

Case study: Recruiting women into IT



MYOB



Computer System Design
and Related Services



1,100
employees



36%
female



64%
male

Challenge

Faced with a shortage of female IT graduates, and a lack of women at all levels of the company, MYOB wanted to find an alternative recruitment process.

Strategy

“We found women are not looking for opportunities in IT straight after high school,” says Tanya Windscheffel, MYOB Platform Development Manager. “The problem is that women have no idea what IT is really like – the industry is seen as uncreative and the perception of IT is nerdy men in suits in cubicles, with lots of pens in their top pockets.”

To address this issue, MYOB devised an experimental program to see if it was possible to teach people with no previous IT experience basic coding in 16 weeks.

The company created DevelopHer, a ‘returnship’ program where, instead of taking on ‘interns’ straight out school or uni, they looked for women who may have been out of the workforce for a while or wanted a mid-career change, to be trained in coding.

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MYOB Recruiting women into IT

Actions

The MYOB coding course was devised from scratch. “The closest thing in the marketplace to our course is the General Assembly software delivery course – but it can be too hard for women to access, as it’s full-time and costs thousands of dollars,” explains Tanya.

The MYOB course was made accessible by running it three days a week to take into account caring and other work responsibilities. “We know flexibility is very important for women – they tend to start off in IT then drop out when they can’t balance working and home.”

“MYOB is completely different to the stereotypes that you see in pop culture on TV. It’s a happy working environment and you don’t have to be technical – it’s about problem solving – it’s not about the stereotypical maths and physics.”

Recruitment

The MYOB team thought it would be difficult to get applicants – but when the project was posted on social media – Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn – it received 100 applications. Instead of an interview process, the team asked applicants to make a video about themselves.

“We wanted to understand the way they thought, see their problem-solving skills, find out why they wanted to do coding, and why particularly at this time of their life, and why it was important to them,” says Tanya.

Thirty people were shortlisted and invited to MYOB for a one-day session with team-building exercises to see how they interacted with the group, a 30-minute one-on-one chat, and some time shadowing people from the four main development (dev) teams.

Training

Three women were picked for the 16-week paid, part-time program which started with classroom-style basic coding for eight weeks. The rest was spent working one-on-one with a ‘dev’ team member.

“We chose recent software graduates to teach the recruits coding because it was a relatively short time since they were in the classroom environment,” says Tanya. “But one of the lessons we learnt was that we under-estimated how hard it is to teach other people. We found that we had to teach the graduates to teach – including understanding and empathy of the learning process and managing expectations about how long the recruits would have to stay at a basic level. It takes 12 months to two years to have a solid understanding of the life cycle of IT.”

Outcomes

The recruits were not guaranteed a position at the end of the course, but all three participants achieved a level of competence and were offered jobs, with two working part-time and one full-time.

MYOB now has a list of 300 women, including internal applicants, who have expressed interest in the program and are hoping the next intake in 2017 can take more people.

“We want to take it slowly because we want to be able to fully support the participants. We’d love this type of program to expand across the industry – it was always intended to be an industry-wide project not just confined to MYOB,” says Tanya.



Employee experience

Based in Melbourne, Hannah Deutscher, jumped at the chance to make a career change and dive into IT.

“After finishing a degree in Art History and French, I had a good position as a retail manager but I felt that I wanted to do something else. When my sister and I started selling tea online we had to build a website. It was fun and I began to get interested in IT and then I found out about the MYOB program and managed to get a place in the team.

Because the course was part-time I didn't have to give up my job – I was able to work full-time on weekends and do three days at MYOB – which was perfect because there was no guarantee that I would be good enough to get a job at the end.

In the beginning the coding was a bit familiar but very quickly it became a very steep learning curve – you have to pick things up quickly and remember everything you've learnt over several hours. When we left the classroom and joined a 'dev team' everything suddenly had context – it was really interesting going

beyond just coding and beginning to understand how the coding fitted into the other areas of the business.

I now work in the core services team with eight to 12 people, and our customers are in other areas of the business. I am still 'shadowing' in the team but working with real products – working on small tasks at my level which are then checked by a senior developer.

I was so surprised about what the job involved. I had no idea how interesting and how collaborative the environment is. If I'd known how IT really was I would have done this 10 years ago! I think there is a lack of transparency about the industry – when I was at school leaving year 12 no-one came and talked about IT, so I never considered it.

MYOB is completely different to the stereotypes that you see in pop culture on TV. It's a happy working environment and you don't have to be technical – it's about problem solving, it's not about the stereotypical maths and physics (I hate maths, I'm hopeless at it). Ultimately coding is like learning a language. It's about being able to embrace change and enjoy learning and working with new technology. These are the qualities you need to be successful.”

The other returnship team members

Julia Harper

After starting her career in counselling, Julia managed the operations and financial side of her family IT consulting business until she had her son in 2010. Her husband had joined MYOB and sent her a link to the coding program. He was one of several employees who encouraged their wives to apply which, she says, spoke volumes about how great the organisation is to work for and also how supportive the males at MYOB are of gender diversity initiatives.

Ludmila Stakhovych

Graduating with a master's degree in economics and finance, Ludmila started her career as a financial risk analyst. After maternity leave and immigrating to Australia she found out about MYOB's DevelopHER program through social media.

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Hannah Deutcher

MYOB gender diversity programs

- Gender pay gap analysis at all levels of the company is currently underway.
- The board and executive have completed unconscious bias training and it is being rolled out to all managers. Once this is complete, the company will review the next steps for diversity and inclusion training.

MYOB's Diversity Policy includes requirements for the board to set measurable objectives for achieving gender diversity and an annual assessment of objectives and MYOB's progress in achieving them.

The 2018 objectives include:

- increasing the number of women in senior management from 33% in 2016 to 40%
- increasing the number of female board directors from 17% to 30%
- increasing the proportion of women participating in the MYOB Leadership Program from 33% to more than 45%
- maintaining a high return-to-work rate and increasing the rate from 83% to more than 85%.



Visit www.wgea.gov.au to learn about employer best practice and download practical tools to improve gender equality in your workplace.

Drill down into our data at data.wgea.gov.au to compare how industries are performing on gender equality.