

Microsoft®



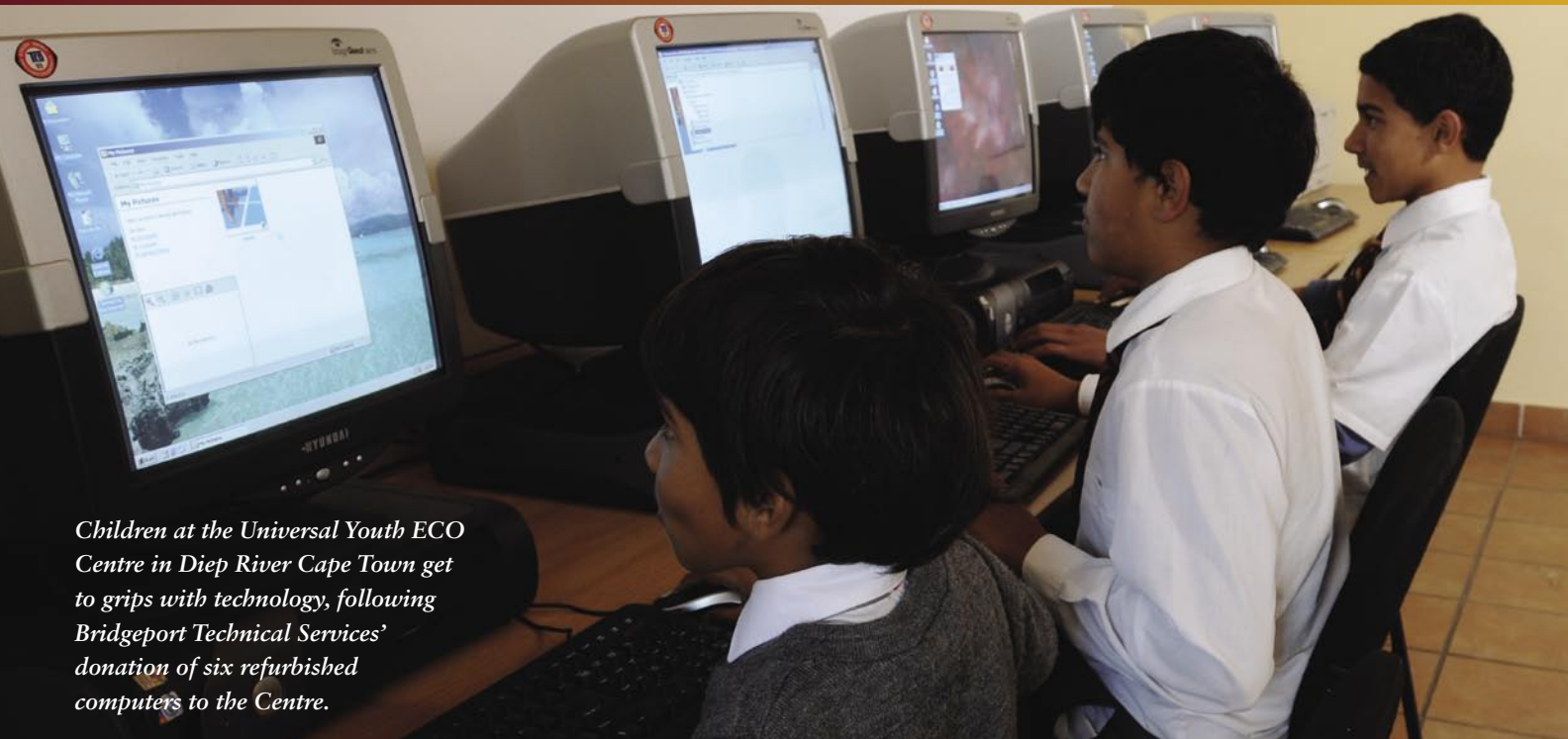
*Faizal Kelly, Assistant Manager at
Bridgeport Technical Services.*

Refurbished PCs:

Giving good people – and businesses – great opportunities

Microsoft®
Unlimited
Potential **UP**





Children at the Universal Youth ECO Centre in Diep River Cape Town get to grips with technology, following Bridgeport Technical Services' donation of six refurbished computers to the Centre.

