

How a Long-term Community Partnership Ignites Lasting Impact

How Camp Ignite evolved from a one-week experience into a model of community impact that engages youth and Steelcase.

 Read 5 minutes

Camp Ignite recently marked its 10-year anniversary, reflecting a decade of sustained investment in community. What began as a one-week camp in Romania has expanded into an evolving set of experiences for young people, and a powerful employee engagement opportunity that strengthens purpose and culture at Steelcase.

The First Spark: Camp Ignite

It all started when Steelcase wondered how it might support transformational opportunities for teenagers. Rather than starting with a pre-set solution, Steelcase and its partners began by clarifying purpose and listening to what young people said they needed most.

That led to the launch of Camp Ignite in 2016, an immersive experience facilitated by Steelcase employees. Steelcase had recently established its European Business Center in Cluj, and local employees saw an opportunity to act alongside World Vision, a global humanitarian organization that has worked in Romania's rural areas since 1990. The nonprofit's long-standing community relationships helped connect Camp Ignite to young people who could benefit most.

In many rural areas of Romania, teenagers have ambition and ability, but limited opportunities for education, career pathways, professional environments and role models. These barriers are structural, but their impact is personal. When opportunity feels distant, confidence can diminish and future possibilities narrow.

Camp Ignite emerged as a space where teenagers could identify and explore their strengths, amplify their voices and build confidence and ownership to shape their futures. The format is intentionally human-centered, designed to respond to the needs of the young people it serves. Facilitators focused on conversation and reflection rather than instruction, creating an environment where participants could grow their leadership, critical thinking and empathy. There is also a focus on challenging gender norms and stereotypes that can limit opportunities.

Ignite has helped shape many individual journeys, including that of Cris Teglas, Product Data Analyst at Steelcase, whose experience with Ignite began in 2018. Cris was invited by World Vision to join Camp Ignite at age 16. She then participated in Ignite Explorers, Steelcase's internship program, in 2021, and later joined Steelcase full-time after graduating from university. Today, she also volunteers as a camp facilitator.

“I can’t separate who I am from Ignite. It gave me the courage to speak up, to believe I belonged in spaces I had never imagined, and to keep asking what else might be possible.”

CRIS TEGLAS

Designed to Evolve

As the camps demonstrated impact, a question emerged: What happens after the week ends?

The answer came from the participants. Ignite grew into an ecosystem of opportunities with Steelcase, designed to support continued development.

Ignite Programs Launch Timeline:

2016 – Camp Ignite (one-week camp experience)

2021 – Ignite Explorers (internships)

2022 – Ignite Amplify (mentoring)

2025 – Ignite Day in the Life (job shadowing)

Each addition followed the same human-centered design approach that shaped the original camp: listen and learn first, then design in response.

Ignite Explorers offers a 3-week internship at the Steelcase Cluj Business Center, designed to build on the leadership and critical thinking skills cultivated during Camp Ignite.

Confidence That Compounds

For many participants, the impact of Ignite begins internally.

“Most of us remember what it felt like to be 16 and unsure whether our voice mattered,” says Kinga Pakucs, Sr. Learning Consultant at Steelcase. “Camp Ignite creates a safe space where young people are listened to and encouraged to speak up.”

It’s the kind of listening that stays with people.

Cris Teglas has seen that shift from both sides, first as a participant and now as a facilitator. “Someone who arrives unsure begins to take up space and stand up for themselves,” she says. “That confidence doesn’t disappear when the camp ends.”

The camp closes with a statement participants say out loud: “I am myself. And I am enough.” It’s more than a ritual. It reinforces the idea that the confidence built during the week belongs to them, and it is meant to stay with them long after they leave.

Impact on Steelcase

While Ignite was developed to expand opportunities for young people, it has also shaped the Steelcase community. Employees who volunteer as facilitators often describe the experience as one of the most formative in their careers. Working alongside teenagers builds adaptability, empathy and confidence in navigating uncertainty.

Those capabilities translate directly into Steelcase's work, where collaboration and human-centered problem-solving are essential. Employees involved in Ignite often gain clarity about their own development, stay with the company longer and have a higher promotion rate than non-participants and return as volunteers year after year.

When Community Shapes Culture

Ignite is one initiative within Steelcase's [Better Futures Community](#), a global network focused on community and belonging.

"The Steelcase Better Futures Community brings together employees and partners to create opportunities that can change lives," says Kim Koeman, Director of Impact at Steelcase. "What began with Camp Ignite has grown to include internships, mentoring and job-shadowing, reflecting our shared commitment to empowering youth and fostering meaningful employee engagement."

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STEELCASE BETTER FUTURES COMMUNITY

The [Better Futures Community](#) is a global network of organizations and individuals connected to Steelcase, all working toward a shared goal of improving the wellbeing of people and the planet. The Better Futures Community turns individual contribution into collective action through:

- **Changemakers:** Employee volunteers who lead local impact
- **Catalysts:** Community partners advancing positive social change
- **Network:** Connections that bring employees, dealers, partners and customers together through shared learning

Stay connected to the Better Futures Community. Subscribe for quarterly insights and event updates.

Still Guided by the Same Commitment

Ten years after Ignite began, the program looks different from what it did in 2016 because young people and the world of work look different, too. What remains constant is the commitment to create spaces where teenagers and young adults feel heard and supported.

The anniversary gatherings offered a reminder that the most meaningful outcomes cannot always be measured in a single moment. They show up when young people leave with more confidence than they arrived with, and when employees keep raising their hands to facilitate because the experience changes them, too.

To mark 10 years of Ignite, Steelcase brought together the Ignite community in two ways: a virtual gathering that connected participants across locations, and an in-person event in Cluj, Romania, attended by about 80 people. The Cluj gathering brought together World Vision Romania staff, Steelcase employees, former employees and past participants for a short program and time to reconnect.