

MCP - The Ambassadors of MINDSTORMS

You probably know a bit about the LEGO® Ambassador program – you will probably know at least one of the current Ambassadors either directly or indirectly. But do you know what MCP is?

Text by Jetro

The MINDSTORMS Community Partners program was designed in much the same way as the Ambassador program, but instead of focusing on the whole LEGO® fan community it is specifically directed at MINDSTORMS. There is a good reason for this 'limitation'. LEGO MINDSTORMS (LMS) is without a doubt the single most 'different' LEGO product in existence and it has a very specific fan-base. Additionally, LMS is not only used by both kids and adults, but serves as a teaching aid in many educational institutions (primary and secondary schools, universities, etc). Add to that the fact that LMS involves some pretty sophisticated electronics and software and you'll understand why it makes sense to have a program specifically designed for the needs of the LMS community.

Like the LEGO Ambassador program, the MCP is made up of AFOLs with a passion for the product who love to share their passion with the world-wide LEGO community and the public.

Their mission is to work together with the LEGO Group in the development of the LEGO MINDSTORMS Community. There is no time-limit to the membership – some of the members have been in the group since the very beginning – but from time to time new members are added to the group and others leave it, due to different circumstances.

MCP members are selected by the LEGO Group after an application process that is announced periodically in the most relevant MINDSTORMS related forums. The selection criteria are many, but some of the important factors The LEGO Group keeps in mind are that the selection be culturally diverse and global as possible. The age of the current MCP members ranges from under 18 to well over 60 (the average is 30+) and there are both male and female participants. There are a total of 50 MCP members. In this way the group represents a significant and varied section of the actual MINDSTORMS community.

The members of the MCP are of course expected to actively contribute to the MINDSTORMS community and they do so in a large variety of ways – participating in the different on-line communities, at LUG events, helping out with FLL teams and competitions, developing and testing software and hardware, publishing LMS related contents and a long etcetera.

The MCP also interact with TLG on a special 'internal' forum to which they get access only after signing an NDA... which means that's as much as I can tell you about it. Additionally there are special MCP meetings at some of the bigger events so the members of the community can meet face to face with the representatives from LEGO.

The benefits of this program are many. For TLG it means a direct line to the community and input from their final customers. For the MCP it means being able to discuss their ideas and concerns directly with TLG and getting to see and sometimes even test new hardware and programs before they are released. It also means that when these products are released they can put out the word and provide information and support from first-hand knowledge. In this way they do the same for the MINDSTORMS community as the Ambassadors do for the general LEGO Fan community:

- Help extend and improve the connections between the worldwide LEGO MINDSTORMS community and the LEGO Group
- Actively cooperate with LEGO employees, LEGO User Groups and FLL teams
- Post feedback, guidance, and other types of support to their favourite on-line and off-line LEGO User Groups
- Help the LEGO Group keeping up with activities going on across the LEGO MINDSTORMS community
- Help giving LEGO User Groups as well as individual LEGO MINDSTORMS Fans a voice towards the LEGO Group.

In order to get a better understanding of the MCP, I'd like to present a few of them so you can learn a little more about who they are and what they do: