over the past few years related to resource conservation, education, technology donation, or hands-on volunteer work.

Hewlett-Packard and Intel, for example, created employee green teams, says Sarah McNamara, director of business partnerships with the Northwest Earth Institute based in Portland, OR. The teams focus on community education using NWEI guidebooks. Since 2005, both corporations have been on the “Global 100

Most Sustainable Corporations in the World” list since 2005.

IBM representatives describe widespread green initiatives that apply the company’s technology, products, and services to help clients and partners reduce their impact on climate, pollution, water conservation, and supply-chain environmental management.”

Microsoft’s responsible leadership through policies and programs are supported by a foundation of responsible and ethical business practices. A spokesperson says the company helped to rebuild communities after natural disasters, and worked to create a stronger framework for human rights.

Four employees interviewed at these companies say in their experience employee diversity is handled responsibly where they work, and that being a person who is blind, deaf, or in a wheelchair hasn’t kept them from moving up, across, or spinning their wheels.



HP OPTIMIST ENHANCES WEB ACCESSIBILITY

IF THE WORST PLATITUDE IN THE WORLD IS ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING, HEWLETT-PACKARD’S WILLIAM D. TIPTON, A PROJECT MANAGER BASED IN SAN JOSE, CA, COULD BE THE FACE ON THE DARTBOARD UNDER THOSE WORDS. HE WAXES PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT HOW FULFILLING HIS LIFE BECAME AFTER HE AWOKE FROM A THREE-MONTH COMA, TOTALLY BLIND, TEN YEARS AGO.

“Before I was disabled I would go home and do stuff, but I didn’t do any community work or global collaboration to better the world in which we live,” says Tipton. “I’m extremely busy now, so it is more exciting work than I ever did back when I could see. I get to meet all kinds of exciting people.”

There’s no question that Hewlett-Packard benefits from Tipton’s new energy level, and he’s been recognized for it. In 2007 *CAREERS & the disabled* magazine named him an “Employee of the Year”.

Tipton ‘hit the ground wheeling’ when he got out of the hospital, in order to reinvent himself professionally. He quickly learned white cane mobility, and touch-typing, level-two Braille, and how to use a screen reader. His plan was to go back to his job as a customer-support networking engineer, and HP gladly supplied the screen reader. To work as efficiently as possible, Tipton wanted to incorporate a customer support application with the screen reader, however the applications weren’t compatible. That snafu led to not only the end of his job, but to a new passion to ensure no other person with a disability would have to lose his or her job because of non-standard applications.

In order for Websites or applications to work with any assistive technology, software developers must follow World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards, and that hadn’t been done with the customer support application, explains Tipton. Without skipping a beat, he started a virtual job search within the company, and found that the HP labs department were overloaded and needed some help. To get hired he wrote a professional profile that highlighted his skills and explained what he could do for the labs department. “It was slightly different from a résumé because I was already employed by HP and I just wanted to showcase my new skills because they had changed slightly from when I could see,” recalls Tipton. “They looked at that pro-



file and then hired me based on that skill.”

After one year of proving himself, he moved into another position as an information research assistant, and then into a tools integration job. That supported his goal to broaden adherence to W3C standards. “There I moved into the accessibility role and worked to help to make tools at HP more accessible to those using assistive technology, not just for people who are blind, but also for people who have mobility issues, who can’t use their hands or don’t have hands,” Tipton states. “I did that for a period, and since January 2005 I’ve been a project manager.”

At the same time, he carved out a leadership role in HP’s employee resources group. It also reaches beyond HP, giving him access to software and application developers globally, so he can work with them to ensure the ubiquity of W3C standards. Tipton praises HP’s employee resource group, saying job candidates should find out if the company that hires them has one. “If they do, they should get connected to them. That’s a giant step because at that point they can just ask any questions to the group who may have been there for many years and

know how to get that new employee what they might need,” he says.

His work with the group is an extracurricular activity at HP. “It’s included in the work I do but it’s above and beyond my job. I do it for a reason.”

Because of the W3C work the team has accomplished, more Web-based information and applications are now available via screen readers, Braille, and other assistive technology thus enhancing what people with disabilities can accomplish. “It will be much easier for them to keep their jobs, be promoted, and switch positions because of the work I started,” declares Tipton. The group is also changing some policy guidelines for tools, procedures, and employee processes to improve accessibility.

Group members can participate remotely and after hours if they wish, says Tipton. One goal is to make sure HP’s online courses can be accessed by employees who might be using assistive technology, and the HP group test pilots the course and provides feedback. To support W3C standards efforts, see Tipton’s blog <http://www.globaldialoguecenter.blogs.com/disabilities>.