Affordability is often what prevents many deserving organisations from owning – and using – personal computers. A partnership between Bridgeport Technical Services in South Africa and Microsoft is making huge strides in addressing that challenge – with a few unintended consequences along the way.

Boosting South Africa's skills base through used computers

“These refurbished computers are definitely put to good use time and time again. They are used to enrich people who would otherwise not have been given the wonderful opportunity of using a computer or who are not in a position to acquire one.”

– David Swartz, pastor and project co-ordinator of Open Hands Outreach

When Dave Corne, the owner of Bridgeport Technical Services, first came to South Africa, he quickly realised that there was a distinct lack of computer equipment in schools and community projects – key areas of the community that would make good use of such equipment. The main reason for this, he soon found out, was affordability.

According to the International Telecommunication Union, the leading United Nations agency for information and communication technologies, only 10% of the South African population has access to the Internet. This includes schools, small, medium and micro-enterprises as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charities.

One of the main reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs is that many schools, charities and NGOs

work with very tight budgets, allowing them little to no financial possibility of buying a new computer. Furthermore, many of these organisations often need more than one computer to cater for the numerous people in their fold.

Corne realised that the only way to actively address this matter was to find the most cost-effective way to provide used PCs with legal operating systems installed. This is why, in 2004, Bridgeport Technical Services became the first Community Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher (MAR) in Africa.

“It is the most affordable way for eligible recipients to obtain a PC system with a legal operating system installed,” explains Corne. “It enables us to provide low-cost, legal PC systems to eligible recipients and to help spread information technology to deserving schools and needy communities who

may otherwise not be in a position to afford such basic systems.”

Only qualifying computers make their way to Bridgeport Technical Services’ offices in Cape Town, to be professionally refurbished and become part of the programme. Computers can only be included in the Community MAR programme if they are used personal computers, that is, used by individuals, businesses or any other organisation. They must meet all of the following criteria:

1. The computer must have been in distribution, or used for at least six months.
2. The computer must contain the original motherboard.

Qualifying computers can come from any individual, business or organisation that wishes to donate computers for re-use.

Under the programme, Community MARs like Bridgeport Technical Services, which receive previously used personal computers, are required to consider the specifications of each computer when they are professionally refurbished. This helps all partners in the programme to select whether to install Windows 2000 or Windows XP Professional, to ensure the best performance for eligible recipients. Microsoft Office 2003 Standard is also available for eligible charitable organisations.

The Community MAR programme is extremely flexible and does not have any regional or numerical limits. If the hardware is available, and if there is a Community MAR in the region to refurbish PC equipment and install the software, then people and communities can benefit.

“It is very gratifying for me to think that Bridgeport Technical Services, as a partner in the programme, can help spread information technology where it is most needed, where it will have the most positive impact, and where we can help to train people – even if it is

only on a small scale,” says Corne. Bridgeport Technical Services is currently targeting schools throughout South Africa in an attempt to publicise the Community MAR programme and its cost-saving benefits.

Making a difference where it matters most

In its four years as a Community MAR, Bridgeport Technical Services has supplied 177 computer systems through the programme, mainly in the form of donations to the community, schools and NGO projects. The appreciative recipients include the Western Cape’s Pollsmoor Prison educational and training department; The World Burn Foundation of Southern Africa; The Lighthouse Project; and Open Hands Outreach.

Pollsmoor Prison was the very first recipient of a refurbished computer, and to this day continues to buy equipment from Bridgeport Technical Services.

“The communities and NGOs are extremely pleased and eternally thankful because, very often, they simply have no other way of obtaining useable and affordable computer equipment,” says Corne.

His words are echoed by a grateful David Swartz, pastor and project co-ordinator of Open Hands Outreach. “These refurbished computers are definitely put to good use time and time again. They are used to enrich people who would otherwise not have been given the wonderful opportunity of using a computer or who are not in a position to acquire one.”

