

FROM SPRING BREAK TO THE BIG BREAK



## SALESFORCE.COM FOUNDATION

In 2012, when San Francisco's Salesforce.com Foundation wanted to assess the impact of its programs and plan its future philanthropic direction, they decided to contact Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to engage in a review of one of its longest-running programs – BizAcademy.

BizAcademy – a one-week program begun by the company foundation in 2005 – selects high school students from low-income communities to compete in what has been called a kids version of “The Apprentice.” For most high school students, Spring Break means no school, no homework, and no stress. But each year, a group of San Francisco high schoolers vie for a spot in BizAcademy, choosing to give up their Spring Break, get up at the crack of dawn, and enter San Francisco's fast-paced world of competitive business. Students are split into teams and spend the week at the downtown headquarters of Salesforce.com, alongside company employees and Foundation staff. Their challenge: to come up with a business plan and to pitch their “company” to Salesforce.com employees who play the role of investors.

One of the reasons the Foundation reached out to FTA was because of the firm's extensive experience with youth programs and its ability to creatively evaluate and

*BizAcademy participants vividly recount the intensity and frantic pace of the week-long program — conditions they describe as very different from school. “We're in high school. We're not used to getting up so early and heading downtown for work, especially during Spring Break. And trying to get everything finished in a week's time was just hectic.” The teams developed business plans, marketing plans, and sales plans, and then pitched their ideas to professionals in front of the other teens.*

*SALESFORCE.COM adheres to a “1/1/1 model” of integrated philanthropy. This means Salesforce.com encourages volunteerism equal to 1% of employees' time, donates 1% of the company's equity, and provides 1% of its products for a greater good.*

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make appropriate and innovative recommendations for program development and sustainability.

FTA's familiarity with the region and expertise in the field also allowed the firm to frame the program assessment within a practical and up-to-date review of the communities that the Foundation was looking to reach.

FTA conducted in-depth interviews with company and Foundation staff, program alumni, current participants, and several San Francisco-based youth development organizations to determine the impact BizAcademy was making on young people as well as its impact on company employees (which was a secondary Foundation goal). As FTA connected with BizAcademy participants, stories unfolded about how this small window into the intense nature of the world of business opened the eyes of young people.

But the program reached just a handful of youth in a city where thousands of youth seek work experience and exposure to adult mentors. Thus FTA's assessment and recommendations focused on expansion, depth of involvement of both youth and adult participants, continuity beyond the one-week program, and the potential to build the program in a neighborhood/high school of high need.

Beyond the assessment, FTA produced a concise, readable, and attractive document – featuring photography and first person descriptions from students – conveying the intensity of the program's competition, the pragmatic lessons learned, and the personal progress made.

