



Co-workers and Change Makers

Employee Volunteer Programs' Steps to Success for Small-to Medium-Sized Businesses

EVP 101

By harnessing the power of employee volunteering, small- and medium-sized businesses can affect a change in the way private enterprise contributes to public good. After all, at least 99 percent of employer firms in the United States and at least 51 percent of U.S. workers make up small-to medium-sized businesses, representing a major force for real change.*

Employee volunteer programs (EVPs) also offer great benefits to businesses and employee volunteers themselves. Reported benefits include enhanced employee loyalty, satisfaction, retention, recruiting, productivity, camaraderie and even stability during organizational changes. EVPs offer employees service-learning opportunities for professional development as volunteers practice increased management, professional or technical skills.

These programs also advance company visibility, networking and community relations. Savvy businesses underscore their own expertise by starting workplace volunteer programs that complement their area of business. Most importantly, long-term commitments to workplace volunteering create healthier and stronger communities — customers, neighbors, friends and families — a contribution that exceeds even the most innovative product or service.

To help you help others, the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network offers a spectrum of publications, customized technical assistance, seminars, conferences and networks with local Corporate Volunteer Councils and affiliate Volunteer Centers. This includes the Principles of Excellence for Workplace Volunteering, developed through years of research and collection of effective practices among business leaders in the field. These principles make up the backbone of this paper and help ensure that your programs benefit both the company and the community.



* U.S. Census Bureau. Table 2a: Employment Size of Employer Firms, 2003. "Statistics about Business Size (Including Small Businesses) from the U.S. Census Bureau." Page modified March 29, 2006. Page accessed April 20, 2006. <<http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/smallbus.html>>. (Calculated using employer firms with up to 499 employees.)

ACT: PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE FOR WORKPLACE VOLUNTEERING

1. Acknowledge that the workplace's employee volunteer efforts contribute to the achievement of its business goals.
2. Commit to establish, support and promote an employee volunteer program that encourages the involvement of every employee and manage the employee volunteer program like any other business function.
3. Target workplace volunteering at serious social problems in the community.

EVP STEPS TO SUCCESS

1) Assess Employee Interests and Community Needs The interests of the employee volunteer and the community are equally important. *Targeting* volunteer efforts at community problems will bring tangible results and outcomes for the program, employees and the community. Therefore, it is necessary to assess accurately community needs. In order to find community needs, contact your local Volunteer Center at 1-800-Volunteer or visit 1-800-Volunteer.org and ask about an assessment of community needs. To identify employee interests, send a short survey and use the information you gather to develop activities that the employees will enjoy and that also will fill an important need in the community.

2) Meet Business Objectives

The company should put together a work plan and strive to meet it. The plan will include goals, resources and promotional strategy. Like any business plan, target existing assets and untapped opportunities that could jumpstart the program. Also, the EVPs should be primarily employee-driven with direction from senior management and community members. In addition, develop volunteer projects that capitalize on the existing, distinctive skills of the business and its employees. Also, when planning your EVP, choose activities that support the company's goals and objectives.

Stats at a Glance: Why EVP?

- Eighty-seven percent of Americans believe it is important for businesses to offer employees volunteer opportunities
- Seventy-two percent of working Americans — and 87 percent of working students over 18 — would choose to work for a business that supports charitable causes when deciding between identical offers and jobs
- ¹Sixty-three percent of respondents find volunteering has had a positive effect on their career
- Sixty-one percent of Americans believe EVPs communicate company values
- ²Fifty-six percent of Americans think workplace volunteer opportunities improve employee morale
- ³Thirty percent of employees involved in workplace volunteering are more likely to want to continue working for their company and help make it successful



¹Deloitte & Touche USA LLP and the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network, Volunteer IMPACT Survey, 2006

²Deloitte & Touche USA LLP, Corporate Community Involvement Survey, 2004

³Walker Information Inc. and the Council on Foundations, The Walker Loyalty Report: Volunteerism, Philanthropy, and US Employees, 2003

Alibris is an e-commerce company in Oakland, Calif., that supplies hard-to-find books to retailers, distributors, libraries and book-lovers around the world. With roughly 100 employees, most people on staff are generally interested in books, literature, publishing and reading; therefore, its volunteer program centers on books and literacy. Alibris employees tutor individuals at targeted schools. With one “partner” school, the company helped write, design and publish a fundraising cookbook, capitalizing on the expertise of Alibris employees.

3) Obtain Top Management Support

It is critical that the president, CEO or top manager believes in the program and leads by example. Top management must encourage employee participation and directly acknowledge it. For programs to be successful, management needs to acknowledge publicly the importance of workplace volunteering and to commit resources to it. Management should also take a lead role in encouraging, highlighting and rewarding employee volunteer efforts. To build and/or maintain executive support, target ways to leverage the EVP for publicity and other benefits.

4) Partner with Others

Create valuable relationships with other businesses such as vendors, suppliers, customers and clients for larger impact and consider partnering with schools and nonprofit organizations. Work through your local Corporate Volunteer Council and Volunter Center to network with other companies. Take advantage of national volunteer opportunities such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Make a Difference Day, Family Volunteer Day, National Volunteer Week and Join Hands Day. For more information on national days of service, visit www.PointsofLight.org.

