**Community Recommendations for Companies**

**Topic:** How to Start with Corporate Volunteering

**Michaela Chaloupková,** Member of the Management Board and CSR Leader, CEZ Group

“If an employee volunteer programme is setup correctly, it should be beneficial to all – an NGO, local community, a company and its employees. The company builds a positive brand image, strengthens cohesion at workplace, and creates bonds between employees. It is becoming more and more frequent that interviewees ask about the possibilities of employee volunteering – which seems to be a strong motivating factor for younger generation in particular.”

**How Helping Others Adds Value to Your Business**

A relationship between a company and community does not have to be nurtured solely via financial or non-financial donations. Corporate volunteer programmes represent a continuously growing form of corporate philanthropy. Companies actively involve their employees in volunteering activities and providing support to their community. Such practice interconnects two crucial aspects of responsible entrepreneurship – one being positive contribution to society, the other provable positive impact on employees, their motivation and overall performance.

**By supporting volunteering activities, your company...**

- contributes to positive changes in its surroundings and the whole country;
- builds a positive brand image – the company is being viewed on as a good neighbour;
- wins new regional and local contracts;
- increases employees’ loyalty by connecting company values to their personal values;
- provides employees with a unique opportunity to develop their communication skills and creativity;
- develops a positive workplace culture;
- opens up to innovations and unconventional procedures thanks to the contact with non-profit sector;
- offers employees unique and entertaining teambuilding activities.

**DO YOU KNOW...?**

- 74 % of employees claim that they are more fulfilled with their work if they are offered a possibility to work also on projects which have a positive impact on their community. (*Cone Communications Employee Engagement Study, 2016*)
- 81 % of employees who volunteer think that volunteering is a key factor in strengthening and improving relations with co-workers. (*Health and Volunteering Study, United Health Group, 2013*)
- Engaged employees invest up to 57 % more effort to their work and the probability that they will show disinterest and resignation on their job is up to 87 % lower than for unengaged employees. (*PwC Study: The keys to corporate responsibility employee engagement, 2014*)
- 80 % of employees are convinced that thanks to active participation in volunteering activities they develop leadership skills more easily. (*Deloitte Impact Survey, 2016*)
Business Leaders Forum Recommends

If your company has no or little experience in volunteering and is open to dedicate time to it, it is recommended to take upon a systematic approach right from the start. At first glance, volunteering might seem as a fun activity which rests on a good will of all participants but, in fact, an effective setup of corporate volunteer programme is a rather lengthy process that demands involvement and cooperation of different departments in the company.

Talk Your Boss into it

Getting support from the management is key. Members of the upper management should lead by example, and this is especially true when introducing corporate volunteering. Only then employees will understand that volunteering is far more than a PR activity. It is primarily about expressing the values your company holds.

Magdaléna Dobišová, Deputy Chairman of the Management Board, Skanska SK, Chief Officer Ethics, D&I

“If you want to feel the taste, just dive in. In order to persuade your management, you need to communicate patiently and argue objectively. Managers are in favour of brief, clear and quantifiable arguments. I am personally convinced that investment into community provides a significant competitive advantage. People in villages, towns, and cities see us building, creating dust and causing some discomfort. However, as soon as they see us helping their community, relationships move to a different level. It is also through volunteering activities that we manage to open a way to better communication and future cooperation.”

Best Practice

One of the biggest employers in Eastern Slovakia, U.S. Steel Košice, has been systematically developing a programme of corporate volunteering since 2007. From the very beginning, the management has been supportive of such initiative and considered helping improve the quality of life in the community, of which they are an inherent part, as something totally natural. Every year, during Volunteering Days, the top management becomes personally involved in the activities organized by an NGO which is close to their heart. They usually bring their families or their team and work side-by-side with others – they paint, cut the grass, lay concrete, etc.

Scott Buckiso,
President of U.S. Steel Košice

I am proud of hundreds of employees from our company who year after year prove by their enthusiasm and industriousness how much we can do for others. I like Volunteering Days, when I am told by others what I should do. We work for the community as one team and volunteering together enriches us all.”

Do You Know...?

