



# IBM IRELAND – NARROWING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

IBM is the longest established IT multinational in Ireland with over 3,200 people employed in Dublin, Cork and Galway. IBM has a diverse portfolio of businesses in Ireland including sales and services, hardware and software manufacturing, software development, telesales and marketing, an International Financial Services Solutions Centre and a Corporate Treasury Centre.

## ? Business Issue

IBM has a deep commitment to the communities in which we live and work. Our top social priority is education where we provide the latest technology to help improve student achievement and narrow the digital divide, particularly amongst the disadvantaged.

## ✓ Solution Applied

IBM’s KidSmart Early Learning Programme is a worldwide initiative designed to explore the role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in early childhood development. Introduced in Ireland in 2000, the programme is run in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science’s National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). By the end of 2007, IBM will have donated over 550 KidSmart Early Learning Centres to primary schools in disadvantaged areas in the Republic of Ireland. These donations include IBM hardware, (Riverdeep) educational software, a global support website ([www.kidsmartearlylearning.org](http://www.kidsmartearlylearning.org)), NCTE training and support and the opportunity to participate in the collaborative Learning Village programme.

## 👍 Benefits for the Company

- Delivered in 19 European countries, KidSmart demonstrates our innovation and leadership in technology, our commitment to raising education standards and bridging the digital divide in disadvantaged communities.
- KidSmart has allowed us to gain deeper insight into communities and build a wider network of contacts, particularly in central and local government and the education community.
- Heads of Government in Ireland and Poland have launched KidSmart in their countries, as have Government Ministers in the UK, Portugal and the Netherlands. IBM is now ready to market the KidSmart Early Learning Centre in Europe. The first order for 300 units has been placed by a national Education Ministry.
- The KidSmart programme offers IBM Corporate Citizenship Managers opportunities for development in key skill areas including project management, partnership building and relationship management, deeper understanding of education issues and public speaking.

• According to Iram Siraj-Blatchford, independent researcher from University of London, “the KidSmart Early Learning Programme has been a major catalyst in improving practice in the use of ICT in early childhood settings. It has also enhanced the awareness of practitioners and policy makers of the need for sustained training in ICT for the early year’s workforce across Europe”.

## 👍 Benefits for the Stakeholder

- The programme is helping to bridge the digital divide for thousands of children in Ireland.
- It is improving the skills of teachers through the integration of ICT into early education.
- KidSmart’s child-friendly features enable ICT to be introduced in a sensitive and monitored way, enhancing children’s awareness of computers and technology as part of daily life.

## 🏔 Challenges

Lack of an effective strategy for the integration of ICT in the curriculum.

## 💡 Tip

Ensure ongoing training and professional development is available for all practitioners. Emphasise the importance of adult presence working alongside children at the computer. Stay involved with the schools to ensure the programme develops and grows.

## 👥 Departments Involved

Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs

## 👤 Solution Champion

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