FROM THE FAST LANE
INTO A GROOVE AT INTEL
AFTER TWO INCIDENTS IN WHICH
HE ACCIDENTALLY HIT TWO
EMPLOYEES WITH HIS WHEELCHAIR,
INTEL APPLICATIONS DEVELOPER
NATHAN MONGER WAS ONCE
DECLARED THE NUMBER-ONE
SAFETY HAZARD BY THE HEAD OF
BUILDING SECURITY.



NATHAN
MONGER, INTEL

He didn't want to hit anyone again, he says, so he tied a red flag to his wheelchair to make it more visible from afar. "I like to pop wheelies because it's a lot easier to turn on two wheels than

four; but that tilted the flag back and anybody behind me would have gotten hit by it, so I took it off and put bells on my wheels so people could hear me coming," he remembers "One day, I backed out of my cubicle but failed to check first, and ran into my co-worker—the deaf one," says Monger. His colleague wasn't hurt, but Monger, who works from home one day a week, says Intel responded right away when he asked for a round panoramic mirror in his cubicle. The company is very good about accommodating employees with disabilities, he says.

An eclectic thinker, Monger studied theology, massage therapy, and computer programming in his search for a career he felt would be doable with the limited use of his legs. He had been fascinated with computers since the age of 16 when his parents gave him one to keep his mind active while he recovered from the car accident that partially damaged him and his short-term memory. The trauma kept him out of high school for a semester, but Monger managed to graduate with his class and earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

At Intel, Monger's primary responsibility is writing programs, a skill he

learned for fun initially, and developed professionally at an Intel vocational rehabilitation program in 1995. "I like writing programs because it's creative," he notes. "A lot of what I program deals with different systems and how they are communicating. I deal with the program that runs the systems. In the major projects, I work on the materials systems that keep track of buying materials and of where those materials are located, how they are stored."

Monger continues, "I also deal with the purchasing process. I work in Intel's main computer system trying to keep the system intact with the bank's system as far as what payments were successfully made or which ones weren't, for example. I have a lot of space to grow at Intel, even though I have noticed after several levels up they want you to start managing," says Monger. "At first they give you programs to manage and I have several Web servers and programs I'm in charge of. And everything I've done in the past, I'm still responsible for.

"Not having a degree hinders my advancement a little bit," notes Monger. "If I was ever fired from Intel I would probably have a difficult time finding



**"Each step forward
is a success
no matter how small."**

another job except that I have Intel under my belt that might help because a lot of jobs require a bachelor's of science degree or five years experience, and I've been here 12 years.

One thing I like about Intel is it provides classes in the new languages so you can start programming in them. I still work on the servers and the programs, but if I did get raised in rank I'd start to manage entire projects and after projects it goes to team management and then the larger team management that I don't want to do."

He adds, "So far, Intel only raises you as fast as you are able.

Each year the company gives you a little harder work and if you want to take a big jump and do something complex you can."

Monger encourages young professionals to hang in, no matter what. "I personally know that things are hard in training, finding a job, and advancing in your career with any disability. But never give up. Each step forward is a success no matter how small," he concludes.

LUCK BEGAN WITH
DOT COM LAY OFF

IBM SOFTWARE ENGINEER PAUL HINZE WAS AN EXPERIENCED WEB DEVELOPER WHEN HE LOST HIS JOB DURING THE DOT COM BUST. "SO I WENT BACK TO VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION THAT HOOKED ME UP WITH A GROUP IN SANTA CLARA, CA," HE SAYS. THAT GROUP CONNECTED HIM WITH LIFT INCORPORATED, WHICH HIRES PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WITH TECHNICAL BACKGROUNDS AND CONTRACTS THEM OUT. THAT'S WHEN HIS LUCK CHANGED. HINZE GOT A JOB AS A FUNCTION TESTER CONTRACTOR FOR IBM, AND AFTER 15 MONTHS IBM OFFERED HIM A FULL-TIME POSITION, WHICH HE READILY ACCEPTED.

Hinze plans to stay in the computer field; however, that was not his first career choice. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science from Southern Illinois University, he pursued a master's degree in counseling, but changed his mind soon after.

"I had moved from Missouri to California and the new college didn't accept any of my transfer credits. I could either start over or choose something else, so I decided to go in a different direction," comments Hinze.

That took him in 1996 to Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, CA, where he earned an associate's degree in computer software development. But Hinze says it was his student internship experience that convinced him to go into Web development "I would encourage anyone to do internships even if not paid. And join any organization that gives you experience in public speaking—it's a good skill to have," he advises.

Currently Hinze works primarily as a

function tester. His job includes creating test applications and automated test cases that test the On Demand products for Information Management System, which he says many Fortune 500 Companies use to process financial transactions. "I feel fortunate to have been given the opportunity to work for IBM," says Hinze, "and come to find out the company is progressive and seeks people out of different backgrounds. IBM is a diverse company."

Hinze continues, "There are several people in my department who are also in wheelchairs, and a co-worker who has a hearing disability," he states. "There are several other people with disabilities in my immediate department. The only accommodation I needed was a workstation of a certain height, but accommodation has never been an issue as far as working at IBM."