Since many hands make light work, target effective

partnerships to leverage the resources necessary for addressing serious, systemic social problems in the community.

5) Align Volunteering with Financial Contributions and In-Kind Support

Target opportunities to maximize your company’s philanthropic efforts by piggybacking employee volunteering with donations of services, materials or money your business or its president already provides to local groups. Target volunteer activities that support the same nonprofit groups that received the company’s donations. This way, the company’s donations and employee volunteering will reinforce one another.

Consider *committing* to an ongoing relationship with a nonprofit group to focus your philanthropy. Also, consider developing a “Dollars for Doers” program, in which businesses award employees with monies specifically to be donated to the nonprofit where they are volunteering. This accomplishes two goals at once, melding employee recognition with company contributions.

6) Measure the Program and Evaluate Results

Like all business strategies, volunteer activities should be evaluated based on return on investment. *Commit* to analyzing results from regular evaluations and measuring

Georgia Natural Gas has only about 70 employees, but every single manager and 70 percent of its employees have joined the TrueBlue Crew to volunteer. Focusing on helping its most vulnerable constituents, children and the elderly, the TrueBlue Crew has built partnerships and relationships with neighborhoods, schools and senior’s organizations. They have been honored by Georgia’s First Lady as one of only 20 corporate “Champions for Children” and they have received the 2005 Award for Excellence in Workplace Volunteer Programs.

Adams and Reese is a multi-disciplinary law firm with more than 500 attorneys and staff in nine offices in the South-Central United States and Washington, D.C. One of the most extraordinary benefits of working at Adams and Reese is the opportunity to participate in Hope, Understanding, Giving and Support (HUGS), the firm's nationally recognized EVP. Attorneys at all levels — from associates to senior partners — participate in HUGS activities and events, and they are well known throughout the region and the nation for their commitment to community action. Adams and Reese is a proud recipient of the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network's Awards for Excellence in Workplace Volunteer Programs.

the outcomes that the EVP brings to the company, employees and the community. This will enable you to assess current partnerships based on agreed-upon goals, and to gauge other indicators of EVP impact. Consider evaluations and analysis with nonprofit partners and employees, thereby spreading the work, while reaping further benefits from the continued nonprofit partnership and volunteering that result from a collaborative evaluation.

You will often be asked to “make the business case” for developing, expanding and revising your EVP based on program outcomes or results. Regular evaluations, therefore, are critical to the quality and longevity of your

EVP. Furthermore, no business is too small or budget too tight to conduct and benefit from even the simplest evaluation.

You can create a straightforward and cost-effective self-reporting form for employees to complete, which will let you show number and type of volunteer hours, people involved, number of organizations/individuals served, and dollars raised or dollar value of the work provided. Evaluations can also help you monitor employee satisfaction with the EVP, public awareness of your efforts and the program's impact for your company.

7) Establish a Recognition or Awards Program

Commit to supporting your EVP with policies and practices that encourage optimum participation. Policies and practices may include release time, flex time, continuous improvement practices for volunteer events, participation goals, rewards and funds for program expenses.

In particular, *commit* to spearheading a program to recognize and reward employees' volunteer efforts, using certificates, coupons, vouchers, other gifts and/or events. Favorites include CEO receptions or luncheons that occur at least annually. Nominate your EVP for community service awards from the Chamber of Commerce, local Volunteer Center, Mayor or Governor's office, major newspapers, or the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network.

8) Publicize Your Efforts, both Internally and Externally

Commit to consistently communicating the company's corporate social vision to external and internal



stakeholders. Utilize several communications techniques available to you, such as e-mail alerts and newsletters, the company's Web site, publications, the company's intranet, in-house bulletin boards, press releases,

media outreach, retail displays, regular advertising and direct mail. In this way, you will grow involvement and recognition, as well as ensure your volunteer service goes further in solving serious social problems.

Windsor Electric Co., Inc., an electrical contracting firm in Owings Mills, Md., with more than 100 employees, partnered with a local high school to provide training in construction trades. Windsor electricians provided technical assistance to the teachers, helped build the classrooms and provided manuals and supplies to get the program started. Students who complete the program successfully are promised assistance with employment through the Associated Builders and Contractors. Windsor Electric now has a steady flow of trained electricians made up of graduates from local high schools.



Just Born, Inc., the makers of MIKE AND IKE®, HOT TAMALES® and PEEPS® candy in Bethlehem, Pa., recognizes its volunteers annually with a Volunteer Celebration. In 2006, this celebration was an Ice Cream Social held exclusively for volunteers only. In 2007, they plan to celebrate in January to thank their associates for the previous year of volunteer service. The week is marked with special postings and articles in the company newsletter. The Co-CEO's and President give their special thanks to volunteers.

The [Points of Light Corporate Institute](#) is the go-to resource for community-minded companies looking to build and expand effective employee volunteer programs. With our global network of 250 affiliates and a team of experts, we can help you create a customized volunteer program, engage your employees, learn best practices, network with other leading companies, and gain visibility for leadership and excellence.

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