



What is Corporate Volunteering?

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) involves integrating social and environmental concerns into a company's business operations on a voluntary basis. More and more businesses see corporate responsibility as essential to growing an ethical, sustainable and profitable business. In today's world, companies want to be part of ensuring that their local communities are sustainable and resilient and many believe that as community members they have an obligation to support their local communities.

Corporate or employee volunteering sits within CSR. Here are a couple of popular definitions describing Employee Volunteering:

1) **An Employee Volunteer Programme** is a planned, managed effort that seeks to motivate and enable employees to effectively serve community needs through the leadership of the employer.

2) **Corporate volunteering** is any action by an employer to encourage and support the volunteer involvement of their employees in the community, whether during work hours or in employees' own time.

Today, many larger companies provide their staff with a day, sometimes two days or more, to engage in employee volunteering. Employee volunteer programmes take many forms, come in many different sizes and develop overtime to align with the company's values and to meet the identified needs of the community. Some companies choose a charity of the year and engage in employee volunteering as part of this partnership, while others focus on supporting specific areas of social interest e.g. education, youth, the environment, that align with their company values, aims or goals. A number of large multinationals have a global day or week of volunteering and focus their employee volunteer efforts during this time. Many employee programmes have evolved in a more ad-hoc manner encouraging teams to source their own volunteering opportunities. Each of these programme models have their challenges and their advantages and it is worth considering what will work best for you and for the charities and communities you wish to support.



What's the business case for having an employee volunteer programme?

As well as supporting the communities they serve, employee volunteering offers companies the opportunity to increase employee retention, improve employee motivation, enhance job satisfaction and enhance employee engagement. Higher levels of employee engagement are associated with increased company performance and success.. Corporate volunteering can raise the community profile of companies, enhance brand awareness, connect businesses with communities and enhance employee health and well-being & support inclusion in the workplace. Employees report major satisfaction in contributing to a defined and valuable community need and in using their skills to work with colleagues in a new environment.

How do non-profits and communities benefit from corporate volunteering?

Communities and non-profits benefit from financial support along with professional expertise and human and financial resources to complete and deliver programmes and projects that otherwise would not take place. They benefit from sharing their mission and work with others and creating a shared understanding of the challenges faced in today's society.

What types of volunteering do company employees engage in?

Companies get involved in a range of different volunteering opportunities including: beach cleans; assembling food hampers; preparing playparks and care kits for those in need; supporting charity events and fundraising activities; improving primary school children's reading skills; painting or sprucing up a garden at a community centre; sharing professional skills and expertise; participating in a water quality blitz; setting up in-house educational, career, business enterprise, I.T. and STEM programmes; supporting the elderly; mentoring young people and so on.

Keep in mind

However you choose to engage your employees in volunteering there are a few core things to keep in mind:

- **The top priority** for any non-profit is to serve their clients and achieve their mission...many are not aware of or thinking about company volunteering and others do not have the capacity or time to support employee volunteers.
- It's easy to assume there are lots of **corporate-specific volunteer opportunities** already designed and waiting for your teams to rock up and get stuck in. However, this is not usually the case!
- Remember, '**volunteering is not a day out**' — it is a commitment to a cause or organisation that deserves to be managed well by your team.
- Keep in mind that while collecting donations and hosting fundraising coffee mornings are a worthwhile activity these are **not strictly volunteering**.
- Engage your employees in the process of choosing charity or community partners to volunteer for to help foster employee buy in and develop **meaningful opportunities**
- Meaningful volunteering is based on an **identified need** in the community.
- Volunteer opportunities take time to organise and plan. Community groups are often under resourced and under-funded so **be mindful** of your requests and expectations.
- Remember **there are costs** to volunteering for the company and the charity, in relation to planning and implementing the volunteer activity. This is why it is imperative companies come to the table with a **budget** to make a donation to the organisation along with a supplies budget.
- Volunteering should be well organised and executed to a **high standard** so your company can stand over the end result and volunteers can feel proud of their accomplishments.





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