

How to build an effective volunteering programme

Well-designed employee volunteering programmes foster employee engagement, says Andy Hadfield, CEO of forgood - the South African volunteer and donation matching portal.



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It seems that work for no pay pays - the catch is that it needs to be for a good cause.

“In an average firm, over 70% of employees are either not committed to or engaged with their company’s goals,” says Hadfield. “That’s like saying only five players in a rugby team know where the try line is.”

forgood builds and manages customisable, branded portals through which CSI teams can select verified causes for their staff to get involved with while tracking the number of hours committed and donations made. The portal includes a rating tool that enables star employees to stand out and receive recognition.

While eight out of 10 South African corporates offer allocated paid-release time for volunteering, the challenge is to align this with engagement programmes and business strategy: “To do so successfully, CSI and HR teams should leverage off staff’s existing interests, monitor all social sector activities and incentivise greater commitment going forward by recognising work well done,” says Hadfield.

Hadfield’s tips on how to build an effective volunteering programme:

- 1. Gauge staff social sector interests:** Giving staff the opportunity to work for a cause, organisation or community that they care about is key. When able to choose their activities, employees are more likely to get involved with CSI initiatives.
- 2. Match size with size:** In a small business, a single cause or two might satisfy employees' desires to do good but as numbers grow, you need to find multiple causes, organisations and opportunities.
- 3. Get tech:** Most CSI teams are under-resourced and do not have the capacity to manage relationships with the hundreds of organisations required for a volunteering programme at scale, especially if they are working towards strategic goals.
- 4. Work within your staff's skills – but also look to expand them:** A financial firm can help prepare a charity for an upcoming audit, an engineering company can offer expert advice - but companies should also look to build their employees' soft skills, latch onto their diverse talents and grow teams' capabilities through volunteer work.
- 5. Promote it internally:** Internal marketing is key if you want to reap benefits from your employee programme - staff will only get involved when they know their options to give back and feel that these are both exciting and impactful.
- 6. Get executive buy-in:** Executives should lead the charge – without this, you cannot expect the team to follow. The first volunteer in any programme should be the CEO.

**Statistics from the Giving Around the Globe report 2016 and Enterprise IG Report on Employee Engagement.*

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