

Volunteering in the Workplace: How to Promote Employee Volunteerism

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Department of Canadian Heritage
October 1993

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a very special thanks to four people: Joanne Cooper of the Volunteer Centre of Metropolitan Toronto, Keith Seel of the Calgary Corporate Volunteer Council, Martha Parker of the Volunteer Centre of Calgary, and Reva Cooper of the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo. In developing this resource, it was immensely useful to be able to tap into their vast experience in employee volunteerism and their vision of the future.

In addition, the following individuals provided critical comments on earlier drafts of this text and shared their thoughts on how to promote employee volunteerism: Lorraine Street of Volunteer Ontario; Violette Gingras of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal; Sandra Murphy of the Volunteer Centre in St John's, Newfoundland; Leslie Maclean of the Saint John Volunteer Centre in New Brunswick; Marilyn Box of the Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton; Dale Cuthbertson of Volunteer Vancouver and Mel Moyer of the Voluntary Sector and Arts Management Program at York University. Their input resulted in a greatly improved text.

About this guide

Voluntary organizations today are caught in an ever-tightening spiral of increased demand for programs and services, reduced government support and increasing competition for private funds. Without a doubt, there is an even greater need for volunteers in these tough economic times. Organizations must be prepared to recruit and retain the most talented and dedicated volunteers if they want to ensure their viability and perhaps even their survival.

Employee volunteerism (also known as *corporate volunteerism*) is one way to meet the urgent need for volunteers. This involves a deliberate strategy by an employer to encourage employees to become more involved in their community as volunteers and to support them in those efforts. Since the majority of volunteers today are also members of the paid labour force, the workplace is now recognized as an important source for recruiting volunteers and a logical place to promote volunteerism.

This guide is intended for volunteer centres and other voluntary organizations at the local level. It examines:

- the advantages of promoting employee volunteerism in your community;
- the reasons why companies get involved and the potential benefits to their employees;
- the various ways in which companies of all types can encourage volunteerism among their employees; and
- the strategies that can be used to encourage employee volunteerism in your community and to attract employee volunteers to your organization.

The Introduction defines employee volunteerism and the reasons why this concept should be promoted. Part I looks at employee volunteerism from the perspective of the corporate sector. Part II offers suggestions on how voluntary organizations can successfully recruit and integrate employee volunteers. A series of appendices provide an overview of employee volunteerism both in Canada and internationally. Advice on managing an employee volunteer program and on organizing a corporate volunteer fair is also offered, along with an annotated list of the major resources in this field.

Efforts to promote the concept of employee volunteerism can pay dividends to your organization and the community as a whole. We hope that the information offered in this guide will give you an understanding of the concept of employee volunteerism that will help you put it to work in your community.

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Introduction

1 *What is employee volunteerism?*

The term *employee volunteerism* denotes a deliberate effort by an employer to encourage employees to participate in volunteer activities and to support them in these efforts. It involves creating a work environment where volunteer activity is valued and encouraged — that is, a 'volunteer-friendly' workplace.

When put into practice, employee volunteerism covers a broad range of strategies that companies can use to encourage volunteerism. It includes support to employees when they:

- donate their own time to an organization or community activity they have chosen themselves;
- donate time (either during working hours or after hours) to an organization or community activity that has been endorsed by their company; or
- donate time (usually during working hours) to a voluntary organization or activity as a work commitment.

Because this is a relatively new field, the definitions of terms are not yet completely fixed. For example, 'corporate volunteerism' is often used as a synonym for 'employee volunteerism'. However, this term is also used to define a narrower concept whereby employees in the management and professional categories contribute company time to a voluntary organization as a work commitment. 'Workplace volunteerism', on the other hand, is used to convey the same broad idea as 'employee volunteerism', but it is used much less frequently.

The concept of employee volunteerism is almost always restricted to volunteer activity that benefits the community or society in general. It is rarely used to refer to employer support for the time that employees devote to professional associations, unions, business or trade associations, or Chambers of Commerce.

Employee volunteerism can be regarded as a basic business strategy for community involvement that complements financial donations, gifts-in-kind, 'pro bono' services, and event sponsorship.

2 Why promote employee volunteerism?

Voluntary organizations face enormous challenges in the 1990s. They are under growing pressure to do more with less, while the needs of their clients are increasing. Although the public has become accustomed to high-quality service, in most cases the resources needed to meet those expectations are not growing at a fast enough pace to keep up with demand.

In the current era of fiscal restraint and cutbacks in government spending at all levels, the survival of services and programs Canadians depend on is being threatened. Voluntary organizations are being obliged to assume an even greater role in delivering services and in responding to their communities' needs and social problems.

As a result, the need for volunteers as a resource has become even more critical. Volunteers are needed to deliver services, to lend specific technical and professional expertise, to show leadership as board and committee members, and to build support for programs in the community.

