



Larry F. Solomon competes at the 2013 New York Marathon on behalf of Back On My Feet

EDITORS' NOTE Over his 28-year career, Larry Solomon has held a number of leadership positions with Accenture, ranging from Group Chief Operating Officer for both Human Resources and the company's Health & Public Service group to Global Geographic Human Resources Director. He recently assumed his current role of North America Operating Officer. Solomon joined Accenture's consulting practice in 1986 after receiving his B.S. in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Albany. His background also includes developing and running the company's Northeast Strategic Services practice back in the late '80s.

COMPANY BRIEF Accenture (accenture.com) is a global management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company that combines unparalleled experience and capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies. With approximately 281,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments.

How critical is corporate responsibility to Accenture's culture and how is it driven throughout the organization?

It's a significant part of the fabric of our culture. We have a long history of community involvement – local, national, and global – and one of our core values is stewardship. We define this as fulfilling our obligation to build a better, stronger, and more durable company for future generations.

We have to meet our commitments to our stakeholders, to community members, to our

Skills to Succeed

An Interview with Larry F. Solomon,
Senior Managing Director – North America Operating Officer, Accenture

people, and to clients. And we have to develop our people and improve the communities and the global environment in which we all live and work on a daily basis.

Skills are a key driver of economic empowerment for people and companies. At the same time, they are important to how we deliver services, and we have a focused commitment to use skills to make a tangible, measurable difference to the communities in which we live and work.

Is it important that the causes Accenture supports tie in with your business strategy?

It's absolutely important. It is our strong belief that our company's business purpose is most powerful when it aligns with our potential for broader impact in society. Giving back what we do best is key. It all comes down to empowering, training, educating, and helping people reach the next level. We teach people new skills to serve not only our clients but to serve their communities.

One of our prouder accomplishments has been the progress we have made through our corporate citizenship initiative, Skills to Succeed. It draws on one of our core competencies – training people – and we use it to help others learn new skills, ultimately opening doors to employment opportunities.

We're a large global company and our Skills to Succeed program is a singular, integrated initiative. Our people are excited about it, and we continue to build momentum with distinct programs across the world.

Through collaborating with many nonprofit organizations that share our passion for building skills, as well as through our pro bono, volunteering, and grant-making efforts, we are making a sustainable difference to the longer term economic vitality of people and communities around the world.

As we look ahead, we will continue to build out our strategy with a focus on having a measurable impact and achieving scale in what we do through the use of technology and collaboration, which is what we do for our clients.

Is this focus on community engagement also critical to recruiting top talent?

I've spent many years in and around recruiting all over the world. Five years ago, corporate citizenship was rarely mentioned as an important value for recruits; today, it is absolutely a differentiator. There are recruits who will walk away from a company that doesn't make this a top priority.

I get jazzed when I see people coming into our company and learning about Skills to Succeed

on day one and often stepping up to take a leadership role. Our focus in this area is a true win-win.

You were Chairman of the Board of Directors of Back On My Feet. Why has the organization been so important to you?

We started Skills to Succeed in 2010, which was around the same time I started to get serious about running and fitness. I had read about Back On My Feet, which started in Philadelphia. The organization focuses on the "underdogs" in life, the less fortunate, the people that got swept aside.

I contacted the then-CEO of the organization to express what a great program I felt it was – and I got involved.

Back On My Feet gives people a second chance at life by providing the skills, encouragement, confidence, and teamwork to open doors to independence and employment.

It's a nonprofit that uses running to help those experiencing homelessness see themselves differently. This creates real change in their lives, which often results in employment and independent living and, in turn, contribution to their communities.

What is the connection between Back On My Feet and Skills to Succeed?

Once I became involved, I wanted to expand on the organization's goals by connecting it to Skills to Succeed and having Accenture help the homeless men and women who were part of the program. Accenture agreed, and I am extremely proud that Back On My Feet has become one of our most successful national Skills to Succeed partners and initiatives. Accenture has given the organization more than \$600,000 in grants to date.

But it's about more than just writing checks. Accenture people provide job preparation support and mentoring. We have people who participate in mock interviews. We help them build IT skills. And we have people who regularly join the runs at 5:30 AM with the Back On My Feet participants.

The organization now serves more than 3,500 residential members out of 11 chapters, and we provide training and education to almost 900 people.

It's a program our people want to get involved in. On a personal level, it has been incredible to align my passion for fitness and running and for helping less fortunate people with an organization dedicated to the same – using running to help those experiencing homelessness change the way they see themselves so they can make real change in their lives, which results in employment and independent living. ●