

# 11. Steps to design an employee volunteer program

## The tool

With this tool, we want to challenge you to design an employee volunteer program from the companies perspective, and not from your youth organization's perspective. From your perspective, the steps are pretty clear: you start from a need you have in organization (for specific workforce, for specific expertise), look for companies that can match your needs through their employees' contribution, contact them, make the proposal, they come and volunteer, you recognize the efforts, say thank you and plan for future collaboration.

Here are **the steps that one company thinks about when starting an employee volunteer program (EVP)** (adapted from [Volunteer Hub](#)):

1. Assessment of the community's needs
2. Coordinate business and EVP objectives
3. Secure support from top executives
4. Seek out partnership opportunities
5. Match corporate giving with corporate volunteering
6. Quantifying and evaluation
7. Recognize and award
8. Publicize the program's effort

## The EVP steps explained and recommendations on how to use the steps to enhance the collaboration with the company for a volunteer program

### 1. Assessment of the community's needs

The company will look to give its support and involve its employees in addressing needs that are relevant to the community. So, your job here is to make your cause visible enough, and compelling for the company, and to reach out to the company. The most successful strategy to reach the company is to do it through an employee that is already connected to your organization, who could recommend you to his/her colleagues, but also to the human resource department which might be in charge with the development of EVPs or directly to the owner of the company.

The company will be worry about things like:

The name of the EVP and how the company name will be used;

Paid or unpaid volunteer time for the employees;

How appealing could be the volunteer activities to the staff;

What kind of programs should consider: one-time group activities, individual activities, long-term commitment activities, in-house fundraiser activities, support the ongoing volunteer activities of its employees or add new activities, etc.

Be prepared to answer to these worries, to show benefits, advantages of what you propose with your EVP, but also disadvantages and risks and how you can handle them for the company.

## **2. Coordinate business and EVP objectives**

The company will be interested that an EVP project to also answer to its marketing objectives, the EVP should reach potential customers or current customers, or to match the day to day business operations, which will allow employees to use their skills within the community while establishing them as experts in their sector. For instance, an IT company might be interested to involve its young developers in a volunteer program in which they could develop apps that could be used to address diverse needs from the community. This program would be also easy to communicate to the regular customers and business partners, enhancing company's profile. Thus, design the EVP you propose, so that you can answer to the business' needs in regards to its marketing and human resource goals and objectives.

## **3. Secure support from top executives**

The employees need time off, need the resources, need paid time or unpaid time from work time to be involved in volunteer activities, and sometimes they need specific encouragement and role-models from their leaders to be involved in volunteer work. Your role in this step is to be prepared to support the employee or the HR manager to propose the EVP to the SME owner or the CEO of the company, making the case for your program, but also for the employees and for the benefits the program could bring to the company itself.

## **4. Seek out partnership opportunities**

First, the partners that companies look for are usually NGOs and schools they could support. Children and young people, from what we found out through [CoOp project research on SMEs and youth organization cooperation](#), are the groups that companies prefer to support. In other words, companies know that it will be much harder for them to develop EVPs without your contribution, so show your experience, and make a list with the responsibilities you will take for the implementation of a successful EVP, giving time for the company to take care of other things, and helping companies not to waste capital and human resources on doing things for which they do not have the expertise. Also, companies would like to involve their business partners, suppliers, relevant customers in these volunteer opportunities - so you could design the program so that it becomes relevant for such partnerships, which will allow for building relations between the companies, outside the regular partnership areas from their day to day business operations.

## **5. Match corporate giving with corporate volunteering**

Usually, companies are interested to focus their both financial and in-kind support in the same area. So, have in mind to design EVP that could lead to financial support or fundraising activities from the company. For instance, the employees could fundraising among their teams for a volunteer activity they want to run (such as renovating a youth center), and the company could match their fundraising results, doubling the gift to the youth center.

## **6. Quantifying and evaluation**

When it comes to the evaluation of an EVP program, the companies will be interested to collect data on:

- Number of employees who volunteer;
- Amount of time donated to each activity;

- Number of organizations/projects served;
- Number of individuals served;
- Amount of money raised;
- Dollar value of volunteers time;
- The degree of satisfaction of the employees towards the volunteer opportunities and the impact on the community;
- Return on investment of the volunteer activities to the company;
- Changes in brand recognition and company's visibility in the community.

Talk with the company about the data it is interested to collect, make a plan for collecting the information and allocate time and resources for that. Take the responsibility for some of the evaluation actions you can take as the host organization of the EVP.

### **7. Recognize and award**

Companies will be interested in providing to their employees who volunteer: certificates, plaques, coupons, or gift cards. They could also be interested to hold an annual ceremony to formally recognize volunteer efforts, which will also give them an opportunity to invite media for additional public awareness of the company's involvement in the community. Be one step ahead of the company, and come up with a plan of providing *together* the recognition and the awards to the employees who are part of the EVP - you want the employees to remember the cause and the organization they volunteer for. Also, you want to make the employees loyal to your cause as well, for future individual volunteer activities or even for future fundraising campaigns.

### **8. Publicize the program's effort**

The company will be interested to talk about the program's accomplishment, to reach its PR, marketing and HR goals, as we said before. The company will use for sure its social media channels, newsletters, bulletin boards, websites, email, and even traditional advertising, to get both the employees and the community talking about the EVP they supported. You could support the company in the process, by collecting content from the activities you run together with their employees: stories about the young people the volunteers help with their work, stories about the cooperation between your organization and the company and its employees, stories about your organization and results, testimonials young people, testimonials from volunteers, photos and videos from the volunteer activities, etc. Also, you can use your own promotion channels to talk about the EVP developed together with the company. We recommend to use a promotion plan, like the one we introduced in this collection of *Ready tools for fundraising for youth organizations* (The tool: *The communication plan for an event*).

*This tool was developed based on the steps of developing a successful Employee Volunteer Program, recommended to companies by Volunteer Hub: <https://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/making-the-common-good-great-for-your-business-creating-a-successful-employee-volunteer-program/>*