

The Evolution of Camp Ignite: Keeping the Spark Alive

A testament to the power of community engagement in transforming lives and workplace culture

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Steelcase's partnership with global nonprofit, World Vision, and the creation of Camp Ignite began over 8 years ago. More than just a summer retreat, this five-day camp has become a catalyst for change, hosting over 380 teens from under-resourced rural communities since its inception in 2015.

Camp Ignite goes beyond traditional camps; it's a journey of self-discovery and youth empowerment focused on reducing school dropout rates. Through carefully curated workshops, group sessions, and team-building activities, Steelcase facilitators ignite a spark in the hearts of the teen participants, fostering empathy and adaptability while embracing diversity and divergent thinking.

But the story doesn't end there.

From the embers of Camp Ignite, a dedicated team of Steelcase volunteers emerged, determined to keep the flame burning beyond the summer experience. They wanted to figure out a way to continue the self-exploration journey for the teens, this time by bringing the participants into Steelcase for career discovery and exploration.

IGNITE EXPLORERS

Thus, Ignite Explorers was born, a 3-week internship-based program designed to build on the leadership and critical thinking skills cultivated during Camp Ignite. Since 2021, over 45 teenagers have seized this opportunity, with many returning to the camps after the internship to act as facilitators or become ambassadors for similar initiatives in their local communities.

The 3-week experience takes place at Steelcase Cluj Business Center and includes career orientation, soft skills training, team shadowing, and project collaboration. Every year, 15 young adults from previous camp iterations are selected to take part, based foremost on their curiosity to learn, followed by their interest in business and future employment. Ignite Explorers not only prepares young minds for their future careers but also fosters a sense of purpose and a positive changemaking mentality.

"It's amazing to observe how the Ignite Explorers gain confidence and autonomy in an unfamiliar office environment. At the beginning, they feel like they're at school. They raise their hands to go to the bathroom, they're quiet, sometimes shy, or even stressed. By the third week, they've each found their place where they feel comfortable expressing themselves. You can see the transformation happen," says Iulia Galinescu, Steelcase business development manager and co-designer of the Ignite Explorers and Amplify experience.

Cris Teglas, Steelcase product data analyst, began her Ignite journey at Camp Ignite in 2018 at the age of 16. She then joined the Ignite Explorer program in 2021 and eventually became employed fulltime at Steelcase after graduating university. Cris's story is just one testament to the profound impact of Camp Ignite and its subsequent programs: "This was an important step towards my decision to apply for a job at Steelcase," says Cris, expressing how involvement in the Ignite programs has fostered a deep connection for her with like-minded individuals within the company.

"Being able to do so much more beyond the scope of my actual role brings a sense of community and belonging to the workplace."

CRISTINA-ALEXANDRA TEGLAS | Product Data Analyst, Steelcase

Vlad, a 2023 Ignite Explorer captures the essence of his Ignite journey: "The first day we got here and had to wait in front of the tall, impersonal office building, we were overwhelmed and a bit scared. But then we got inside and we were surprised that everything felt like home!"

IGNITE AMPLIFY

To keep the flames of Ignite Explorers burning bright, Ignite Amplify was launched in 2022. Ignite Amplify pairs Explorer graduates with Steelcase mentors for three transformative months. Not only does this provide continued development opportunities for the participants, it also supports Steelcase's diversity, equity and inclusion commitments in many ways: the program attracts new talent, improves development potential – facilitators have seen a staggering 77% of lateral moves or promotions within the company – and it directly impacts Steelcase employee retention.

"Ignite Amplify is not just a program; it's a testament to the power of community engagement in transforming lives and workplace culture."

IULIA-MARIA GALINESCU | Dealer Business Manager, Steelcase

The Ignite journey extends beyond the boundaries of the community and into the workplace, creating a network of empowered individuals who find purpose, belonging, and joy in making a difference.
