

# Engaging Employee Volunteers

## Engaging Employee Volunteers: Is Your Organization Ready?

Increasingly, businesses are encouraging their employees and retirees to get involved in local community service. Since the 1970s, companies have turned to augmenting their cash and in-kind giving with volunteer resources. Despite economic shifts, the business value of volunteering has never been stronger. Today, employee volunteer programs offer time off to employees during work hours to enhance the company's image in the community and promote employee loyalty and morale.

### Nonprofits working with employee volunteer programs (EVPs) need to provide:

- Sufficient lead time
- Specific task descriptions
- Clarity on who supplies what
- Attention to risk management
- Realistic estimate of number of volunteers needed
- Ability to engage all volunteers effectively
- Appropriate recognition of volunteer and business efforts
- Assessment and evaluation of employee volunteer involvement and program effectiveness

### Questionnaire:

Before your nonprofit engages employee volunteers, you need to know if your organization is ready to work with volunteers. Check out this simple questionnaire. Answers to these questions will help you ascertain your organization's readiness. You may want to use the sheet as a way to start a discussion in your organization with other staff members who are interested in starting a volunteer program.

Do you have in place the management skills and systems needed to involve volunteers effectively?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Has the organization made the commitment to provide the resources, leadership, and management support (paid or volunteer) that a successful volunteer program will require?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Engaging Employee Volunteers

*(Questionnaire continued from page 1)*

Based on your “gut” feeling, is your organization ready to have volunteers involved in its work? Estimate your feeling on a scale of one to six, where one is very comfortable and six is very uncomfortable. \_\_

Based on your “gut” feeling, is your organization comfortable with having volunteers in its work? Estimate your feeling on a scale of one to six, where one is very comfortable and six is very uncomfortable. \_\_\_\_\_

Check off all the answers for which you can say “Yes”:

\_\_\_\_\_ The Board of Directors and/or senior management have stated that working more effectively with business volunteers and donors is important for the organization.

\_\_\_\_\_ We do have volunteers and some are from employee volunteer programs.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are developing our strategic plans to work more effectively with volunteers and donors. These plans include specific strategies for business volunteers as well as volunteers from other sources.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are well on our way with staff trained and systems in place, but not much experience using formal volunteer management systems for recruitment, training, assessment, and recognition.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are successfully working with business volunteers now.

Please put a check by any of the following for which your organization is currently using written procedures and materials.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer recruitment

\_\_\_\_\_ Training for staff and volunteers

\_\_\_\_\_ Position descriptions for staff and volunteers

\_\_\_\_\_ Assessment or evaluation for staff and volunteers

\_\_\_\_\_ Assessment or evaluation for program and administrative operations

\_\_\_\_\_ Ongoing recognition program for staff and volunteers



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## Engaging Employee Volunteers

### Reasons businesses invest in employee volunteer programs

Eighty-one percent of businesses with EVPs says they use volunteering as part of an overall strategy to address critical business needs (1999 Study); 48% incorporate their volunteer program into company-wide business planning.

Volunteer opportunities developed for employee volunteers should help the nonprofit meet its mission and address the motivations of both the business and its employees.

#### Employee volunteer program (EVP) Interests

Education 91%  
 Youth 85%  
 Health and Human Services 82%  
 Environment 63%  
 Hunger 56%  
 Homelessness 52%  
 Elderly Needs 49%  
 Diversity 45%  
 Welfare to Work 29%  
 Racism 14%

#### Volunteer Motivations for Businesses:

- Develops workforce skills
- Is a recruitment tool
- Is a retention strategy
- Increases productivity
- Adds to employee and family well-being
- Increases the quality of community life
- Builds consumer loyalty

#### Volunteer Motivations for Employees:

- Develop workforce skills
- Can make a difference
- Learn to handle increased responsibility
- Spend quality time with families
- Use non-job-related skills
- Source of friendship and fun

#### Nonprofit Partners Bring the Following to Business Partners Engaged in Volunteering:

- Offer public relations boost
- Enhance marketing and communications
- Develop employee skills
- Add to recruitment and retention of employees
- Show the value of diversity



**Need your volunteer management questions answered?  
 Contact [nonprofit.gov@PointsofLight.org](mailto:nonprofit.gov@PointsofLight.org)!**

## Engaging Employee Volunteers

### Elements for Successful Business-Nonprofit Volunteer Relationships

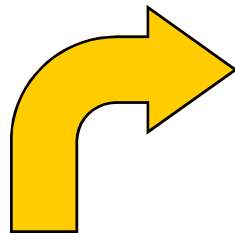
According to the Boston College Center for Corporate Community Relations, the following elements are key to the development of successful business and nonprofit volunteer relationships.

