HANDBOOK and BUSINESS CASES

Global Corporate Volunteering

A strategic tool to involve companies and employees in the fight against poverty
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CODESPA FOUNDATION
The CODESPA Foundation is a Spanish non-profit organization without political or religious purpose and with more than 25 years of experience in the field of international development cooperation.

CODESPA believes in the human capacity to build a more just and equal world. Its' mission is to provide people with work opportunities so that they can develop their own capacities and be protagonists in their own development. CODESPA's areas of specialisation are access to microfinance, markets, and job training.

Since the Foundation started its work, it has managed 730 projects in 33 countries in South America, Asia and Africa, contributing to improve the life of millions. Currently, it has sixteen international and national branches. CODESPA's honorary president is H.R.H. the Prince of Asturias.

ICEP
Institute for Development Cooperation – is a private, independent non-profit organisation based in Austria that aims at effectively contributing to global poverty-alleviation. For that matter, ICEP consults partners in developing countries in the integration of poor people into economic cycles and offers support in building sustainable structures. ICEP’s strategy in developing countries is complemented by awareness raising efforts in Europe for the high-potential of synergies of business and development. ICEP puts the positive effects of such collaboration in the spotlight of Austrian businesses.

EUROPEAN UNION
The European Union is the European Community’s executive body. Led by 27 Commissioners, the European Commission initiates proposals of legislation and acts as guardian of the Treaties. The Commission is also a manager and executor of common policies and of international trade relationships. It is responsible for the management of European Union external assistance.

IESE
IESE Business School is one of internationally renowned companies founded in 1958 with the mission to develop leaders who have a deep and lasting impact on business and society through professionalism and spirit of service. For 50-year history, 38,500 alumni from 100 countries have attended classes to experience IESE: a transformative impact on personal and professional level. Participants say that this experience has changed their view of business management and the way they lead their teams. This is demonstrated by the high degree of linkage they have with the school through the Association of Members. Today, IESE has campuses in Barcelona, Madrid and New York, and offices in Munich and Sao Paulo. In addition, the school has several partnerships with other universities and prestigious business schools like Harvard Business School, Stanford, MIT and University of Michigan.
THE BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP
BCG is a global management consulting firm and the world’s leading advisor on business strategy. Founded in 1963, BCG is a private company with more than 75 offices in 42 countries.

BCG partners with clients from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors in all regions to identify their highest-value opportunities, address their most critical challenges, and transform their enterprises. Integrity, respect for the individual, delivering value, and making an impact on society are just some of BCG’s core values.

FUNDACIÓN ROVIRALTA
Founded in 1959 by D. Manuel and D. José María Roviralta, the foundation seeks to invest the incomes generated by their assets in altruistic and / or beneficial projects. Roviralta has support the work of CODESPA since 2001 and collaborates in development cooperation projects, awareness, and research and social innovation.

BARCLAYS FOUNDATION
The Barclays Foundation is the institution which implements the commitment to social investment and Corporate Volunteering of the Group in Spain, set out as part of the CSR strategy and linked to the development of the business.

Its main areas of work are the promotion of economic prosperity and the provision to society, particularly youth, with the necessary skills to achieve economic independence and security. For that purpose, the Foundation works with organizations whose projects are focus on employability, improvement of financial knowledge, and promoting entrepreneurship. Barclays Foundation programmes are notable for their employees’ involvement in solidarity initiatives.

FORUM EMPRESA
Forum Empresa is an inter-American network created in 1997 that unites 22 leading organizations in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from Canada to Chile. The organizations, which make up the network represent 19 countries in the region and have a combined total of more than 3,300 affiliated businesses.

The network seeks to strengthen national and regional organizations committed to CSR and to encourage the establishment of new CSR-based business networks in Latin American countries where it is not currently active.
A productive end to Employee Volunteering

The tantalizing potential of corporate employee service to societal causes

Bea Boccalandro is president of VeraWorks, a global consulting firm that helps companies evolve their corporate community involvement strategy, programming and evaluation. Boccalandro has worked with many companies around the world, such as Aetna, Bank of America, Levi Strauss & Company, Walt Disney and many others, to help them develop and improve their corporate citizenship programmes.

Boccalandro teaches at the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship and the Georgetown University Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership. She is the author of “Mapping Success in Employee Volunteering: The Drivers of Effectiveness for Employee Volunteering and Giving Programs and Fortune 500 Performance” and “The Methods Behind the Magic: Examining the Practices of Atlanta’s Exemplary Employee Volunteer Programs.”

ABSTRACT

Considering the high effectiveness and capacity for innovation, generation and advance that companies have, what if employees developed their leadership skills by, instead of solving business school case studies, solving international development challenges? What if distributors of retail products in remote developing country locations also delivered needed medical supplies?