Now more than ever, voluntary organizations and community agencies need volunteers who are committed and involved. They must tap new sources for potential volunteers in order to ensure an adequate supply of volunteers with appropriate skills and abilities.

In these times of rapid change and instability, the reality of volunteering is also changing. Old stereotypes of who will volunteer, what they do, and why they do it are no longer valid. Today, **two thirds of Canada's volunteers are members of the paid work force**, and most of them are employed full-time.

Given that people in paid jobs are more likely to volunteer than those who do not, the workplace is a logical place to promote volunteerism and recruit volunteers. Employee volunteerism should thus be seen as a viable way to inject new, creative energy into a community.

The workplace is a source of specialized advice and specific skills that may not be available anywhere else. Employee volunteers can offer a fresh perspective on community issues and challenges and can bring new talent to apply to problems.

The community in which we live dramatically affects the quality of our everyday lives. A secure and vibrant community, which attracts businesses and holds people because they want to live and work there, is in everyone's best interest.

An active voluntary sector is essential to a healthy community. For this reason, by increasing the pool of available volunteers, employee volunteerism benefits not only the local voluntary sector but also the community as a whole. Since the well-being of business is linked to the health of communities, the corporate sector also has a stake in ensuring that our communities are well served.

Part One

3 Opportunities for employees

Volunteering is no longer regarded as a purely unselfish activity. It is widely accepted today that volunteer activity fills a need in the lives of those who volunteer, as well as making a valuable contribution to the organizations it serves and the people it helps.

Employee volunteer programs offer employees a chance to grow both personally and professionally. Through volunteering, employees have opportunities to:

- help others and have an impact on community problems;
- increase their understanding of community needs and issues;
- use the skills and knowledge they already have in new settings;
- try out skills and use creativity that may be gathering dust in the workplace;
- learn new skills, broaden their experience and develop their careers;
- develop teamwork and leadership abilities;
- build a bridge to a new type of job or to retirement;
- meet new people;
- make professional or business contacts;
- balance their work life by getting involved in something they care about or by trying something new;
- find personal satisfaction and increase their sense of self-worth;
- improve their mental and physical health.

In short, employees are motivated to become involved as volunteers for most of the same reasons as other people do. Personal benefit is a critical factor in community involvement, for employees as for anyone else.

4 Motivation for company involvement

The first objective of any business is to make a product or to provide a service, in a way that maximizes profits. But many companies also have a sense of *corporate social responsibility*, a belief that they have a duty to make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the communities where they do business and their employees live.

The desire to be a good corporate citizen is a powerful motivating force in a company's decision to become involved in the community. This has been confirmed by the Conference Board Of Canada's 1986 study of employer practices and policies in employee volunteerism, as well as by case studies and other research in Great Britain and the United States.

When they support the wider community, companies' motivations range across a spectrum between self-interest and pure philanthropy. At the one end are sponsored events closely linked to public relations and commercial benefits. At the other end are

charitable donations and gifts-in-kind, which may even be given anonymously. The balance will vary from one company to another.

In the case of employee volunteerism, motivation is likely to be a mixture of altruism and self-interest — and this should be viewed as perfectly natural. Just as individuals have needs that can be met through volunteer work, companies also have needs that can be met through encouraging their employees to volunteer.

Experience in Canada, the United States and Great Britain has shown that employee volunteering offers advantages for the companies that promote it.

Because these benefits are largely intangible, they are difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, many companies are convinced that their volunteer programs:

- improve their relations with the community in which they operate
- improve the way they are perceived by the public at large; and
- offer new channels for information about the community and the challenges it faces.

A company is much more likely to be successful in its community relations efforts if it has a good understanding of community issues and is sensitive to community needs. This knowledge can also give the company useful insights into its local markets.

Equally important to its public image is the company's self-image, since this has a direct impact on the motivation of its employees. Employee volunteerism shows employees that their company values the contribution they make to the community. Employees may even consider it a perk to be able to find workplace support for their volunteer efforts and to be encouraged to get involved in issues they care about.

Through employee volunteerism, a company has the opportunity to:

- improve the morale of its employees
- build team spirit in the organization
- improve its ability to attract and keep high-quality employees
- have a positive impact on employee productivity.

Employee volunteer policies and programs can also be effective tools to help strengthen a company's work force at all levels. Since skills developed or honed in the voluntary sector will be brought back to the workplace, employee volunteerism offer new avenues for:

- training
- professional development
- career development

This can be particularly effective if a company wants to develop leadership skills in its employees, to give them opportunities to gain experience in decision-making or to build experience as teamworkers. A critical component of any company's success is the competence and commitment of its employees. Many companies view the people who work for them as their most important resource — a resource that must be managed effectively. In the current era of fast-paced technological change and increasing competition, the need to ensure a loyal and productive work force is even more important than it was in the past.