#### Successful business partners:

- Run highly focused employee volunteer programs
- Leverage expertise
- Solicit experts to shape the community involvement program and the partnership
- Integrate the program within the existing for-profit infrastructure
- Identify executive-level community champions
- Involve all company stakeholders, investors, employees, and business partners
- Invest all locales in which the company has a presence
- Use multiple resources to respond to community needs
- Plan ways to give consistently, even during lean times

#### Successful nonprofit partners:

- Communicate the programs cost-effectiveness and the organization's resourcefulness
- Provide business the opportunity to demonstrate community leadership
- Leverage existing corporate participation by facilitating their ability to recruit peers to join
- Give business complete autonomy to organize their part of the program or project
- Are flexible and familiar with business volunteer interests
- Publicize business participation in the program or project



**Fill Out the Worksheet on Page 5 to Answer the Question: Does Your Volunteer Program Have What Employee Volunteers Need!**



## Engaging Employee Volunteers

### Does Your Volunteer Program Have What Employee Volunteers Need?

What has worked for your volunteer program in the past when you worked with employee volunteers?

What worked for businesses in the past when they placed their employees with your volunteer program?

What do employee volunteer program managers in the businesses you are targeting want?

What do employee volunteer program managers in the businesses you are targeting not want?

Record three things you want to change or fine-tune about your volunteer opportunities for corporate volunteers.

In order to change or fine-tune these opportunities, what does your agency need to do?



# Engaging Employee Volunteers

## Hints and tips on engaging employee volunteers

**Challenges you will have to take into consideration when working with an employee volunteer program:**

**Finding appropriate volunteer opportunities that:**

- Are with a business that wants to work with YOUR program
- Match the business organization's goals for its employee program
- Match the business organization's interest areas (e.g. a pharmaceutical company may prefer employees offer educational workshop in schools on chemistry, or tutor science students)
- Match the time employee's have available (8-hours of paid week-day time per month; after work hours; weekends)
- Provide opportunities for teams of employees to work together
- Provide family volunteering opportunities for working parents

**Ways your volunteer program can meet these challenges:**

- Contact your local Volunteer Center (1-800-VOLUNTEER) for leads on businesses wanting to place employees.
- Make appointments with employee volunteer program managers at businesses that donate to you (they've already shown a commitment to your organization).
- Don't forget small businesses; small businesses and corporations represent the majority of the new jobs in the U.S.; small businesses are also often family-owned and are a good way to recruit family volunteers.
- Start with an "informational interview" to learn what the businesses needs before making a formal proposal.
- Meet with the employee volunteer program (EVP) manager and find out what the business expects from volunteer opportunities and what types of skills employees have to offer a volunteer program; find out what the organization's interest areas are.
- Find out if the company has already done an employee volunteer needs assessment to see what times and types of projects for which they prefer to volunteer or if they would welcome family volunteering projects, etc..
- Get a copy of the mission statement for the business and/or the EVP; companies that have effective employee volunteer programs often have their volunteer commitment written into their mission statement.
- Once you believe your volunteer program and the business are a match, make the proposal in person; bring an outline and a few supporting documents and don't overwhelm the contact with paper.

*(Continued on page 7)*



# Engaging Employee Volunteers

*(Continued from page 6)*

## Tips for Nonprofits:

- Organize a half-day needs assessment retreat for your organization center around the question: “If we had more time or expertise, we would...” This exercise can help you create a more abundant selection of volunteer opportunities that address the important organizational needs your staff can not currently address. It is also the first step toward realizing the potential of professionals, and towards helping staff see volunteers as a resource and not competition.
- Even if your needs are immediate and short-term, work with the employee volunteer program so that you build a long-term relationship with them.
- Draft project descriptions with clearly state goals and objectives and engage volunteers in designing the implementation strategy.
- Design project-based volunteer opportunities that reflect the long-term volunteer involvement your organization desires.
- Consider what short-term, high impact project you can create that will make use of the skills adults have accumulated in their work lives.
- Explore volunteer position sharing and team volunteering options when developing projects.
- Think creatively about projects that could be done by groups of volunteers at various times throughout the year.
- Design and frame your volunteer projects as if you were engaging consultants or project managers. Let volunteers play an active role in setting project goals, procedures and timelines to help build their commitment to the work.
- Provide opportunities for advancement. Reward increased commitment and accomplishments with increased recognition and responsibility.
- Ask employee volunteers what skills they wish to develop or competencies they need to demonstrate.
- Develop a volunteer track for volunteers specifically looking for continued and increased involvement.



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2. **Engaging Corporate Volunteers Effectively, and**
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For more information on Points of Light Trainings, contact [training@PointsofLight.org](mailto:training@PointsofLight.org) or visit [www.PointsofLight.org/training](http://www.PointsofLight.org/training)

4. **50+ Volunteering: Working for Stronger Communities, Points of Light Foundation, Washington, DC, 2003.**

For more information, visit [www.PointsofLight.org/catalog](http://www.PointsofLight.org/catalog)