With these questions as the starting point, Boccalandro presents in her essay the concept of “impact maximizing employee community involvement.” She addresses issues such as performance and drivers of effectiveness for Corporate Volunteering and impact maximizing employee community involvement. Throughout the essay, the author shows how tapping into the great potential of employee service to societal causes requires an adaptation that, ironically, takes Corporate Volunteering beyond volunteering.
The human resources contained within the corporate sector can solve our most difficult societal problems and improve our lot as a civilization. But not just any employee volunteering has the power to transform the world. As this paper will show, tapping into the great potential of employee service to societal causes requires an adaptation that, ironically, takes employee volunteering beyond volunteering.

To fully embody its potential for impact, employee volunteering has to draw from the strengths of its host company. In the normal course of business, companies fend off hackers, survive spikes in commodity prices, invent previously unimaginable products, and get those products to thousands of retail stores across several continents every day. Capitalism is fantastically competent, productive and transformative. If even a fraction of this corporate prowess is repurposed toward societal causes, we might very well stop human traffickers, maintain quality education in schools reeling from budget cuts, invent ways to make potable water universal, and find a myriad of other ways to deliver solutions across the globe.

Imagine masses of corporate employees serving societal causes in ways that are more effective than what employees can do on their own. What if employees developed their leadership skills by, instead of solving business school case studies, solving international development challenges? What if distributors of retail products in remote developing country locations also delivered needed medical supplies? If we truly intend to support societal causes as best we can, we need such “impact maximizing employee community involvement.” As its name suggests, impact maximizing employee community involvement capitalizes on business’ capacities and other assets to optimize both the quality and quantity of services that employees contribute to societal causes and, thus, maximize societal and business impact.

The disappointing reality of employee volunteering

Sadly, impact maximizing employee community involvement is rare. Most employee volunteering is not enhanced by the competencies and other assets of its host company, nor does it involve large numbers of employees. The most common employee volunteer program practices – such as “dollars-for-doers” grants that give financial resources to nonprofit organizations where employees volunteer, policies of paid-time-off to volunteer, workplace donation drives and organized events in which employees paint, clean and perform other unskilled labor – replicate the volunteering that employees can do on their own. These practices don’t draw from the fantastic corporate powers mentioned above. They not only fail in terms of the quality of the service offered, but also in terms of quantity. Ninety-two percent of Fortune 500 companies involve only a minority of employees in their employee volunteer programs every year, and for only a few hours. Thus, employee volunteering largely foregoes the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to societal issues.

The poor performance of today’s employee volunteering is well documented. The Drivers of Effectiveness for Employee Volunteering and Giving Programs (“Drivers of Effectiveness”), developed by the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, are evidence-based standards that measure how well an employee volunteer program is designed to make a positive impact on the social sector, as well as on the business. A review of the research identified the employee volunteer program practices associated with community and company impact and codified them into six Drivers, each with its own measurable indicators, as seen in the table below: “The drivers of effectiveness for Employee Volunteering and Giving programs.”

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Impact maximizing employee community involvement capitalizes on business’ capacities and other assets to optimize both the quality and quantity of services that employees contribute to societal causes and, thus, maximize societal and business impact.

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Distressingly few employee volunteer programs are configured to effectively put the companies’ strengths in service of the social sector.

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Most common employee volunteer programs replicate the volunteering that employees can do on their own.

