



Case Study: Networking Academies at Prisons

Brazil: Federal Institute of Pernambuco, Caruaru

Bringing Technology and Opportunity to Youth in Prison

The local government of the city of Caruaru, together with the Federal Institute of Pernambuco, has implemented a Cisco Networking Academy in the Brazilian corrections system. The program serves 14 to 18 year olds who are imprisoned on a part-time basis at the Casa da Juventude. By re-educating these students in technology and employment skills, the program helps overcome the prejudices that socially vulnerable youth face when trying to enter the job market.

For purposes of a correctional facility, Cisco Networking Academy courses can:

- Be delivered in a completely secure, offline environment, including hands-on skills practice
- Prepare inmates to earn worldwide industry-recognized certifications for their resume
- Help them obtain entry-level IT jobs after their release

During the pilot year of the program, 3 cycles of students (80 students all together) enrolled in Cisco’s “Get Connected” and “Entrepreneurship” courses. According to Francisco Neto (pictured here), Youth Manager and Instructor at the Casa da Juventude:



“The importance of having the Cisco Networking Academy in Caruaru represents an immeasurable advance in technology education propagation in our region. Our team, the organization responsible for the youth in Caruaru, must offer quality courses, with no exclusions. This has been a commitment that we have always had. Observing the result that our “Get Connected” course has had on our students, with its social and educational approach, reassures us that we are on the right path. The fact that one of our young students has been hired has brought great excitement, and gives our team the strength needed to continue with the project to bring quality education to the youth community of Caruaru.”

Other cities in the state, including Agrestina and Bezerros, have expressed interest in the program to serve this segment of their youth population. In addition, the Secretariat of Social Development of Children and Youth (SDSCJ) has requested expansion of the program to the state level, starting with

Recife, the state capital. The intention is to expand and implement the program throughout the Pernambuco state prison system.

Background

The corrections-based program was started by Manoel Neto (pictured here), a Cisco Networking Academy alumnus. His love of learning, and his desire to give back and empower others through reskilling the way that he was, has led Neto to become a Networking Academy instructor himself. Neto completed his studies at the Federal Institute of Pernambuco – ASC. Inspired by his teacher, Luciano Cabral, Neto chose to provide courses – and thus more opportunities – for youth in social vulnerability, particularly those who have limited knowledge of technology.



The Networking Academy course delivery is run in partnership with the Casa da Juventude program. The community center provides a classroom, PCs, and internet access. Cisco trains the instructors, provides the courseware, and gives ongoing tech support to help the community center meet its internal goal of serving this segment of youth. The Casa da Juventude is a state government program, which came to Caruaru through a partnership between city and state governments.

Students attend Networking Academy classes at the community center twice a week. The program also works with businesses and work agencies to help students find employment after they have completed their coursework.

The Program

The Cisco Networking Academy program is built upon an effective learning platform. This enables students to access a diversified range of quality technology courses. According to Neto, “Through this platform, we can bring new knowledge and present a new labor market to the youth community of Caruaru. It’s a great Cisco initiative.”

The program is implemented in two phases. In Phase 1, students complete the “Get Connected” course. In Phase 2, interested students can continue their studies with the “Introduction IoT” course. The best students are engaged with an employment agency to attend interviews, and find jobs that match their profile, so they can actively seek employment.

Challenges

Adapting the Networking Academy courses to meet the needs of this target group presented a number of challenges:

- **Course Delivery:** This was achieved by working with the local TV and partnerships between the municipal and state governments, making it feasible in terms of logistics and security operations.
- **Trust:** Students were wary about the re-education program as they did not know where it would lead. However, upon completion of the first class and the employment of fellow students, there was increased interest to continue the program into Phase 2.
- **Prejudice:** This often arises around youth who have been in the prison system. The credibility of the Cisco Networking Academy program, combined with the quality of the training, helps students overcome the barriers this prejudice presents when seeking employment.

- **Success Rate:** The first cycle included several students whose background suggested they would have difficulty with the course. However, with the quality of the coursework and support from the instructor, these students were able to successfully complete the class.

Success Profile

M.M. (name not included to protect the privacy of a juvenile) is a 17-year-old student of the Caruaru Networking Academy. He said, “The course was very constructive in my life. Besides Cisco giving an opportunity for teenagers who have committed illegal acts, the course showed me I could learn what was taught. An example of this was my grade at the end of the course.”

“The most important thing was that, through the Cisco Networking Academy, I signed up at the Centro de Integração Empresa-Escola (CIEE - Center for Integration of Companies-Schools).” The CIEE is a private nonprofit association that provides social assistance. Among its many programs, the CIEE helps young Brazilian students receive training, and then connects them with companies so they can join the workforce. “I interviewed, tested, and have been approved to work at the water supply company of Pernambuco.”

“This course was a great incentive to create change in my life. I am fully aware that all this will be very good for my life and my family. I thank everyone who helped me: Francisco, my family, the teachers, the educators at the House of Semiliberty (CASEM), and the Foundation of Socio-Educational Services (FUNASE). I also want to thank the CIEE, who have not seen me as a troubled teenager but as an adolescent equal to others.”

More Information

Learn how Cisco Networking Academy’s flexible learning program can support your training goals:

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