

Creating the Win-Win Scenario for Employee Volunteer Programs

by Tessa Srebro (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/author/tsrebro/>) / 📅 08. September 2016 / 🏢 Working with Nonprofits (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/category/working-with-nonprofits/>) / 💬 0

Guest post by Jerome Tennille

As corporate social responsibility (CSR) gains popularity, it's no surprise that over 60% of companies in the United States have created programs addressing social, environmental and economic challenges in their communities. Recently, philanthropic involvement has evolved beyond just monetary contribution, and now often includes employee engagement.

However, matching employees' skills and interests with the needs of a nonprofit can be tricky, as objectives can conflict. When there's conflict preventing collaboration as a unit, both parties suffer. But when CSR programs strategically align with the nonprofit they're serving, the result is meaningful engagement for employees as well as measurable impact for the nonprofit.

Whether you're giving a financial contribution or employee volunteers, this union starts with knowing your goals, asking the right questions, and understanding it's a two-way street. Both the nonprofit and the CSR program need to be held accountable.

The nonprofit as a stakeholder:

It's important that the nonprofit you're serving is seen as a stakeholder. After all, you're giving them your assets, time and money in most cases. To be effective, the nonprofit needs to align with your brand, serve (or be) your customers, or be tied into the mission of your company. Like other stakeholders, there's an amount of accountability the nonprofit needs to bare.

- **Hold the nonprofit accountable for reporting the impact of the resources they receive.** This can include how much and what type of resources they receive, how it's tracked and managed, and which programs volunteers serve. *This will create material the CSR program can use in future recruitment, impact reports and communication to customers and the community.*
- **Do research before forming partnerships.** Create "selection criteria" to screen potential nonprofit partners. Work with the chosen nonprofit to identify their gaps in services and identify a strategic fit for your company. *When you connect your company brand with a nonprofit that can benefit from your services, they'll become advocates for your company. This boosts marketing, media and public relations material and can help create community in an era where people shop with their hearts.*

Establishing much-needed employee buy-in:

Being supported by those participating is key to program effectiveness. Simply giving money in a philanthropic role is becoming less common. With the disappearance of such practices, incorporating employees in community outreach has enabled companies to transcend the traditional "money only" outlook. This contributes to stakeholder relationships and value, eliminating "greenwashing" and the perception of inauthentic motivations, thus enhancing the reputation of community service.

- **Link employee volunteer program with business issues.** Align the company to nonprofit with like-minded missions, values or challenges. It will strengthen a relationship that's mutually beneficial, enhancing public image, while creating an established branded volunteer program. *It also cultivates an environment of emotional investment, connecting the dots between employee efforts and understanding the relevance to the company. Employees aligned with CSR programs express increased loyalty, pride, and organizational attachment.*
- **Create a CSR module for employee orientation.** This will help you communicate the strategic CSR goals to new employees. *Keeping employees abreast of the goals, what the company stands for and where to get more information is important to aligning them with the vision of the CSR program and how it benefits the nonprofit you're serving. This also demonstrates to new employees that the CSR program is an important pillar of the company strategy.*
- **Create opportunities for employees to develop skills or acquire new ones.** Think about the talent pool of employees and how they may meet the skills demanded by the nonprofit. They may have an ability to learn about project management, communication, negotiating, networking and



budgeting. *This can be a grooming opportunity for younger employees or those looking to be in management positions.*

Solutions by VolunteerMatch brings skilled volunteer opportunities directly to the hands of your employees. Learn more. (<http://transform.volunteermatch.org/I/33352/2016-09-08/77k8q1>)

Be authentic, period:

Most nonprofits can immediately identify when a company doesn't have their best interest in mind. They'll see through the smoke and mirrors (especially marketing or public relations stunts) because what's being offered won't satisfy or align with their mission requirements.

- **Listen to the nonprofit's needs.** The CSR program isn't the subject matter expert in challenges plaguing the nonprofit. Put the onus on the nonprofit to identify where they need help. *Through an effective partnership, you'll bring together diverse capabilities of both your company and the nonprofit. This will allow you to leverage your core competency as a company while arriving at the correct solution with the nonprofit.*
- **Overtly promote CSR aspirations.** Transparency of actions, goals and impact are ways to help employee volunteers trust that the CSR program motives are authentic. *By openly reporting the goals, achievements and impact with internal stakeholders, you create an environment of self-policing and trust, where employees will also hold the CSR program accountable to show they're having a positive impact.*

Equal skin in the game is the roadmap to success:

Value needs to be gained by both parties. Using strategic CSR helps identify and address the long-term goals and needs of both the company and the nonprofit. Avoiding the "cookie cutter" CSR approach means taking a deeper look at measuring impact and assisting in a way that goes beyond the "team building exercise" or marketing ploy. The results pay dividends.

Asking your nonprofit partners what they value will help you start the conversation the right way. Always remember, however, that this is a two-way street, which also means equal sharing of the risks. In these types of relationships, it needs to be made clear that there's a shared risk and shared reward, as businesses can no longer be seen as "cash cows" by nonprofits, and nonprofits need to do more to prove that they're worthy of the support.

After all, with 1.5 million registered nonprofits in the United States, companies need to be diligent, do their homework and require that the nonprofit does the same.

Bio: Jerome Tennille is Certified in Volunteer Administration, currently serving as the Manager of Volunteer Services at Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. With over four years in the nonprofit industry, he's also on the Board of Directors for Peace Through Action USA, a national nonprofit social purpose organization missioned to achieve peace between people and their communities in the United States.



You might like:

1. **Building a Flexible – and Sustainable – Volunteer Engagement Program** (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2012/01/19/building-a-flexible-and-sustainable-volunteer-engagement-program/>)
2. **CSR Food for Thought: Evaluating CSR Programs** (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2012/11/30/csr-food-for-thought-evaluating-csr-programs/>)
3. **How To Make Volunteerism Shine in Your CSR Report** (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2012/09/10/how-to-make-volunteerism-shine-in-your-csr-report/>)
4. **CSR Food for Thought: The Latest Snapshot of Giving Trends** (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2012/12/14/csr-food-for-thought-the-latest-snapshot-of-giving-trends/>)

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment

Name *

Email *

Website

POST COMMENT

Previous [Get to Know NetSuite, Finalist for 2016 Employee Volunteer Program of the Year](http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2016/09/06/get-to-know-netsuite-finalist-for-2016-employee-volunteer-program-of-the-year/)

(<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2016/09/06/get-to-know-netsuite-finalist-for-2016-employee-volunteer-program-of-the-year/>)

Next [Get to Know Hagerty, Finalist for 2016 Employee Volunteer Program of the Year](http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2016/09/13/get-to-know-hagerty-finalist-for-2016-employee-volunteer-program-of-the-year/) (<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2016/09/13/get-to-know-hagerty-finalist-for-2016-employee-volunteer-program-of-the-year/>)

ARE YOU A GOOD COMPANY?

Sign up for GoodCompanies,
our monthly CSR newsletter:

First Name *


Last Name *

Email *

Company

ARCHIVES

Select Month ▼

 (http://www.twitter.com/vm_solutions)  (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/volunteermatch-solutions>)



© 2016 VolunteerMatch Solutions All rights reserved.