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## The Drivers of Effectiveness for Employee Volunteering and Giving Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver 1: Cause-Effective Configuration</td>
<td>1.1 Cause focus: Focuses on causes for which the company is especially well-suited to support Employee Volunteering and Giving Programs (EVGPs) are structured to support social causes and nonprofit partners productively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver 2: Strategic Business Positioning</td>
<td>2.1 Business goals: Has employee-accessible written goals that explicitly state the business benefits program promotes 2.2 Aligned infrastructure: Benefits from procedures/practices/guidance from department(s) charged with the business goals the EVGP program seeks to promote 2.3 Resonant cause(s): Focuses on cause(s) that connect to the business 2.4 Integration with corporate citizenship: Is integrated into the company’s overall corporate citizenship/social responsibility plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver 3: Sufficient Investment</td>
<td>3.1 Strong team: Has at least one full-time paid professional position for every 10,000 employees, and not less than two total, to manage the program (not organize events) 3.2 Adequate operating budget: Expends at least $30 per employee in operations, and not less than $500,000 total (operating budget excludes salaries and grants) 3.3 Grant support: Company grants to nonprofits in support of employee volunteering total at least $100 per employee (e.g., dollars-for-doers, team grants, other grants tied to volunteer events, but not matching gift grants unless they are limited to organizations where employees volunteer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver 4: Culture of Engagement</td>
<td>4.1 Facilitative procedures: Has universal procedures/practices/guidance to facilitate employee involvement 4.2 Formal encouragement: Has universal procedures/practices/guidance to create interest and enthusiasm for employee volunteering 4.3 Business department support: Business units supported by EVGP, per the EVGP’s business goals, promote employee involvement 4.4 Middle-management outreach: Educates middle managers on the relevance of the EVGP to their responsibilities 4.5 Senior-management modeling: Has senior executive public participation 4.6 Accessible information: Makes information on how to get involved easily available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver 5: Strong Participation</td>
<td>5.1 Majority participation: Involves at least 50 percent of employees in EVGP-supported volunteering 5.2 Substantial scale: Generates at least eight hours, on average, of volunteering per employee per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research using the Drivers of Effectiveness finds that distressingly few employee volunteer programs are configured to effectively put the companies’ strengths in service of the social sector. Only eight percent of surveyed Fortune 500 companies have compliance levels of 50 percent or more with the Drivers of Effectiveness. On average, Fortune 500 survey respondents exhibit only 26 percent of these impactful practices. The majority of Fortune 500 respondent employee volunteer programs lack even the most basic strategic elements expected of any business endeavor, such as written goals and measurement systems to track progress toward those goals. Although the referenced study focused on US companies, the lack of impact maximizing practices in employee volunteer programs appears to be universal. Non-Fortune 500 US respondents, Canadian respondents, and German respondents (the other two countries that are well represented in the database), all have average compliance rates with the Drivers of Effectiveness of below 30 percent. Clearly, there is ample room for increasing the impact of our employee volunteer programs.

The inherent limitations of employee volunteering

Our difficulty in making our employee volunteer programs high impact is that the traditional concept of volunteering is at odds with the concept of impact maximizing employee community involvement. Therefore, ironically, our attempts to design a true “volunteer” program undermine our progress toward achieving a highly effective program.

The language and nuances of volunteering might vary greatly across the globe, but virtually every culture has a concept that corresponds with what Americans call “volunteering,” an altruistic, non-remunerated, and voluntary act. These three fundamental tenets of “true” volunteering, however, conflict with impact maximizing employee community involvement. Consider these common employee volunteer program practices: Designing the employee volunteer program to improve employee retention or to otherwise support the business in order to garner more internal support; offering volunteer activities during employees’ paid time in order to increase

PHOTO: Jerónimo Rivero, 2011

2 ibid

participation; and requiring that employees serve on non-profit boards in order to forge stronger company-community relations. In most circumstances, these are excellent practices that increase the impact of employee volunteering. Yet, these practices are also incompatible with true volunteering. The first practice violates the altruism requirement; the second violates the non-remuneration requirement, and the third violates the voluntary participation requirement.

The tension we have between true volunteering and impact maximizing employee community involvement is not simply cognitive, it is emotional. Programs that require entire departments to attend a service event or use employee volunteer efforts as company publicity offend our charitable sensibilities. We’ve heard the objections many times – “Volunteering is voluntary. You can’t force people to volunteer” or “The company shouldn’t claim credit for employee charitable actions.” What’s worse, although we barely tolerate these particular practices, they are mere baby steps toward fully drawing on company assets to maximize the impact of employee service.

Evolving to impact maximizing employee community involvement

To attain impact maximizing employee community involvement requires shedding many of the concepts we ascribe to volunteering and replacing them with a determination to fully leverage the business context to generate the greatest amount of societal benefit while also generating business benefits. A developing country marketing campaign for a women’s commercial product might include a social marketing message about breastfeeding, for example. Retail store employees might mentor impoverished youth around workplace skills and then supervise them as interns. These marketing and retail employees would be making a sizable contribution to impoverished individuals, but they would not be conducting “volunteering,” per se. A first step toward impact maximizing employee community involvement, then, is to avoid the term “volunteering” (or charity or philanthropy) so as to not elicit unproductive expectations.

Trying to take “volunteering” to an impact maximizing state is likely too offensive to be realistic. To draw intelligently from company assets requires shunning employee charitable efforts that are ineffective no matter how heartfelt, ignoring causes where the company cannot contribute effectively no matter how heartbreaking, instituting measures of bottom line impact no matter how crass, and otherwise unapologetically applying cold uncharitable business practices to employee warm charitable efforts. Given how distasteful these practices are, it’s no wonder we are stalled in our evolution of employee volunteering at a place of only modest impact. Ironically, by protecting the sanctity of volunteering we undermine our ability to elevate “volunteering” to heightened levels of impact. The end effect of insisting on true volunteering in the workplace is that the causes we care about – from poverty to elder care to neighborhood crime – remain largely unaided by the workplace.