5 Forms of employer support for volunteerism

The support and encouragement that an employer gives to its employees' volunteer activity can take many different forms. There is great flexibility here, depending on the needs of the company and the intensity of its commitment to employee volunteerism. A variety of approaches can be chosen specifically to reinforce or complement one another.

This range of activities can be organized into five basic categories, but elements from these different categories can be combined to create a unique blend that may be the most appropriate strategy for a given company. In some ways, these different forms of employer support could be viewed as steps along a continuum.

The first form of employer support involves *practices that acknowledge that employees are involved as volunteers and try to accommodate this reality* whenever possible. This type of support is not necessarily formalized in a policy or a philosophy statement. The possibilities include:

- counting relevant volunteer work as experience when considering a candidate for a position or promotion;
- allowing leaves of absence without pay for volunteer work;
- allowing employees to adjust their work schedules to make it possible to carry out their volunteer work activities (where the demands of the job allow for flex-time);
- allowing employees access on their own time to facilities and equipment (such as computers, fax machines and meeting rooms) for their volunteer work activities.

With the second form, employer support is demonstrated in a more formal way. A key element is the *recognition of employees who are involved with voluntary organizations* and highlighting their activities and achievements. Examples are:

- sending a letter or memo to all employees in which the CEO expresses his or her views on the value of volunteer participation;
- sending a thank-you note to employees during National Volunteer Week (or any time during the year);
- writing commendations or letters to employees concerning their volunteer activities;
- publishing articles or a regular column in company newsletters or magazines profiling the volunteer work of employees;
- organizing special lunches or receptions hosted by senior managers to recognize employees for their volunteer work;
- giving awards or some form of special recognition to one or more employees who have been nominated as outstanding volunteers;
- conducting a survey to find out about the volunteer activities of employees.

With the third form, support is offered through *policies which encourage employees to volunteer* in a more active way. Guidelines, procedures and criteria are required to ensure fairness in terms of the competing demands of the needs of the workplace and the volunteer needs of employees. Potential activities include:

- encouraging volunteer work as a legitimate way to gain skills and experience

- for professional or career development;
- encouraging executives and other staff to serve on boards of directors of voluntary organizations that they choose;
- offering pre-retirement seminars promoting volunteer work;
- permitting the posting of information on local voluntary organizations and volunteer positions in the community;
- featuring appeals in internal newsletters from employees on behalf of organizations they support;
- holding a volunteer fair on company premises or participating in a larger event in the community (that is, a display and information booth organized by a volunteer centre or a group of local voluntary organizations to inform employees about volunteer opportunities and services in the community);
- inviting speakers from voluntary organizations to address employees;
- allowing employees to use office communication channels for announcements to publicize events or volunteer opportunities in the association they work with (for example, through company newsletters, bulletin boards or information in pay packets);
- referring employees on request to a local volunteer centre or agencies that refer or place volunteers;
- encouraging and supporting volunteer clubs and employee groups that are involved in the community;
- establishing formal volunteer programs for retired employees.

The fourth form involves *the company working actively with voluntary groups to encourage employees to do volunteer work*. Nevertheless, the choice of the voluntary organization and the volunteer activity would still rest exclusively with the individual employee. Examples are:

- making information about volunteer opportunities in the community available to employees on a regular basis through in-house publications, notices on bulletin boards, *et al*;
- liaison with the local volunteer centre on a regular basis or maintaining a 'clearing house' to make employees aware of volunteer jobs available in the community;
- allowing voluntary organizations to have direct access to employees and to recruit volunteers on the company's premises;
- developing a 'skills bank' to record the skills and experience of employees who are interested in volunteer positions;
- allowing time off with pay to employees for volunteer activities of their choice during the regular working day (that is, a specific, pre-determined amount of time available on request, such as longer lunch breaks or early leaving);
- offering help in kind or free services to the organizations for which employees volunteer without requiring the organization to identify or publicize the source (for example, access to surplus furniture or equipment, access to specific services or technology);
- offering cash support to organizations for which employees volunteer (a popular model is the 'community fund' program whereby grants are given to

organizations as a form of recognition of outstanding volunteer work by employees)

- giving cash donations to match funds raised or time volunteered by an individual employee or team of employees for a given organization;
- supporting community projects that have been organized spontaneously by employees;
- publicizing the work of employee volunteers in a public way in the community.

The fifth form relates to very active forms of employee volunteerism whereby *volunteer work is done under the auspices of the company* which employs the individual. Here the company is the intermediary for the community involvement and provides direct support to a community organization, event or cause. By some definitions, this is true 'corporate volunteerism'.

