



Grab widens opportunities for millions of Southeast Asians through digital literacy and technology training

Howey worked as an electrical engineer until, during hard times in the manufacturing company he worked for, he was laid off. To help make ends meet, he began driving for Grab, the multinational ride-hailing company that operates throughout Southeast Asia.

Recently, Howey changed course. While continuing to drive with Grab, he is learning the skills needed to become a software developer. He is just one of many mid-career workers who are upskilling through a partnership between Grab and Microsoft.

Grab is working to ensure that people of every background and ability can benefit from the rise of the digital economy. The Singapore-based company, which operates in eight countries, is partnering with Microsoft to advance toward that goal. The Grab-Microsoft efforts are building capacity of local nonprofits and academic partners to scale impacts and offer opportunities for even more learners.

"If the private sector actively creates programs for local communities, technology can be within reach for many," says Anthony Tan, CEO and cofounder of Grab. "The learning of new skills can immediately improve the livelihoods for many more people in Southeast Asia."

The ride-hailing company partners with Microsoft to equip drivers for the future

Empowering driver-partners for the digital economy

The changing Southeast Asian (ASEAN) economy will require workers to adapt. An estimated 6.6 million will require reskilling to move into a new career; 41 percent of those lack the digital skills needed to successfully transition, though.

A recent survey showed that more than 70 percent of Grab driver-partners in Singapore planned to stop driving for the company after two years. Anecdotal evidence suggests driver-partners across the regions will similarly seek careers elsewhere.

These figures present a challenge as well as an opportunity, as so many workers are eager to reskill for in-demand technology positions, including tech-enabled openings at Grab.

The power of partnerships

Grab's mission is to create economic empowerment for everyone in Southeast Asia. It is partnering with governments, nonprofits, and private companies, including Microsoft, to equip people with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in the digital economy.

Microsoft is supporting Grab to train 1 million driver-partners and their families in digital literacy and technology-related employment skills.

By working together, Grab and Microsoft complement each other's strengths in pursuit of this urgent goal. For example:

- Microsoft is entrenched in the needs and gaps of the technology industry. The company can help Grab translate these insights into training programs for driver-partners so they are equipped for the changing job market.
- Microsoft's track record in providing training for digital and professional skills meant Grab did not have to develop materials and methods from scratch.
- The companies' combined power of advocacy recruited other influential partners. For instance, they unlocked \$1.5 million SGD of governmental funding to train and place driver-partners in software development positions.

Partnership impacts

This collaboration is ongoing. So far, impacts include:

- More than 250,000 driver- and delivery-partners across ASEA have participated in the Microsoft Digital Literacy program opening new economic opportunities.
- Driver-partners in Indonesia and Vietnam earned 350,000 industry-recognized certificates in digital literacy.
- In Singapore, 150 driver-partners formed the initial cohorts of a scalable software development program. The program also provides end-to-end support and coaching from industry leaders to help learners secure in-demand jobs.

Digital content enables driver-partners to gain the skills for new careers—like software development—at their own pace. That way, they can manage other responsibilities such as family and work (and continue driving with Grab).

“I’m excited to learn from the experts and hope that this will equip me with the right skills to make my mid-career switch into the tech industry.”

- Lau Kok Tiong, Grab driver-partner

The impact of these efforts extends further by enabling driver-partners’ families to log on and learn. The free access supports entire families to effectively and safely use devices, software, and the internet to more fully participate in the digital economy. These skills also open pathways to careers that would otherwise be out of reach—and the improved livelihoods that come with in-demand jobs.

This program will be scaled to reach many more partner-drivers. Microsoft worked with the Singaporean government to allocate funds to train participants for in-demand fields such as digital marketing, data science, and software development.

Accelerating impact

Microsoft’s mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. With more than 160,000 employees, 17 million partners, and 75 million customers in 190 countries around the world, we have both an enormous opportunity and responsibility to ensure that the technology we create benefits everyone on the planet, as well as the planet itself.

The challenges facing people and the planet are complex, and no one company, sector, or even country can solve them alone. That’s why Microsoft is committed to working across sectors to foster partnerships and solutions that will have lasting impact.



16 percent of ASEAN youth say they want to work in the technology sector.

In addition, Microsoft funded research of 11 other employers for insights into the positions and skills most in need. This research, carried out by the nonprofit Generation, shapes employment programs and learning paths Microsoft and Grab promote.

“Building the capacity of partners helps make this collaboration bigger than Microsoft and Grab,” explains Hosea Lai, Regional Director Microsoft Philanthropies, Asia and Pacific. “It has the potential to open new upskilling paths for millions of people across Southeast Asia.”

Corporate partnerships advance CSR goals

The Grab-Microsoft partnership aims to equip more learners with digital and technical skills training, so communities and businesses alike thrive in a changing economic landscape.

“As Southeast Asia grows, we hope everyone can rise with it and benefit from the growing digital economy,” says Hooi Ling Tan, cofounder of Grab. “I’m especially excited that Grab driver-partners and their families will be able to learn new skills from Microsoft courses and work towards certifications.”

The partnership provides driver-partners access to:

- Digital literacy training via an app Grab driver-partners already use. Those that finish trainings earn a certificate they can use to demonstrate their abilities, for example during job applications.
- Training content translated into local languages.
- In-depth, 7-month program in software development. The nonprofit Generation is building universities’ capacity to scale the program, offering it to increasing numbers of partner-drivers who want to pivot in their career.
- Access to Microsoft and LinkedIn learning pathways. These digital resources align with the soft and technical skills needed for in-demand jobs.