

Dialogue survey reveals most-liked employee volunteering initiatives

According to a Dialogue survey, carried out for its [23rd annual Dialogue Business in Society Handbook](#), three-quarters of participating large companies had an employee volunteering programme (EVP). 75% had a stated EVP policy in 2020, and 41% had a separate EVP budget. Companies commonly provided employees with one working day of paid volunteering time.



Cathy Duff, director, Dialogue

Feedback from the non-profit organisations (NPOs) surveyed by the CSI consultancy was revealing. “Company-organised volunteering initiatives were least liked by 11% of NPOs, family volunteering by 13% of NPOs, and retiree volunteering initiatives were least liked by 19% of NPOs,” said Dialogue director Cathy Duff.

“In line with our research in previous years, NPOs revealed that they most like the company employee initiatives that provide funding: give as you earn (most liked by 21% of NPOs), fundraising/collection drives (17% of NPOs) and employee-matched funding (13% of NPOs),” said Duff.

“Fortunately for both parties, for the first time in our research, one of the most liked types of company initiatives – fundraising drives – was also the support most received by NPOs. Over half of the NPO sample received assistance with fundraising/ collection drives.”

Volunteering experience

In a *Dialogue Handbook* case study article on volunteering during the pandemic, Mandisa Kalako-Williams, former president of the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS), said that during the pandemic, SARCS volunteers were the first responders or go-to-people in their communities. Volunteers focused on community-based health education, screening for the virus, and distributing food.

“At the onset of Covid-19, our existing volunteers were trained in dealing with the new virus, apprised of the risks, and supported with the necessary protective equipment. Naturally, there was – and still is – much fear and apprehension. However, the numbers have not dwindled. Instead, more people have come forward, wanting to be trained and to help

others.”



Mandisa Kalako-Williams, former president of the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS)

Kalako-Williams recommended that companies gain more insight into the mandates and principles of the organisations they support through volunteering.

“More company employees should be exposed to real volunteering, allowing them to walk in the footsteps of community volunteers. Company donations should have a specific amount earmarked for volunteer subsistence allowances as our volunteers are usually drafted from the very needy communities we try to assist. Lastly, assistance should be practical.”

Dire need for skills support

Kalako-Williams said the NPO sector is in dire need of the skills of accountants, auditors, HR managers, marketers and public relations practitioners. “These skills reside in almost all companies and can add a tremendous amount of value to their chosen NPOs.”

Duff said Trialogue’s primary research showed that in addition to pro-bono support, most of the surveyed companies provided NPOs with some form of capacity building support. Almost two-thirds offered workshops and/or training, often in the skills mentioned by Kalako-Williams. What emerged, however, was the insight that flexible funding was the intervention most desired by NPOs (35%).

“Given Covid-19 conditions, it’s not surprising that NPOs favour funding that is not restricted to a particular programme. Such funding helps them to plot a route during these uncertain times. They can choose to cover operational costs, build capacity, or to change course to better respond to the pandemic.”

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