Activities in this category are often viewed as being part of the public relations function of the sponsoring company. They may be directly linked to the mandate of the company. Support for volunteer activities of employees is an integral part of the business strategy and, as such, tends to be 'corporate-driven' rather than 'employee-driven'.

Typically, this type of support involves selected types of volunteer involvement and specific organizations and requires highly structured involvement by the employer (that is, staff time is dedicated to the coordination of the employee volunteer program).

Types of support include:

- *appeals to employees to volunteer* for specific organizations;
- programs to *recruit and refer volunteers* into specific organizations in the community;
- invitations to employees to become involved in *projects that are endorsed by the company*;
- *cash, goods or services* are given to voluntary organizations for which employees volunteer with the employer clearly identified with the donations;
- *professional assistance* to identified voluntary organizations either on an *ad hoc* or a regular basis (in the past, this has generally involved only managerial, technical and professional staff);
- *nomination of employees to serve on the board* of a specific voluntary organization (in the past, this has often been limited to managerial and professional staff);
- *employer-sanctioned 'volunteer' time*;
the best example would be the time that employees devote to a United Way campaign during working hours;
- *company projects* that take place in regular working hours
these are company-sanctioned projects or committee-chosen causes that have been endorsed by the company; they may be either one-shot or ongoing projects; and
- *lending employees* to a 'company-sanctioned' voluntary organization at the employer's expense;

this is often in an area linked to the product or service provided by the company and is generally restricted to managers and professionals (for example, loaned executives programs); it is commonly used for developmental assignments for staff in the early to middle stages of their career and for longer-term assignments for those in middle to advanced stages of their career; for the employees involved, this is a work commitment, since they are still accountable to their employer;

In the case of company-sanctioned projects, three different concepts are possible:

- i) *sponsorship*:
examples include the United Way campaign (which ranks first in terms of sponsorship in Canada) and 'adopt-a-charity' schemes;
- ii) *joint partnership projects* done in collaboration with a voluntary organization:
a good example is a Meals on Wheels program run by a company;
- iii) *in-house projects* where the company works totally on its own without the involvement of a voluntary organization, except perhaps as a beneficiary;
this is a model for community development that is common in the United States: adopt-a-school projects and tutoring of youth on company premises are popular examples.

6 Structures of employer support for volunteerism

Virtually anything that an employer does to promote the involvement of its employees in community service is beneficial in some way. Any form of support can foster a climate that shows that the employer values volunteerism.

Some published material refers to an employer's efforts to accommodate the personal volunteer work of its employees (that is, 'type I' as outlined above) as mere 'tolerance' of volunteer activity. However, it seems more helpful to regard any kind of support as an important first step.

Once a company has taken the first step, it then becomes easier to introduce other forms of support for the volunteer work of its employees. It may well have laid the foundation of what will become an incremental, gradual process, building on existing activities. Even if a company is just beginning to move in this direction, many of its employees will already be involved as community volunteers.

Policies and practices to encourage and support volunteer activity by employees differ. Some companies will prefer to adopt a very formal approach with detailed policies and practices; others will prefer a less formal approach, at least at the beginning. Some of the businesses that are most active in promoting employee volunteering do not have formal policies and programs.

For some companies, their efforts depend heavily on input from the community organization or volunteer centre they work with; others have activities that are fully 'owned' by the company or by a group of employees.

For employee volunteer programs to be successful, however, both the level of support for volunteerism and the shapes that support takes will depend on the corporate culture and the values of the managers and employees. For this reason, it

is essential for a company to be fully aware of the views and attitudes of employees at all levels before it takes the initiative in this area. It is also important to be aware of the fact that some volunteers prefer to remain anonymous and will not welcome publicity in the workplace about their involvement.

Structures for organizing support for volunteer activity by employees vary from one company to another. Some have relatively unstructured and spontaneous activities; others have highly formalized programs.

Where support is formalized, there are two basic approaches that companies are now using to manage their efforts in support of employee volunteerism (these are not mutually exclusive; both approaches can also be used together):

- a staff member is assigned responsibility for this as part of his or her job (although usually this is only a small part, even in large corporations); generally, this staff person is in a community relations, public affairs or human resources unit;
- a team or committee of employees is given the task of planning and overseeing the company's employee volunteer program.

7 Success factors for employee volunteer programs

Key factors that influence the success of employee volunteer programs can be identified based on experience in employee volunteerism in Canada and other parts of the world (particularly, case studies and other research from the USA and the UK).

There is no magic formula for success. Each company moulds its efforts to fit its own priorities and culture — its particular way of doing business. The fact that a company is likely to view its efforts to promote employee volunteerism as an extension of its own uniqueness can work to the advantage a particular voluntary organization if it is aware of what the needs and interests of the company are.

The approach adopted must suit the needs and interests of both the employees and the employer. No two companies are the same, and there may even be differences between various branches of larger corporations. What is right for one company may not be the best choice for another.