Trying to take “volunteering” to an impact maximizing state is likely too offensive to be realistic

If we offer “employee community involvement” instead of “employee volunteering” opportunities, there is no suggestion that the service is altruistic, unpaid, or voluntary; and no contradiction if it is none of these. An employee community involvement program comfortably encompasses compulsory board service for high-level managers, workplace greening efforts that take place during work hours, and paid pro bono service. In other words, shifting from the term “volunteering” to “community involvement” (or service or community engagement), vanquishes much of the resistance and many of the contradictions community involvement managers face when applying the Drivers of Effectiveness or when otherwise trying to move toward impact maximizing.
As seen in the table below, “Key differences between volunteering and impact maximizing employee community involvement,” impact maximizing employee community involvement is not just new language, it is new territory. Making the transition from volunteering to impact maximizing employee community involvement requires updating the program’s raison d’être from demonstrating altruism to maximizing societal good and business return; updating the cause and project selection criteria from emotional connection to potential for impact; and updating the recruitment strategy from an appeal to employee charitable inclinations to an appeal to their interest in refreshing and meaningful twists on their jobs or other workplace experiences (for example, a leadership program might have a service component or a department team-building event might include cleaning up a beach).

While upgrading from employee volunteering to impact maximizing employee community involvement will boost the program’s effectiveness, there is currently little guidance for making this transition. Early adopters of this development in community involvement will need to use judgment and ingenuity, and will undoubtedly encounter unforeseen challenges.

Fortunately, some vanguard companies are already illuminating the path from traditional employee volunteering toward impact maximizing employee community involvement. Following are a few examples:

• IBM’s flagship leadership development program, Corporate Service Corps, sends teams of employees to developing countries to work on community-driven development projects at the intersection of business, technology and society. In other words, IBM has gone beyond traditional volunteering (which it also supports) in order to design a powerful program that is part leadership development and part community involvement.

• Caesars Entertainment leverages a very unusual asset to help impoverished families: soap. Housekeeping staff at Caesars Palace hotel in Las Vegas, USA have the option of collecting partially used soap from guest rooms. The Clean the World Foundation—which also receives financial support from Caesars—then sterilizes, recycles and distributes the soap to impoverished families across the globe.
This isn’t “volunteering.” It is a powerful way for employees, however, to do more for a societal cause than they could do on their own.

- Coca-Cola and its business partners are involved in a pilot, organized by ColaLife, to involve Coca-Cola’s distribution channels to carry “social products” such as oral rehydration salts and zinc supplements to save the lives of children living in poverty across the globe. Again, this is not volunteering. It is a high impact way for drivers and other employees to have a positive impact on a serious societal issue.

Conclusions

The modern concept of volunteering originated in the civil society that developed over the last few centuries across many countries. Thus, volunteering is designed to work directly with nonprofit organizations that serve the poor, preserve culture, clean up the environment, fight for justice or otherwise promote societal benefits. When industrialization populated our society with highly structured workplaces, we brought the concept of volunteering to work with us and, over several generations, created what we now know as “employee volunteering.”

However, volunteering has not been properly adapted to the workplace, nor can it be without becoming something less than volunteering. Volunteering – with its altruistic, non-remunerated and voluntary character – cannot blossom within the hard confines of the workplace that is constrained by business considerations. Conversely, the business quest for a program that is logically designed to maximize effectiveness can never thrive when the program is expected to honor the idealistic nature of volunteering. The result is that our employee volunteering is seriously undermined, and the awesome support it could offer the social sector remains latent. The collection of volunteer activities contributed by most employee volunteer programs is virtually identical to what the employee base would do privately. A company might add a small grant or event coordination, but rarely backs employee volunteering with anything more than modest support. Meanwhile a treasure of corporate assets – from specialized skills to logistics with global reach – that could dramatically augment the impact of these programs, don’t serve this higher purpose.
To maximize social sector impact we must design impact maximizing employee community involvement programs – avoiding the term “volunteering” itself – that don’t try to live up to the ideals we assign to volunteering and, therefore, can draw from the full prowess of business. The purpose of impact maximizing employee community involvement is to fully leverage the business context to generate the greatest amount of societal benefit, not to offer true volunteering. Such employee community involvement makes evidence-based decisions about what to support and not support, even if this results in disregarding some needs at the company’s doorstep; chooses issues that can support its business, even if this is inherently non-altruistic; and otherwise applies strategic processes to employee involvement in the community. This attention to logical design at the expense of heartfelt preferences might appear heartless. Yet, nothing is more compassionate than ensuring our employee involvement programs reach the apex of effectiveness in helping the less fortunate, supporting impoverished children and otherwise improving the lot of our global civilization.