

Corporate Volunteering

We have several companies whose employees volunteer for the Food Bank on a regular basis and I have often observed many positive qualities among those corporate volunteers. They are usually very upbeat, hardworking, punctual, open to any task, and often willing to do more than is initially asked of them. They also are generally happy people.

In other words, they are great ambassadors for their businesses!

This really caught my attention, so I started doing some research and found that companies who encourage their employees to volunteer also tend to find their employees do a much better job for them at work.

When employees are disengaged, the picture is grim. According to a global report, fewer than one in three employees (31 percent) are engaged while nearly 1 in 5 (17 percent) feel disengaged. A Scarlett Survey, suggests that four percent of those who are disengaged are probably hostile, meaning they are speaking poorly of their company to their friends and family and maybe even financially undermining their company with behaviors like stealing office supplies.

These statistics translate into real financial numbers. Gallup estimates that in the UK, employees who feel disengaged at work cost employers upwards of \$64 billion every year. In the United States, that number jumps to \$350 billion.

On the other hand, research shows that companies with high levels of employee engagement enjoy a significant uplift of every performance number. Gallup performed a meta-analysis across 199 studies covering 152 organizations, 44 industries, and 26 countries. They discovered that for companies where employees were more engaged, their profitability jumped by 16 percent, general productivity was 18 percent higher than other companies, customer loyalty was 12 percent higher, and quality increased by 60 percent.

Giving employees volunteer outlets also often impacts positively on perception of employers by their employees and in the hiring process. Eighty-seven percent of employees who volunteer with their company reported an improved perception of their employer and 82 percent felt more committed.

Nearly 50 percent of interviewees from the millennial generation want to work where there is corporate involvement in the community and 61 percent of them factor a company's commitment to the community into their job making decision.

There are several local companies already committed to letting their employees go to a local non-profit during work hours and volunteer for a day, paying them their usual wage to get involved. Some even encourage three service days or more per year. Sounds like those companies have caught on to the benefit of corporate volunteering!

Watching corporate volunteers, I have frequently seen team work and team building blossom. I am amazed sometimes how much those volunteers do and how much more they want to do.

Corporate volunteers also often seem willing to extend their service beyond workplace hours. They willingly come back to help, and many times come on their own or bring family with them. They want to help, they want to work, and it shows.

Seeking and finding new volunteers is the cream in my coffee and the icing on my cake. But if I find a new corporate volunteer group, that is the biscotti to go with my coffee and ice cream for my cake. When a

corporate volunteer group is coming we make big plans for putting them to work because we know they will meet the challenge and do it with a smile.

We do our best here at the Food Bank to make corporate volunteering fun. We offer our conference room for meetings, lunch then an afternoon of service. We schedule special times for the group to come and design special duties for them. We do our best to make this a safe and fun place to volunteer for everyone.

Many companies also make grant money available to the non-profits where their employees volunteer. For instance, one company will give a grant of \$500.00 if the employee performs 20 hours of service in 1 quarter. So that employee who volunteers at least 20 hour per quarter will be able to bring in \$2,000.00 for the year. This applies for active employees, retirees and their families. What a wonderful way to not only serve but to donate.

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