The commitment of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior managers, backed by strong support from middle managers, is vital. Without this, efforts will likely fail. The cause also needs a champion within the organization, ideally at the top level. However, there is a danger of losing momentum in the longer run if the force rests in a single individual.

At the same time, it is critical to ensure employee ownership of activities. A wide range of employees should then be actively involved in developing the policy and the precise types of support to be offered. As well, representatives from employee associations or unions should be invited to play a role.

For example, in assessing needs and interests, the company could develop a short questionnaire (which does not ask for names) to solicit ideas from employees. This would also be a good way to find out what employees are already doing as volunteers

or are interested in doing. Then, once the employee volunteerism program begins, the company should encourage feedback and consult with employees on a regular basis.

Support for volunteer activities should be open to the entire workforce, rather than restricted to managers and professionals as has been the case with many companies in the past. Ideally, there should be no distinction between an hour of work from an executive and an hour from a receptionist. The program will also be enhanced if the company's 'extended family', including spouses and children of employees as well as retirees, are invited to become involved.

In planning and starting up an employee volunteer program, certain steps are essential. At the beginning, the company will need to:

- establish a forum to present the idea and develop the plan;
- find activities that require few or no resources; and
- co-operate with key community organizations, in particular, the local volunteer centre.

As support for the idea of employee volunteerism becomes more entrenched in the organization, the company should:

- name a staff person as the contact point, preferably someone with excellent communications skills who is well connected within the organization; and
- determine the budget and the amount of staff support needed.

A more lasting relationship between the company and community organizations is likely to result where the company adopts formal policies to guide its actions. A reference to employee volunteerism could be included in a company's mission statement, philosophy statement and annual reports to show its commitment to supporting employees' volunteer activities.

Ideally, employee volunteerism and the company's community involvement should be regarded as part of the company's day-to-day business, an integral part of its activity rather than a special project or 'program', as it too often still is. This means that the concept should be incorporated fully into the corporate culture and mainstream decision-making process. (This was the consensus of participants at a symposium on employee volunteerism held in Calgary in March 1993.)

The company must ensure that activities are undertaken by choice, whether these have been initiated by the employees themselves or in cooperation with management. Employees should never feel press-ganged into participating.

It is important to recognize that there is a point beyond which volunteer work is no longer entirely a matter of choice, of the employee's free will. Employer support for volunteerism may sometimes be perceived as coercive. (This can be a barrier to success, and voluntary organizations should keep that in mind when working with companies.)

It might be argued that this is the case when employees become involved:

- as a mandatory part of a career development plan or performance appraisal (for example, if employees are simply told that they are expected to give their service to particular voluntary groups or a special event);
- as a requirement for a new position or promotion; or
- as the result of aggressive solicitation by someone in a superior position.

Admittedly, the perception of coercion is a subtle one that will vary from one

setting to another, depending on the corporate culture. In some organizations, employees might regard the examples mentioned above as perfectly normal; in other organizations they would be regarded as coercion and would be harmful to employee morale and staff relations.

Part Two

8 *Selling the concept to business*

How can you, as a representative of a volunteer centre or another voluntary organization, encourage businesses in your community to adopt the philosophy of employee volunteerism? How do you build your case?

The vague notion that employee volunteerism is 'good for' the community will likely not be enough. You will have to stress the potential opportunities and benefits that involvement can bring to the firm and its employees, as well as to the community.

Any company should be concerned about the health of the community in which it does business. Its stakeholders and employees live there — and so do its customers. If the community is not healthy, businesses will not thrive and may not even survive. And, for a community to be healthy, it must have a vibrant and active voluntary sector with an adequate supply of volunteers.

A company's public image has become a vitally important asset. There is strong evidence to suggest that the Canadian public believes that business has an obligation to society as a whole and must be responsive to local needs and concerns. Businesses are now expected to care about pressing social issues and to be involved in the life of the communities in which they operate.

Certain segments of the Canadian public now tie their buying decisions to their belief that social responsibility is part of doing business. According to a recent nationwide survey (the Market Vision 2000 Study), many Canadians consider whether a company is a 'good corporate citizen' before buying its product or service. An earlier survey came up with similar findings (Decima's 1987 Nation-wide Survey on Attitudes Towards Philanthropy).

Make it clear that a company's involvement in the community is likely to redound to the ultimate benefit of the company. Involvement shows that the company cares about the community in which it does business.

Emphasize to the companies you are targeting that employee volunteerism is an effective way to demonstrate commitment to the community and to show leadership in addressing community concerns. Wherever appropriate, point out the opportunities to increase visibility in the community and to build the company's image, while at the same time making a much needed contribution to the community.

