Corporate Volunteering Good Practice Guide

While companies will adopt different Corporate Volunteering Programs according to their business objectives, three key principles lay the foundation of a sound program:

1. Internal support

2. Staff choice and involvement, and

3. Meaningful relationships with Volunteer Involving Organisations

1. Internal support

Corporate Volunteering Programs should be supported throughout all levels in the organisation, from entry level through to executive leadership roles.

Positive promotion of the program to employees should begin at the recruitment stage, be included in employee induction, and continue through into the everyday culture of the organisation as demonstrated from the 'top down'; with management actively engaging and encouraging their staff to do the same.

Allocation of program managers and resources is essential to a successful program.

Having the opportunity to use internal communications channels to promote the program will also help to incorporate it into the corporate culture.

2. Staff choice and involvement

A key component of volunteering is the element of choice.

Staff should be offered choices regarding whether or not they engage in the program, how much or how little they are involved, and what types of volunteering opportunities they can engage in.

Motivation

To promote engagement, corporates should seek to understand what motivates their staff to volunteer.

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Some may wish to volunteer to get to know their team more, others may be especially motivated to support a cause they are passionate about, and others may want to gain or develop new skills.

Timeframes

Flexibility within a program can encourage staff engagement and involvement, by supporting a variety of options to suit the differences within the workforce.

Some staff may want to 'deep dive' into a week-long project, others may want to give a half day in a team environment, and others may be restricted by rosters or workload.

Offering a flexible program, rather than a one-size-fits-all (such as 1 day per year) will provide staff with more opportunity to engage in the program.

Causes

Successful Corporate Volunteering Programs align with the ideals of their employees, and the organisational values.

Corporates should seek to understand the causes their employees are passionate about, and offer volunteering opportunities which offer value and impact to those causes.

Regular review of key causes should be undertaken, due to the changing nature in the 'popularity' of different issues and staff turnover.

3. Meaningful relationships with Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs)

For a Corporate Volunteering Program to be effective and sustainable, good relationships with the Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) must be created and maintained.

Finding the organisation/s

Many corporates have a community engagement unit, a sponsorship program, or a giving program. This is a great place to find organisations to partner with.

VIOs may be already engaged through these functions, or alternatively, a volunteering program can be utilised as a solution for meeting new requests for workplace giving which can't be addressed financially.

Seeking out VIOs aligned with the causes deemed important to your employees is very important. Social media, internet searches, networking events and contacting organisations with existing networks in the community sector are also great ways to find suitable groups to approach.

Specific roles are often listed online through services such as Volunteer Connect. Even if there aren't any suitable roles listed, this is a great way for corporates to find VIOs to approach.

Creating the relationship

Corporates should be very clear on their expectations of what they need and can provide when approaching potential VIO partners, but also flexible.

It is important to understand that many VIOs in Tasmania have limited existing roles which are suitable for corporate volunteering, and as such the corporate should be prepared to be patient, and offer compensation or assistance to create roles and processes where possible and appropriate.

Corporates should, at a minimum, offer to cover costs incurred if their employees require background checks in order to volunteer.

Maintaining the relationship

Meeting any obligations agreed to is imperative to the ongoing success of a Corporate Volunteering Program.

To avoid letting VIOs down, the corporate should make it clear to their staff that agreeing to volunteer is a commitment that must be followed through.

In recognising that corporates must always prioritise their core business, it is best to have pre-arranged alternatives in case an issue occurs on the day, such as an unplanned business emergency or employee illness.

Open and honest feedback about the process and other aspects of the program is important. Both the corporate and VIO should seek feedback from employee participants, and be open to making changes and improvements.

The efforts and impact of the employee (as a volunteer) should be acknowledged and recognised by both the corporate and the VIO. See the document Top Tips for Volunteer Recognition for some ideas.

Measuring outcomes

As with any business investment, it is important for the corporate and the VIO to set objectives, measure results, and analyse the outcome.

If either party finds that the relationship is not delivering a return on their investment (taking into consideration that the 'returns' may not just be financial) then they should review the program and suggest improvements.

Share any positive outcomes and experiences with the staff of both the corporate and the VIO, and publically through newsletters, websites and social media when appropriate.