

Hartz & Minds 26: 6 Elements of a High-Value Volunteer Program

Whether your business has 60, 60,000, or 600,000 employees, a structured civic engagement program yields an array of tangible and intangible benefits, including: increased profits and decreased costs; greater employee creativity and productivity; improved customer and vendor relationships; enhanced public brand.

In honor of National Volunteer Month: we explore what are the 6 elements of developing, expanding, or enriching a company's directed volunteer initiatives?

- 1. Strategic Integration.** Begin with the business. The entire culture of the organization must understand and embrace employee volunteerism to leverage business resources for boosting revenue, shrinking costs, advancing the bottom line, and breaking down barriers to progress.
 - Catalog company assets: people, services, products, money, PPE, networks
 - Consider what propels and what impedes business development and growthMost importantly, establish the *unique* ways that employees, led and supported by the company, can better the world.
- 2. Proactive Planning.** Be thoughtful about who, what, when, where, why, and how employees connect outside of the company. Be candid about what can and cannot take place within the business structure. Specific strategies must drive prescribed programs, which have clear tactics for implementation. Integrate employees' perspectives; it is about them. In this area, the devil is in the details.
- 3. Multi-lateral Partnerships.** Widen the influence to involve government groups, non-profits, vendors, customers, families, retirees, business neighbors, or *even others in the same industry.*
 - Nationwide Insurance and State Farm are both lead sponsors of Mothers Against Drunk Driving
 - AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon co-present "It Can Wait," a program to discourage texting while driving
- 4. Impact Metrics.** Remember that what gets measured gets done, but also that what gets done should be measured. From inception, institute measurement tools for both *outputs* (# volunteer hours, # cans collected) and *outcomes* (placed # families into transitional housing, created # parks to serve # people).
- 5. Continuous Learning.** Treat community engagement just like any other investment; review and revise regularly. Company leadership sets the tone. Like any business (or personal) initiative, every aspect will not be flawless every time. Employees from the boardroom to the break-room need to be part of the solution. Equally, engaged partners, including nonprofits, must feel free to be candid with the company about how to improve the relationship and its impact.
- 6. Meaningful Communications.** Share opportunities, objectives, impacts, and improvements with the full spectrum of audiences including employees and media, as well as all of the partners cited above. Two great strategies:
 - Recognizing employees for their service sends all the right messages
 - Allowing partners to recognize the company publicly furthers their cause

As always, Corporate Hartz is delighted to support employee volunteer programs.