Corporate volunteering can help you attract millennials to your company. According to Deloitte Impact Survey 2016, corporate volunteering programmes are of great importance also to people who do not normally participate in volunteering activities in their free time. Up to 61% of the representatives of the so-called Generation Y (born between years 1980 and 2000) consider taking on active responsibility towards community and its surroundings an important criterion when choosing future employer.
The concept of corporate volunteerism is not yet formally recognized by the Slovak law. The Slovak legislation recognises only the term of a volunteer as a natural person, which is regulated under a separate act. From the point of view of the Slovak Labour Code, we distinguish three types of volunteerism: 1) employee volunteering in their time off from work, 2) during working time, and 3) activity by virtue of an agreement on volunteering activity according to special regulation, i.e. volunteering within a project from an employer. In case of the third type of volunteerism recognized by law, an employer has a rather wide range of competencies in setting the conditions such as deciding about entitlement to wage or wage compensation, number of days in volunteering, etc.

An employer is not obliged by law to insure an employee for this special purpose. Insurance coverage for volunteering purposes is solely up to employer’s consideration. It is, however, important to contractually secure employee's agreement (either embedded in an employment contract or as a separate document), set conditions for volunteering activities and determine their length (either in an employment contract, collective agreement, or internal regulations).

**Marek Laca**, International Law Firm bnt attorneys-at-law

"It is crucial that these conditions are set equally for all employees, having in mind especially the risk of discrimination which can be objected to by the employees."

**Zuzana Chudáčková**, International Law Firm bnt attorneys-at-law

"In our view, the easiest way for the company is to involve the employees into volunteering activities during their working time. Such solution would motivate the employees the most and, from the legislative point of view, it is also relatively simple. Considering the Labour Code, volunteering during working time can be viewed upon as an obstacle to work on the employer’s side; therefore, it is solely on their consideration if this will be deemed as time off with or without entitlement to wage compensation."

**BEST PRACTICE**

**Skanska SK** is convinced that a good construction company can be also a good neighbour. In 2014, the company started a programme called Give a Hand. In the first year they chose one particular day but many of the employees could not participate due to certain working tasks that could not be postponed. Hence, since 2015, employees can, after the agreement with their management to make sure they do not jeopardize construction works, choose themselves one day within Week of Volunteering. Since 2017, a possibility to spend one day of a year on volunteering is guaranteed by the collective agreement. For legal purposes, this day is considered as a day off work with entitlement to wage compensation in the amount of the minimum wage.

**Internal Communication is a Key to Success**

How will your employees learn about a possibility to participate in a volunteering activity? How will you convince them about the benefits such activities will bring to them? What means will you use to get a feedback and how will you communicate the company’s feedback?

No matter what means you will choose, either an internal magazine (e.g. an interview with volunteers from the previous year), posters and leaflets in the company premises (or even in lockers, corridors, or behind windscreens wipers), or company’s intranet (for instance, an attention-grabbing video), the communication has to be clear, comprehensive and non-exclusive. Companies often assign volunteer coordinators (usually a person from the human resources department) or at least so called ambassadors across organizational structure. These provide information about the prepared activities and motivate people to participate. Team leaders or managers of greater teams can become volunteer ambassadors as well and promote volunteering as a teambuilding activity.

It is advised to give a space to the employees to choose activities on their own as well as decide whether they provide a feedback or not.
Magdaléna Dobišová, Deputy Chairman of the Management Board, Skanska SK, Chief Officer Ethics, D&I

“Our employees create on the intranet their own teams, designate a team leader and choose an activity in the given area. After the activity, they upload pictures, share their experiences and overall impressions, and provide feedback.”

BEST PRACTICE

The company DELL does not assign volunteer coordinators and the activities are decentralized to individual departments. This system seems to work as there is 60 to 70 % involvement of the employees in volunteering activities. DELL does not put a limitation on a number of hours/days that can be spent volunteering. Employees can choose from a wide range of activities listed on the intranet or they can be initiative and come up with their own suggestions. In 2016, when the company was only starting with volunteering, they organized a fair called Community Open Day where employees could get to know better the NGOs DELL cooperates with. One of the motivation factors in the company is that since 2010 employees can mark the hours they volunteered in the global system. Those who volunteer at least for ten hours per quarter get a financial voucher which they can use to support an NGO to their liking.

Jana Hudecová, Programme Manager, DELL

“I recommend companies to implement volunteering gradually. A few years ago we had a good experience when we added a small volunteering activity to a teambuilding. Back then the average age of our employees was 26 years and the proportion of teambuilding and volunteering was 90 % to 10 %. This proportion was slowly changing and today we perceive volunteering as a teambuilding activity.”