In a sense, employee volunteers are the company's ambassadors in the community. Because they work at the grassroots level, they also have access to an 'insider's view' that may help the company to better understand the community it serves. For example, working with ethnocultural groups may give employees insight into this segment of the company's market.

Stress to companies that employee volunteerism can be a powerful tool for building a skilled, flexible and committed workforce. If used strategically, programs and policies that promote volunteer activity by employees can sometimes be much more effective than the traditional training and professional development courses — and

less expensive.

This approach should be persuasive since it is widely accepted today that employees are the primary source of gains in productivity in any company. People are now viewed as a company's most valuable resource — as 'human capital' in which a wise company will invest.

Continuous training and re-training, employee empowerment and improved teamwork are basic tenets of the Quality Management philosophy that has become predominant in the 1990s. Professional development and personal growth of employees are seen as a priority. The best companies make every attempt to create a nurturing environment where people's talents are tapped and their creative energies are released.

As John Naisbitt writes in *Re-inventing the Corporation*:

“The corporation's competitive edge is people — an educated, skilled workforce that is eager to develop its own potential while contributing to the organization's growth.”

This same sentiment is echoed in all of the current literature on management theory. (See “Popular books on management in the corporate sector” in the Useful Reading section for a list of key titles on this topic.) And the concept of employee volunteerism is entirely consistent with this theory in allowing employees the chance to hone skills that can be transferred to the workplace.

You should also stress that volunteer work can offer personal rewards that almost everyone craves — interesting, challenging work; a chance to have new experiences; a sense of connectedness to other people in the community; and a sense of feeling needed and doing something positive and meaningful.

Let companies know that recent studies have found that volunteer involvement increases self-esteem and stimulates a sense of accomplishment that helps to reduce the impact of life's many stresses. Research also suggests that regular volunteer activity can have a very positive effect on physical health as well as mental well-being.

It is now recognized that happy, healthy people are likely to be productive employees. (This has resulted in the recent emphasis on the health, fitness and mental wellness of employees.) People who feel good about themselves have higher morale and are likely to be more motivated as employees. Indeed, in uncertain times people may have a greater need for the benefits offered by volunteer involvement.

With the demands on all companies in the increasingly competitive environment of the 1990s and the impact this will have on their ability to make financial donations, employee volunteerism may be even more appealing today. It is a way to contribute to the community that goes beyond financial donations — and one that can offer many returns for the company.

Recent studies from the United States, where the concept of employee volunteerism has become well established, show that many corporations regard programs and policies supporting employee volunteerism are helpful in meeting their individual business goals. These companies are convinced that volunteer programs help them attract and keep the people they need, and help build skills and attitudes that foster company loyalty and job satisfaction. Surprising as it may seem, employee volunteer

programs have even survived attacks of 'restructuring' and downsizing. (See *Corporate Volunteer Programs: Benefits to Business*, published by the American Conference Board in 1993.)

To remain competitive, today's 'lean' company must have a high-quality workforce — skilled, creative, effective as team players, well motivated, committed to the organization, and healthy in body and spirit. Employee volunteerism can help a company achieve this goal.

9 Making the connection

To be successful, the relationship between a voluntary organization and a company should be mutually beneficial — a true partnership. This means that both your organization and the company have to give as well as get something from the arrangement.

Before you approach a company, think about what you can offer the firm and its employees in return for gaining access to the skills and expertise of its employees. Possibilities that might appeal include:

- an opportunity for the company to become identified with an issue that is of concern to its consumer base;
- an avenue for information from the grassroots about the community in which the company does business;
- challenging and meaningful volunteer placements for employees;
- opportunities for employees to build skills and develop expertise in new areas;
- making the community a better place for employees to live; and
- enhancing the company's profile in the community.

Develop a list of target companies that you would like to approach. Find out where your existing supporters work. They could be ambassadors who could open doors in their companies.

Find out about the company you would like to approach — what it needs, and what it can offer you. What is the company's mission and history? Is it currently making a profit? Is it independent, or is it a subsidiary of another company? What kind of workforce does it have? Are the CEO and top executives involved in the community? Is there a history of support for community organizations? Is there a formal donations program or a community fund?

Which companies have employees with the skills you are looking for (for example, administrative and financial management, communication technology and systems, marketing or graphics design)? Is there any reason why a company might be particularly keen to forge links with the community or to build good employee relations? For example, have there been local protests about the company's activities? Or is the company undergoing a major reorganization, be it either expansion or downsizing?

Experience has shown that good companies to target are likely to be those:

- whose CEO and senior managers are active in the community;
- which make financial or in-kind contributions to your organization or to

others in your community;

- which have been in your community for a relatively long time;
- whose business is in an area related to your organization's field of interest;
- whose attentions are not currently absorbed in a struggle for their very survival.