He also likes the support structure. "IBM also encourages you to continue your education and meet with your manager to discuss your career goals," states



PAUL HINZE. IBM

Hired 30 new employees

Invested in new equipment

Built a loyal customer base

Protected the business with an emergency preparedness plan

With ready.gov
the business you've worked so hard to build can be as prepared as possible should a disaster strike. Download free, easy-to-use checklists, templates and other resources to help you develop an affordable plan. Protect your life's work—start or update your plan today.

Ad Council.org

Becoming a success is hard work. Protecting it isn't. www.ready.gov

Hinze. "It's a rewarding company in which to work. I don't feel there's any limitation on what I can achieve here. Right now I'm attempting to pursue my master's degree in software engineering and IBM has a program for that goal."

One of the job-hunting tools Hinze used to market himself was the Website he created while earning his associate's degree. It functioned as a portfolio. "I had examples of the work I had done previously and it was an up-to-date Website as far as recent technologies and discussing different aspects of computers," he remarks.

It's also beneficial to demonstrate some knowledge of Web services, explains Hinze. "Web services are applications that are available on the Web. It's like an automated way for computers to talk to each other through software. Any knowledge of COBOL applications, or of writing them, and any exposure to object-oriented programming such as C#, or Java are helpful. Learning open source software such as Eclipse is useful, too."

CASUAL & FLEXIBLE
AT MICROSOFT

TED HART, SOFTWARE

DEVELOPMENT ENGINEER IN

MICROSOFT RESEARCH, ISN'T THE ONLY EMPLOYEE ON THE REDMOND, WA, CAMPUS WHO CAN SIGN, BUT HE'S ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF ONES WHO CAN. "AS A DEAF PERSON, IT'S WONDERFUL HOW SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE ARE ABOUT TAKING A LITTLE EXTRA EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE," SAYS HART. "COMPUTERS AND WHITEBOARDS ARE EVERYWHERE, SO TYPING AND WRITING ARE READILY AVAILABLE; BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE LEARN AT LEAST A LITTLE BIT OF SIGNING, AND SOME HAVE GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD AT IT."

When Hart joined Microsoft 17 years ago, he worked on the SQL Server, and later spent several years in the natural language group. Several of his current

teammates who worked with him on SQL Server still remember the sign language he taught them. "And one of my best friends is a German woman from the NLG group who has become quite skilled at signing," he declares.



TED HART,
MICROSOFT

"Microsoft has always been accommodating of my deafness," states Hart. "I've always been able to schedule an interpreter when I need one. We have a few other people who use interpreters and we have developed a streamlined interpreter-request process with one staff member who does an amazing job coordinating requests and interpreter availability. Microsoft provides whatever tools are needed to overcome a disability to the greatest extent possible. For me, reading sign language is still quite a bit harder than hearing would be, and this means that I'm less likely to want to advance in a direction that would have me in meetings all day. But that's my own situation, not any kind of limitation in Microsoft's willingness to provide accommodation."

As a past board member of Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing group, Hart helped to start the company's Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing employee diversity group at Microsoft. In this role, Hart is part of a team that works with research groups that have developed technology; and with product groups that are interested in consuming it. The team also provides engineering services that help make the integration successful.

"It's great to work with many smart people on new technologies that make computers more useful to more and more people," he notes. "I appreciate the casual environment and flexible work arrangements. And, as a deaf person, it's wonderful how supportive people are about taking a little extra effort to communicate—computers and whiteboards

are everywhere so typing and writing are readily available, but a lot of people learn at least a little bit of signing, and some have gotten pretty good at it."

Jobseekers who want to work at Microsoft, says Hart, should keep a few things in mind. "Technical skills are always in demand," he says. Currently his group covers a broad range of projects and technologies including C++ and C#. "Beyond that, the important traits are responsibility, self-motivation, focus, the ability to learn and get things done, being able to communicate well—those remain constant no matter what the particular technologies of the moment."

Hart advises students to develop social skills that translate to professional

**"If you have a disability,
it's impressive for
people to see that it hasn't
stopped you."**

life. "Find something you are passionate about and that gives you a feeling of accomplishment," he declares. "I gained a lot from athletics." College wrestling, football, basketball, and martial arts helped him develop and maintain confidence, teamwork, and focus, even when the going got tough.

Community service is another route, adds Hart. "Many tasks can be mixed with computer activities, such as developing a Website for a nonprofit or online political work. Participating in or organizing community projects, even in non-computer areas, helps develop leadership, confidence, and teamwork that carry over into your work, as well as give you experience and a history of achievement that lets people know you can take responsibility for a job and do it well. Successfully finishing challenging projects is a great way to demonstrate this goal. If you have a disability, it's impressive for people to see that it hasn't stopped you." •