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- Home
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- App Development
- VARBusiness 500
- Distribution 25
- Enterprise Spending
- Partner Programs
- State of The Market
- TechInnovators
- Annual Report Card
- Midmarket Spending

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- Columns
- Technology
- Customer
- Strategy
- Research
- Solution Provider U.

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- About VARBusiness
- Site Guide
- Edit Calendar
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- FAQ
- Privacy
- Media Kit
- Spotlights

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- Customer Services
- Renew
- International Subs
- Back Issues

**CHANNELWEB NETWORK:**

- Discussions
- Directory

## Sen. Clinton Helps Launch Future Tech Solution Center

By [Steven Lang](#)

When Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) cut the proverbial ribbon at Holbrook, N.Y.-VAR Future Tech Enterprises' (No. 355 on the VARBusiness 500) solution center on Aug. 4, it turned out her flashbulb-popping visit was not-so-indirectly connected to *VARBusiness*. Seems that the idea for the center emanated from Future Tech CEO Bob Venero's reaction to a discussion about outsourcing and offshoring at the VARBusiness 500 event in June. And Venero didn't like what he heard.



Hillary Clinton with Future Tech's Bob Venero (left), IBM's Greg Adams (behind Venero) and Suffolk County's Steve Levy.

"The question was asked, 'How many people were doing it?' and the answer was something like seven out of 10," recalls the winner of this year's VARBusiness 500 Ascension Award. "I was pissed off. It was the quick route out based only on costs."

So he decided to do something about it. Hooking up with Greg Adams, vice president of business partners for IBM Americas, the duo created a plan that built a multimillion-dollar, first-of-its-kind

technologies solution center, featuring around-the-clock support and services of IBM products, as well an "Insource America Help-Desk Program," which offers adults on public assistance a six-week training program to become certified Level One Help Desk technicians. After that, participants make a six-month commitment to the program, for which they earn a competitive salary while keeping an adjusted portion of their public assistance.

It was the creation of jobs that likely would have been offshored that brought Sen. Clinton to the event.

"I reject outsourcing in favor of 'best-sourcing,'" she told *VARBusiness* at the ribbon-cutting event. "We have to take a much more calculated look [at moving jobs offshore and avoid] the herd mentality."

She said that some companies are finding that time and cultural differences don't make the move worth it. "They are moving their call centers back," she said. "For most people, it can be competitive."

Clinton said that to stimulate jobs here, "there should be a level playing field [with]



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tax benefits for companies who keep jobs here. There should be more training with partners like IBM and from leaders who should think about what they owe their countries."

If all plans come to fruition, the help desk ultimately will be manned by 25 people during four shifts, for a total of 100 new jobs, Venero said. Employees will be paid \$5.50 per hour (plus some public assistance) compared with the approximate \$4.50 per hour received by overseas workers, he said. It is a self-funding program, he added.

"What Bob has done is create a new paradigm," Clinton said. "I think this is going to catch on [and] get people to look at the real costs. We're going to reverse some of this, although we're not going to change all of this."

Meanwhile, the state-of-the-art IBM ThinkVantage Technologies Solution Center offers separate IT stations for products including servers and storage solutions, printers and PCs.

"It's exactly what customer and organizations are saying they need today," Adams said. "We are encouraging our IBM field teams to use this as a demo facility and as a place to have meetings."

Clinton, perhaps inadvertently, could not have given the IBM partner program a better sound bite when, during her opening remarks, she commented: "You have got to have partnerships in the on-demand world."

*VARBusiness* also asked Sen. Clinton why the technology industry should vote for the Democrats in November.

"The local and state governments have gone about as far as they can go," she said. "We are falling behind [in technology], and we need leadership to bring it together. We are not as advanced as we should be. Kerry is good at envisioning that [future]."

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