



## Microsoft – Microsoft Leap Apprenticeship Program forging new paths to tech careers



Microsoft is an American technology company with operations across the world.

Location	Size of organization	Industry	Learning stage journey
United States	10,000+ employees	Technology	Various



<b>What was the business need?</b>	Microsoft’s mission statement is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. The organization recognizes that delivering against this mission statement and serving their customers and partners globally is only possible if their workforce is sufficiently diverse in terms of race, sex and experience. Additionally, with the acceleration of digital transformation, many digital employability skills are required in an immediate term vs via a four-year higher education.
<b>What was the target group/ audience?</b>	Microsoft recognized that there is a large untapped pool of talent with some IT background, but often not a formal computer science degree or significant IT experience. These people would not be able to access traditional recruiting pathways (such as university recruitment), but nevertheless they may possess valuable skills such as problem solving, tenacity, growth mindset, and unique life and professional experiences, which make them a good potential fit for Microsoft. Additionally, the target group includes returning parents whose skills are outdated, individuals who are changing careers, or students with IT qualifications other than a traditional computer science degree.
<b>What programs have been implemented?</b>	The Microsoft Leap Apprenticeship Program (Leap) is based on recruiting these people with non-traditional career pathways - but with some background in IT (e.g. from a coding academy) - and upskilling them rapidly for a career in IT. The sixteen-week program comprises a three week on the job-training to build skills and social fabric followed by thirteen weeks of hands-on projects with a team. Originally, the program focused on three technical pathways, but has since broadened to recruit into: Technical Program Management, Business Program Management, Customer Support Engineer, Data Analyst, Software Engineer, Software Support Engineer, UX Designer). Each apprentice is sponsored by a partnering organization in the business (for example, Azure, Xbox, Bing, and Office365).
<b>Did the organization face any challenges?</b>	In March 2020, COVID-19 led to the shutdown of the training campus, just after a new cohort of Leap apprentices joined, forcing the program to shift online. This has changed how Microsoft think about apprenticeship schemes and revealed the potential of global classrooms; the organization now plans to continue with virtual cohorts joined by global apprentices sharing similar time zones. There have been learnings – for example, the program leadership recognizes the opportunity to encourage apprentices to expand their network through virtual connections, to connect, engage and grow, and that this is an important factor to address.
<b>How has the impact of the program been measured?</b>	After program completion, total employment in the technology sector is 98%, with the remaining 2% of graduates going back to education or back to full time caring work. To date, 68% of graduates have taken up a full-time role in Microsoft. The program has expanded to a wider range of technical pathways, to more countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Canada, Mexico) and is extending internally so that Microsoft full time employees who are not in a technical role can participate. Leap fulltime alumnus at Microsoft have demonstrated continuous career growth, significant contributions to engineering innovations, and inspire talent from all walks of life to pursue their career aspirations.