



CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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In today's world, many organizations are leaner than they have ever been. This leads to the perception that busy is better and institutes an "all hands on deck" mentality. Employees many times struggle with a balance between their day-to-day job functions and the ability to integrate themselves in the very communities they live and work in. That's why adopting a corporate volunteer policy can be good for the soul!

Encouraging employees to spend time giving back to their working community is not only good for public relations, but attributes to happy employees. One major benefit of encouraging corporate volunteerism is a sense of ownership. Employees are able to break from the daily mold of their positions and work with other "like" individuals to assist organizations in need. This allows employees to explore leadership qualities, work on time management, and enhance their social demeanors.

When creating such a policy, remember to structure it just as any other policy would be designed in a corporate handbook. Time guidelines are a good start, identifying the frequency and length that your organization is willing to part with your valued employee. Consider whether your employee will be paid for this time. There are arguments for and against paying employees for such acts, however employees are more likely to volunteer if they won't see a financial hardship in trade for helping out. Outline coverage and task sharing so as to ensure the business needs are met prior to your employee being out. Allow the employee to be a part of selecting a charity and/or organization he or she feels passionate about to enhance those ownership qualities. If you intend to use the volunteer opportunity as PR on your company website or newsletter, make sure a media waiver allowing for your employee's likeness has been



signed prior to the event. Once it has been signed, promote away!

Networking goes hand-in-hand with corporate volunteerism. As with the corporate volunteer policy, structure networking and public involvement opportunities to have clear expectations for the business and employee needs. First, don't try to change your employees! If an employee is not social by nature and fears public interaction, respect those personality types. Consider having a seasoned person attend the initial function with the employee to help build confidence and teamwork. Second, discuss coverage and job duties that need to be accomplished prior to the event. Third, discuss and outline acceptable professional decorum with your employee. He or she is the face of your organization while out and about and must remember that at all times. If the function will include alcohol, review your organization's alcohol policy and establish guidelines. Lastly, encourage your employee to have fun! There is much to be said for relationships and personal interaction.

The keys to a successful implementation of corporate volunteerism and community involvement are patience, communication and an open mind. Studies have shown that when employees feel involved and a sense of belonging, they tend to be happier and more productive in the organization. There are never guarantees that good employees will be retained forever, but allowing employees to give back to their communities and interact with their peers are good steps toward building a more enhanced company culture.



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