Start Small

The easiest way to start with corporate volunteering is to get in touch with an experienced partner. Such partner will provide organizational and administrative support for volunteering event and establish connections between the company and relevant NGOs. The cooperation can relate to a volunteering activity tailored according to a company’s requirements or a company can join a collective event already scheduled for a given time of the year, a benefit of which is its significant promotion by mass media. One example could be Give & Gain Day, an event initiated by British charity Business in the Community. The biggest event of corporate volunteering in Slovakia and, in fact, in the entire Central Europe, is Naše Mesto (Our City) which is organized by the Pontis Foundation.

Marek Richter,
Programme Manager, Pontis Foundation

“Our City is about helping a little but being a part of a big change. Managers, accountants, production employees from all over Slovakia put on the same T-shirts, grasp a brush or a shovel, and during two days jointly help turn our country into a better place. We try to meet the requirements of the companies for which June is not suitable and organize separate volunteering events for them as well.”

TRY THESE ON YOUR COLLEAGUES:

• personal invitation from the upper management (via email or letter)
• meeting chaired in Our City T-shirt from the previous year
• sweet surprise for those who signed up first
• cake from the boss for the team brought directly to the place of volunteering activity
• barbecue for all after the activity
• award from the management/team photography
Establish a Long-Term Relationship

Volunteerism is not only about work but also about relationships. A one-time volunteering activity such as Our City provides a solid ground for establishing a long-term cooperation between a company and an NGO. It is via long-term cooperation that companies and NGOs can get inspirations from each other and together achieve a change with a greater and lasting effect. Such cooperation can take a form of activities repeating on a yearly basis but also of a year-long programme during which employees provide regular help to a chosen NGO. Both sides of the cooperation should enter into this relationship with an open mind and, right at the beginning, set clear expectations about the cooperation and aims they want to achieve.

New York Cares volunteering event served as an inspiration for Our City. We managed to bring the idea over to Bratislava in 2007. Together twenty companies and NGOs participated in the first year. Ten years later, Our City is a national event taking place in 32 cities and 20 towns and villages and more than 130 companies get involved. In June 2017, over ten thousand volunteers (of it six thousand from companies) took part in almost five hundred activities. Thanks to the enthusiasm of volunteers, dozens of public areas get revitalized during two days in June every year. We paint kindergarten and school premises, clean water trails, clean up illegal dumps and so on. The sign up for the companies and NGOs to this event is done via the Pontis Foundation portal www.nasemesto.sk.

Best Practice

Valentina Šešerová,
Social Impact Lead, HPE

“Our employees, who decided to spend a portion of their working and free time in this way carry out the activities voluntarily and with conviction. It gives them a possibility to realize themselves and reconsider their own values and attitudes. They often exchange with seniors their experience, or pieces of life advice. It is a two-way process of giving and receiving.”

Katarina Gazdíková,
Public Affairs Manager,
Kia Motors Slovakia

“Employees’ attitude stems primarily from their self-motivation. They appreciate the chance to see the world from a different angle, the possibility to leave behind a great piece of work which represents a systematic help to others.”

Best Practice

Since 2008, Kia Motors Slovakia has been organizing blood donations and volunteering activities in almost twenty NGOs several times a year. They established a long-term cooperation with a dog shelter in Mojiš. They clean and disinfect kennels, help feed animals, and take them for a walk. They get to know the shelter’s employees well and sometimes come and visit the shelter also during their free time.
DO YOU KNOW...?

Managers, in general, fancy exact numbers and volunteering activity can be translated into numbers as well. In 2016, the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations developed a methodology for calculation and documentation of economic value of volunteer activity. The Platform lists at their website four different variants for calculations one can choose from: http://bit.ly/Vypocet_Dobrovolnictvo

1 Besides manual activities, professional assistance or so called expert volunteering is becoming a new standard. Experts from companies apply their professional skills in the field of law, IT or marketing to support NGOs. In these recommendations we deal primarily with manual volunteering activities as they normally stand at the beginning of building corporate volunteer programme.

2 http://bit.ly/Employee_Engagement_1
5 http://bit.ly/Employee_Engagement_4
6 http://bit.ly/Employee_Engagement_4

Special thanks to the representatives of member companies in Business Leaders Forum: HPE, Kia Motors Slovakia, Skanska SK, U.S. Steel Košice, but also to the companies Group CEZ, DELL, and International Law Firm bnt attorneys-at-law for their valuable insights.

Members of Business Leaders Forum