In addition, certain types of businesses have a much stronger tradition of employee volunteering than others. Insurance companies and other financial institutions, retail stores and service companies, for example, are typically much more actively involved than are the manufacturing and construction industries. This would seem to support a theory that companies which deal directly with the public are more likely to support the concept of employee volunteerism. Presumably, this is because the benefits to them are more tangible.

It would also be wise to check the list of companies which are associated with the IMAGINE campaign and are recognized as “IMAGINE Caring Companies”. These companies range from large national corporations to smaller enterprises from across Canada. They have committed themselves to a corporate policy that includes donating at least one per cent of pre-tax profits to non-profit and charitable organizations of their choice, and encourages current and retired employees to contribute money and time. Medium-sized and small business should not be overlooked as a source of volunteers. Best bets will likely be those that are successful, consumer-oriented, and headed by someone who is active in the community.

Up to now, medium and small businesses have not been involved in employee volunteerism to the same extent as larger corporations. However, even small businesses may be well worth pursuing, especially if they have specialized services in areas that would especially help your organization (for example, accounting, advertising, evaluation, long-range planning). In fact, a small business which is used to dealing with 'shoestring' budgets may be able to relate much more easily to the day-to-day operations of a community organization than a big corporation would.

Once you have decided on the best companies to approach, find the gatekeepers — the most appropriate contacts in the company. This may be the President or CEO; the vice-president or manager of community relations, corporate affairs, public relations, human resources, or planning; the person responsible for training and professional development, the head of an employee association or a union local. As a general rule, begin by approaching the person at the highest level you can reach.

When you make your first contact, try to identify what the company would like out of a partnership with your organization. This will help you to suggest the most appealing kinds of volunteer activity. Sometimes you may discover that you are unable to provide the kinds of benefits that the company is looking for. If that happens, you should communicate it in a clear yet tactful way.

To kindle a company's interest, give examples of what other companies are doing, especially others in the same community. Suggest ways individual employees could get involved as volunteers and have specific ideas ready to offer the company. In addition, give them examples of how a company's involvement could be recognized, and ask which approach they would prefer. Remember that the rule of thumb for public relations and community relations in most companies is: maximum impact for

minimum outlay of dollars and time.

The best kind of advocacy has a personal touch. Look for opportunities to meet face-to-face with groups of employees, middle managers and senior officers.

It is quite probable that your organization, like most others in your community, is struggling in these tough economic times. But the advice from the experts is to avoid pouring out your troubles when you approach businesses. Companies usually respond best to specific needs and opportunities rather than to cries of alarm and urgent pleas for help. You want action, not sympathy.

For example, it would be best not to emphasize to the company that massive cuts in your core funding have put your organization at the crisis point in terms of survival. Rather, ask the company for specific kinds of technical assistance to allow you to evaluate your programs and your organizational structure, to develop a publicity campaign to become better known in the community or to design and conduct a fundraising campaign. Determine what would attract a particular company — a link with its known priorities, a link with the product or service it sells, or a link with its particular skills base.

In most companies, even large corporations, the individual responsible for employee volunteerism almost always has many other duties. There may not even be a specific person assigned this specific responsibility. But don't jump to conclusions: the obstacle may well be a lack of time rather than a lack of interest in the idea.

Bear in mind then, that ease of access to information about volunteer opportunities and activities may be a crucial factor in eliciting interest in employee volunteerism, especially in smaller companies. Prepackaged information may be the key.

The more prepared you are with ideas to appeal to employees, the more likely you are to succeed. If you understand the interests and motivations of particular companies, you can prepare yourself to respond to their needs in the most suitable and effective way.

10 Preparing your organization for employee volunteers

Employee volunteer programs offer your organization the chance to involve individuals you might not reach through your normal channels and strategies of recruitment. They may provide access to skills and talents that would be of particular use to your organization. However, you must be well prepared if you want to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by employee volunteerism. Always bear in mind that you are competing with a wide range of other options for leisure-time activities.

You will have to be flexible and creative to use employee volunteers effectively. First of all, look at the work that needs to be done in your organization and the various tasks involved. What skills are needed? How much time is required? Does the job need to be done on site or can it be done elsewhere? Can it be done after hours (that is, in the evenings or on weekends)? Will volunteers be expected to work independently or to follow precise directions? Is it a job for a single individual, or could it be done as part of a group or family effort?

Design or redesign some of the tasks that need to be done in your organization into

separate time-limited pieces. Then analyze these projects in terms of the opportunities for learning and developing skills and for team-building and other possible benefits for the volunteers. As you would do for all volunteer positions, make sure job descriptions have clearly defined responsibilities and duties, and provide a plan for orientation, training and supervision.

