



CORPORATE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MODELS

Individual Volunteer Matching

Employees are made aware of volunteer opportunities through a variety of communication vehicles such as bulletin board notices, pay packet inserts, newsletter, intranet links to volunteer databases and volunteer fairs.

Advantages:

- Close match of an individual's interest with a community need
- Community receives volunteers with specific skills
- Volunteers receive a worthwhile and rewarding experience
- Limited commitment on the part of the company

Management and Technical Assistance

Individuals with particular management and technical skills are matched with non-profit agencies that request help in their particular area of expertise.

Advantages:

Non-profit Agencies:

- Receive resources to develop new ways to improve operations
- Receive high quality management consultations and skilled board members
- Create effective working partnerships with businesses
- Make better use of everyone's limited resources

Volunteers:

- Strengthen and expand management skills
- Learn about an aspect of the non-profit sector
- Increase knowledge of the community
- Learn to relate to people outside business
- Use skills and talents in personally rewarding ways

Corporations:

- Help promote healthy environment necessary for business activities
- Help employees expand knowledge of community services
- Demonstrate corporate social responsibility and involvement to the public
- Improve the management quality of agencies for overall community benefit
- Help increase public confidence in private enterprise system

Considerations:

- Balancing resources with agency requests
- Short-term assistance could expand to more complex and longer term projects
- Allowing enough time for effective recruitment

Release time

A mechanism by which corporations allow employees time off, with pay, during regular working hours to respond to community needs.

Variations:

- On going, short-term, off company premises: tutoring programs
- One day, off company premises: cleanup projects
- Shared time: employees contribute a period of time and the company matches it with an equal amount of time.
- Loaned personnel: employee is placed at a community agency for a specific period of time to work on a defined project requiring specific skills and expertise
- Social service leaves of absence: an extended leave at full pay, usually no more than one year, to work on a community project with a non-profit agency

Advantages:

- The volunteer gains in-depth insight into a community problem and is able to develop new skills
- The volunteer is able to take on a challenging, complex assignment and follow it to fruition
- Employee commitment to the company is strengthened
- Company's ability to target resources to specific community needs is enhanced and use of employees' energies is maximized.
- Company's commitment to volunteerism is demonstrated

Considerations:

- Cost to company can be prohibitive
- Eligibility must be determined on a one-to-one basis

The opportunity for long-term volunteer work is not available to all
Guarantees to the volunteers about returning to their regular jobs
Adjustment upon re-entry can be difficult
Development of a formal policy can be complex.
Role of management

Support from the top must be visible, continuous and consistent. Mid-level management should understand that they have the option to limit the number of employees participating so that their position and responsibilities are not compromised.

Single or Annual Projects

Corporate volunteer time and contribution dollars are focused on specific nonprofit endeavors or community problems. Projects may be duplicated throughout a national organization.

Some projects are employee directed. An elected or selected group of employees help the company determine the direction of involvement and may have decision making authority over a portion of the corporate contribution dollars.

Advantages:

- Easier to control and measure results
- Especially suitable for smaller companies or branch offices
- Easier to recruit first time volunteers who enjoy working with their friends and co-workers on a smaller projects.
- Good way to introduce volunteerism to the company – one shot projects can be low risk and low budget
- High visibility – especially if large numbers of volunteers are involved.

Considerations:

- May not match all employees' interests
- May have to arrange release time if project is done during regular working hours

Employee-Directed Projects

Advantages:

- Employee expertise and special knowledge of the community are brought back to the corporation
- Recruiting first-time volunteers is easier when they volunteer for a group project
- Group projects have strong visibility in the community and to other potential volunteers

Employees have a strong sense of ownership of the corporation's community involvement program

Considerations:

Clearly defined policies on utilization of company time and resources are needed
Because projects have higher visibility, they need to reflect an "appropriate" image of the company

Community Service Funds: Dollars and Volunteers

A company links contribution dollars to employee involvement with a nonprofit agency. This link can include a direct match of dollars and volunteer time. A combination match of employee time and money to company money, or the consideration of employee volunteer involvement when analyzing requests for corporate dollars. Or, the process may go the other way, with the company recruiting employee volunteers for projects it is financially supporting.

Advantages:

Employee involvement is recognized in tangible ways
There is more incentive for individuals to volunteer

Considerations:

Requires coordination of two, often separate, functions
Requires more extensive record keeping and agency checks
Need to set limits such as minimum and maximum gift and number of gifts each year

In-Kind Contributions

In-kind contributions may be linked with corporate volunteer programs. They can be used to directly support employee volunteer efforts, or may result from an employee request for help with the overall needs of a non-profit agency.

Advantages:

Good way to share resources with the community at a minimal cost to company
Backs up the employee's volunteer services with company goods and maximizes both contributions

Concerns:

Specific goods and services may not be available when they are needed
Overall volume of requests could exceed corporation's ability to fill them.