

Designing Impactful Volunteer Experiences

Q: Can you please provide some examples of what can make a volunteer experience negative, and how we might avoid this in the future?

A: Employee feedback we collected around negative experiences were volunteering activities that feel like busy work. Ben provided an example of a company that was painting the same fence twice. When the employees don't understand the impact they are making it doesn't feel like it was worth their time.

Q: For on-site volunteer activities, I find that there's usually a price associated (having to purchase materials in bulk beforehand, etc.) If we don't have access to budget for this type of activity, what would you recommend?

A: These 'packaging' type of volunteer experiences, ie packing hygiene kits, backpacks, food boxes, etc. have a lot of administrative overhead on the nonprofit. Search for nonprofits local to your employees. You may have to partner with multiple nonprofits to host several smaller groups of employees at a time vs. one large group. Think outside of the box, beyond what is easiest for your employees to show up and do. Nonprofits report skills-based volunteering as their number one need. Partner with nonprofits to help them solve problems and grow their capacity towards making an even bigger impact.

Q: Any advice for generating executive buy-in in corporate volunteer programs?

A: Pull together some quick stats of the impact your employees are making, ie volunteer hours, number of nonprofits reached, outcomes. Add some stats on why this employee engagement matters for employee retention, wellness, team building, etc. Use this information as a business case for increased executive support, which will ultimately lead to better participation.

Start with the highest leader you can get involved, have them trickle down the information to their managers and teams. Build a buzz from that level that gets noticed at a higher level.

Q: Do you know of any research on whether virtual volunteering / hybrid volunteering is as impactful, especially if this is related to education and young people please?

A: We have not seen any specific research on the difference in impact between virtual vs. in-person volunteering.

Q: Would you be able to provide a condensed list for this CSR type of days to engage our teams?

A: Link to [Moments that Matter Campaign](#)
[Link to PDF for calendar](#)

If you are a YourCause client ask your customer success manager about access to the CSRconnect product community. Click the menu for Resource Center and you will find a program resource for various giving and service days including the upcoming Black History month and Women's History month. These resources have detailed instructions on how to curate a volunteer search by keyword or NTEE code to highlight organizations for these special cause areas.



Q: Do you find that 8 hours of VTO is enough of an incentive to get employees to participate?

A: This depends on your total benefits package. If your company offers a generous amount of PTO, then earning an additional 8 hours of VTO may not be a very motivating for your employees. We included a list of examples of incentives at the bottom of this document since there was another questions similar to this.

Q: Its great planning in advance but how do you manage drop out?

A: Work with your communications team and employee ambassadors to create a communication plan to help remind employees multiple times leading up to the event.

Q: What are some great nonprofits you've seen engaging remote workers the best? Do you have a list of virtual volunteer events you can share.

A: We do not have a specific list, but we gave some examples. [WeHero](#) engages remote workers across the globe and curates hands-on virtual volunteer experiences for companies and their employees. Skills-based volunteering translates very well to virtual. Contact local nonprofits to see what projects your team members can work on to help update their IT infrastructure, provide marketing materials or other support that matches your employees' skills.

Ben mentioned looking for nonprofits in the education space helping with literacy, tutoring, or mentoring activities that can be facilitated virtually, as well as some data entry virtual volunteering opportunities at the Smithsonian.

Q: How do you decide how many volunteer events you should host each year when you're first getting your program off the ground? What is the recommended frequency of volunteering? Is there a recommended number of hours for a volunteering event, especially for associate population who hasn't been as engaged since the pandemic?

These came in as separate questions, but we combined for this answer.

A: Survey your employees! We talked about this as a first step to getting started with any type of employee engagement initiative. Sarah walked through some ways to capture employee feedback right when they first login to the CSRconnect platform.

Ben recommended starting out with at least once per year, then trying to move to quarterly if that works with your company culture.

Use the YourCause industry report to see the average volunteer participation rate and average volunteer hours for your industry and employee size as a good benchmark. This can help set realistic goals for the number of events per year and how long that event should be.

Q: Currently our company offers 20% of hours as paid time to volunteer for nonprofits within their communities. Have you seen providing additional incentives to volunteer? For example, Salesforce provides employees with additional incentives that gives back to a nonprofit of their choice in a form of a donation if they complete all their volunteer hours.

A: We have seen companies get creative with showing their support when employees' donate their time or money. We included a list of ideas for incentives at the end of this document.

Ideas for Incentives:

Nomination Grant Programs –A company provides grant funding to nonprofits that employees nominate. These programs often require an application that the employee fills out to specify why a nonprofit should receive grant funding your company has set aside. Many companies require the employee to have volunteered with that nonprofit in order to nominate the organization for a grant.

Company Example: [Southern Glazer's Voluncheer of the Year Grant Award](#). – Each month an employee wins the Voluncheer recognition award. At the end of the year all employees vote from among the group of Voluncheer winners to select who will win a larger grant prize of \$5,000 donated to the charity of the winner's choice

Individual Volunteer Matching Grants a.k.a dollars for doers – A company rewards employees who volunteer by providing monetary grants to that organization. There is usually a set dollar amount for a minimum number of hours served. *Example: A company provides up to \$750 grant (\$15 per hour) to nonprofits after an employee volunteers for 50 hours in a year*

Team Volunteer Grants - A company provides a monetary donation to a cause when a group of employees volunteer together. Example A company provides up to \$500 for a nonprofit when five or more employees volunteer at least an accumulated 25 hours.

Company Example: [Boeing Gift and Volunteer Match Program](#) - in 2018 Boeing Company announced a revamp of their incentives, rewarding those employees' who give their time and talent to their local communities. This new program included:

- A reduction to 10 hours in the number of volunteer hours needed to obtain the 'dollars for doers' company match
- A new team volunteer match program allows groups of employees to request a monetary gift to the organization where they donate their time

These grant programs are another way for companies to incorporate employee choice for where company dollars go to support causes they care about. Checkout our [Grant Program Guide](#) to learn more about the benefits of applying human capital and financial capital towards solving social problems.

Special Matching Gift Programs: We predicted donation participation to decrease in 2023 due to the financial strain from inflation, the recession, layoffs etc. Special matching gift campaigns can help encourage participation in social impact and employees engagement initiatives and show employees that you support their time volunteering Here are a few ideas:

- **Offer a total match amount for a campaign.** Example: Promote an up to \$10,000 donation amount when employees reach a participation rate or total hours for the campaign. This could be in-kind donations or monetary.
- **Match their volunteer hours with Cause Cards.** Cause cards are like donation gift cards in the CSRconnect platform. Employees can select a charity to receive a small donation from your company.

Ideas for Cause Cards:

- Give \$10 for every employee that volunteers and logs their hours for the first time



- **Create smaller rewards by department or group.** If you don't have the budget to reward every employee that meets their volunteer hour's goal or to make a large donation, pool employees that hit goals into a raffle and draw a name for someone to receive a Cause Card.

Create a designated day of service. This is a little different from volunteer for time off in that the employees don't have to spend time volunteering outside of work hours to earn additional PTO. Designated days of service can enable employee to give back during their work week.

- **Office-wide:** Each location or office chooses a day of service. This day is communicated to employees of that location and can accommodate for employees' schedule for that location.
- **Company-wide:** A day of service that applies to everyone in the company regardless of location
- **Rolling:** A day of service that employees can choose based on their schedule. Employees work with their manager to signup for a day off to volunteer. This provides the most flexibility for the employee to pick a time that works around their lives.

