B Resource Guide: Community Service Programs

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I.   Why Have a Community Service Program?

Establishing a community service program for your company can lead to the following benefits:

- Building teamwork among employees
- Enabling staff to develop occupational skills
- Increasing employee commitment and goodwill towards your company
- Exemplifying company values of leadership and service
- Creating a vehicle for building new business relationships
- Generating positive PR for your company

II.   Community Service Program Models[1]

There are many different programs or policies you can choose when encouraging community service. The following initiatives can be used in combination with each other or alone, but each should be considered in relation to the company's capacity. Here are some of the most common volunteer options:

- **Individual Volunteer Matching:** Inform employees of volunteer opportunities, thought a variety of communication vehicles such as bulletin board notices, pay packet inserts, newsletters, intranet, and links to volunteer databases or volunteer fairs.
- **Work Release:** Allow employees time off, with pay, during regular working hours to volunteer.
- **Matching Time Leave:** Offer paid leave (similar to a worker's personal leave) specifically to pursue volunteerism. See, for example, Timberland's Service Sabbatical:
  http://www.timberland.com/timberlandserve/content.jsp?pageName=timserve_inf orm3b)
- **Corporate Volunteer Programs:** Assign a Volunteer Director to develop and coordinate volunteer activities company-wide. Examples include:
  - a) Single or Annual Projects: Focus and coordinate company efforts. For example, UPS organizes one week per year for employees worldwide to participate in organized, hands-on service activities. See:
    http://community.ups.com/volunteerism/gvw.html

b) <u>Employee-Directed Projects:</u> Encourage employees to create their own projects, supported by the company or the Volunteer Coordinator.

c) <u>Ongoing Partnerships with Specific Nonprofits:</u> Create an ongoing partnership with a nonprofit to concentrate and layer various activities for maximum commitment and impact. For example, see Timberland's partnership with nonprofit CityYear: http://www.winwinpartner.com/Branding/ssTimberland.html

d) <u>Management and Technical Assistance:</u> Match individuals with particular management and technical skills with nonprofit agencies that request help in those areas of expertise.

- **Awards:** Encourage a culture of volunteerism by giving awards to employees for community service, whether it is sponsored by the company or not.

- **Participation in Nonprofit Boards:** An attractive option for mid- to senior-level executives.

III.   <u>Identifying Appropriate Opportunities</u>

Before launching a community service initiative, you should work with employees to answer a number of key questions:

1. Which types of community service are employees most interested in? Are they open to volunteering for company-sponsored causes or agencies?

2. How will your volunteer program contribute to business goals, and which types of efforts best fulfill these goals?

3. What needs can your company's pool of human, physical, and financial resources best address?

4. Who will be responsible for volunteer coordination? Who will be responsible for creating a written community service policy and tracking the outputs of volunteerism (e.g., percentage of employees participating)?

5. How will the boundaries of volunteer work be determined? What is the company's policy on including work for religious or political organizations in the program?

6. How will the company articulate the importance of community service to employees? What incentives are best for encouraging high quality and quantity of work?

7. How will your company communicate its efforts and their results to the public?

Once you have determined the nature of community service that is best suited for your company, you can turn to the following resources to identify specific organizations and projects:

- **Corporate Volunteer Councils (CVCs).** These are local networks that businesses join to share effective practices and address community needs through workplace volunteering. A searchable US map of CVCs is available at: http://www.pointsoflight.org/networks/business/cvc/directory.cfm

- **VolunteerMatch**: Searchable database of nonprofit volunteer opportunities around the world. Also offers custom program design services and measurement tools to companies of all sizes. See: http://www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/

- **United Way:** Has regional locations that can provide referrals to partner organizations. Also has a nationwide searchable database of opportunities. See: http://www.unitedway.org and http://www.volunteersolutions.org/nfl-volunteer/volunteer/

- **The Nature Conservancy:** Contact your local chapter to find hands-on ways to help the environment in your community. See: http://www.nature.org/volunteer/

- **Idealist.org**: An extensive search engine of available volunteer jobs and organizations. See: http://www.idealist.org/

8. Community Service Examples
Here are some specific examples of best practices from companies of all sizes:

- White Dog Café, a Philadelphia restaurant and founding B Corporation, integrates its community service activities across many areas related to its business and social objectives. Activities include a restaurant mentoring program, community tours, and service days. See: http://www.whitedog.com/community.html

- Timberland drew on its own experiences to write an excellent guide to organizing a large-scale one-day service event. See: http://www.timberland.com/timberlandserve/files/TimberlandServiceToolKit.pdf

- Starbucks offers a range of programs and incentives for its employees, including a matching program that donates $10 to a charity for every hour that an employee volunteers there. See: http://www.starbucks.com/aboutus/givesback.asp

- UPS encourages volunteerism by honoring one employee annually with a prestigious award. See: http://community.ups.com/volunteerism/jim.html

9. Community Services Resources

   •   **The Points of Light Foundation** specializes in expanding volunteer
       participation. It offers technical support in developing corporate volunteer
       programs, workshops, and extensive literature on volunteer management. Here are
       two of its especially useful resources:
       o   Steps to Success for Small- to Medium-Sized Businesses
           http://www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/networks/business/Steps_to_
           Success_for_Small_Medium_Companies.pdf
       o   The Principles of Excellence: An Employee Volunteer Program
           Assessment includes a free calculator on its website to assess the impact of
           your employee volunteer program. See:
           http://www.pointsoflight.org/networks/business/

   •   **United Way-Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley** has some of the best
       documents on volunteer policies and programs. See:
       http://www.uwmb.org/company/volunteer.htm

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[1] http://www.uwmb.org/documents/cv_Corp_Vol_Program_Models.pdf