Looking forward

Corne’s original decision to become part of the Community MAR programme has had a positive, unintended spin-off in the areas and organisations he has assisted. Many of the refurbished computers are now being used to train members of the community in the use of Microsoft applications.

These “trainees” find that being able to work on Microsoft applications boosts their skills base. In turn this helps with job prospects, due to the fact that many jobs require potential employees to be able to use these software tools proficiently.

The programme also addresses a major practical hurdle that is prevalent throughout the world: people using PCs with an illegal operating system and applications. Under the Community MAR programme, Microsoft provides the necessary software and the required licences to partners like Bridgeport Technical Services. Partners in the programme are then able to provide suitable recipients with high-quality computer systems loaded with legal software, which would otherwise be out of their reach.

This also means that recipients have access to the warranty protection, upgrade options and proper technical support that is provided with all genuine Microsoft software.

The ongoing challenge for Bridgeport Technical Services lies in finding willing donors for the innovative programme. “We have a lot more requests than we can comfortably cater for. I would like to see more corporates (private companies) becoming involved,” says Corne.

“We need to raise the profile of the Community MAR programme, both on a national and international scale. If more corporates join in, we will have more equipment donated to the programme, which will allow more and more deserving organisations to stand a chance of benefitting from access to computer technology.”

About the Community MAR programme

The Community MAR programme authorises eligible refurbishers to install licensed copies of Microsoft software on eligible refurbished computers. Community MARs work with both original owners,

RIGHT: President of the Universal Youth ECO Centre, Shukri Kadri, accepts the donation of six computers from Dave Corne, owner of Bridgeport Technical Services.

FAR RIGHT: An instructor at the Universal Youth ECO Centre advises children on climbing skills. Climbing is one of the many activities offered by the Centre to children in the local community.



TECHNOLOGY USED

- ▶ Windows 2000 Professional
- ▶ Windows XP Professional
- ▶ Microsoft Office 2003 Standard

“ We need to raise the profile of the Community MAR programme, both on a national and international scale ... This will allow more and more deserving organisations to stand a chance of benefitting from access to computer technology ”

– Dave Corne, owner of Bridgeport Technical Services, Community MAR

organisations looking for responsible ways to dispose of hardware, and eligible recipients, such as charities or academic users who want to obtain refurbished computers with legally installed software. Public or private and commercial or non-commercial organisations are eligible to apply for the Community MAR programme. The application process to become a member of the Community MAR programme can be accessed at www.microsoft.com/mar. Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are not eligible to participate.

Community MARs can receive computers from a different country or region, as there are no restrictions on where computers are obtained for refurbishment. To apply to become a Community MAR, refurbishers must be located in a country or region in which Microsoft provides fulfilment. This includes most of the countries throughout the world, as follows:

- ▶ **Asia and South Pacific:** Australia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- ▶ **Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA):** The Community MAR programme is available in virtually all countries and regions in EMEA.
- ▶ **Central and South America:** The Community MAR Programme is available in virtually all countries in Central and South America.

- ▶ **North America:** Canada and the United States.

About Bridgeport Technical Services

Bridgeport Technical Services was incorporated in April 2000 to address the vast shortage of computers in schools throughout South Africa. The company was initially based in Knysna, and in 2002, it relocated to Cape Town. The primary reason behind the move was to secure the extra space required for the refurbishment of personal computers.

In 2004, Bridgeport Technical Services became the first Community MAR in Africa.

The company currently has three warehouses in Diep River, Cape Town. It employs 12 permanent staff, and takes on temporary staff when required. Bridgeport Technical Services is now the largest importer of used PC equipment in the Western Cape and holds the largest stock of PII, PIII and P4 boxes and monitors.

On a commercial basis, in addition to being a Community MAR, Bridgeport Technical Services supplies over 300 systems a month to the general public, other dealers, businesses and schools. Its customer base stands at 1 400.

For more information visit www.microsoft.com/southafrica/communityaffairs