When recruiting volunteers from the workplace, you increase your chances of success by offering opportunities for:

- one-time or short-term assignments (especially to allow new volunteers to test the waters);
- working in the evenings or on weekends;
- working in groups with colleagues;
- volunteering with family or friends.

To find the most appealing volunteer jobs, try to minimize practical barriers and maximize potential benefits. It is important to ensure that volunteers' tasks match the motivations and availability of the people you are trying to attract. To do this, you will need to understand the motivations of the company and its employees. The best matches will provide benefits to all parties.

What could your organization offer the company you want to approach? For example, if the company is looking for team-building opportunities, you could invite its employees to plan, manage and operate a self-contained project. You could offer them a choice of ready-to-run projects that include opportunities for the employees to play leadership or managerial roles.

As your relationship with a company matures, encourage peer recruitment. A satisfied employee volunteer is an excellent person to recruit new volunteers, whether they be colleagues, family members or friends.

Have your information kit ready before you begin approaching companies. It should give information about the purpose of your organization, when it was established, your current aims and objectives, the services and programs you offer, the number of clients you serve, the names of your board members, the number of salaried employees, the current number of volunteers, your budget (including sources of funding or revenue, and a summary of expenses).

You could also prepare material for company newsletters and bulletin boards about volunteer opportunities in various community organizations. This will serve as a forum to introduce employees to your volunteer programs and let them know that there are many options for volunteer involvement. It is also a good way to inform a broad range of people about the many services that voluntary organizations provide to the community.

You could use displays and information booths to publicize your appeal for volunteers and have staff members or current volunteers on hand to answer questions. A volunteer fair could be held on the premises of an individual company or in a central location. (See Appendix D for more details.)

Once you have begun working with a company, do regular evaluations of your approach to make sure that your activities stay as effective as possible. Progress should be measured in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It is important to have feedback not only on the number of employee volunteer and the number of hours they

donate but it's also important to keep track of the level of volunteer satisfaction and the opportunities for personal and professional growth. Make sure that the company itself is getting recognition.

11 *Models for promoting employee volunteerism in your community*

To promote employee volunteerism effectively in a community, an organized approach is needed to provide a link among the companies involved and between these companies and community organizations. Various models have been tried.

A popular model is the *corporate volunteer council* (CVC), sometimes known as a *business volunteer council*. This is a well established concept in the United States, and has been adopted in a number of larger Canadian communities, with variations.

In the American model, the CVC is a coalition of business corporations which provides a link between the corporate sector and the community. Member corporations either have formal programs to support employee volunteerism or a strong interest in initiating such programs. Through the CVC, member companies exchange information on their programs, discuss relevant issues and organize joint projects to meet a need in the community.

American CVCs are driven by the corporations. While volunteer centres have sometimes played a vital role in the development of CVCs, their involvement tends to be limited to that of a behind-the-scenes facilitator once the CVC is fully operational.

Canadian CVCs may vary somewhat from the American prototype. While in some communities, the business sector has taken the lead in establishing a CVC, in others it was the volunteer centre. Some CVCs are composed exclusively of business corporations; others include municipal governments and educational institutions; several involve the volunteer centre as a full member of equal standing.

A key function of a CVC is to encourage corporations to donate time and resources to community organizations and to encourage policies, strategies and programs that foster employee volunteerism. CVCs also serve as a forum to share ideas related to volunteerism in the workplace and to promote the concept of employee volunteerism in the broader community.

Another way to link the corporate and voluntary sectors in your community is through a *corporate volunteer committee*. This is a standing committee of the volunteer centre, established in collaboration with the business sector. It is chaired by a board member from the centre, with a staff person involved as a coordinator. The committee members do not necessarily represent the organizations with which they are affiliated in a formal way.

Volunteer centres are logical catalysts to spur the growth of employee volunteerism in their community. Many of them are already involved with companies, even if only informally.

Volunteer centres have a mandate to promote volunteerism and recruit volunteers for community-based organizations and agencies. They are thus in an ideal situation to approach the local Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade as well as individual

companies in order to advance that cause. Since their role includes providing advice and assistance on issues relating to volunteerism, they are also in a position to offer concrete help to companies interested in developing policies and programs related to employee volunteerism.

As the hub of a wide network of voluntary groups, volunteer centres are able to offer companies a perspective that goes beyond any one setting in which volunteers are active. For medium-sized and small businesses, in particular, the role of a broker agency to assist in making the match with community organizations could be extremely valuable. A company could also contract with the volunteer centre to ensure the most suitable volunteer placements for its employees.

Summing Up

Employee volunteerism is a valuable resource for all three players:

- it is a source of skills and expertise that are much needed by *voluntary organizations* in all communities;
- it offers *the company* an effective way to improve the morale of employees and to strengthen its workforce, while at the same time responding to the public's expectation that business become more involved in the community;
- it provides opportunities to *employee volunteers* for personal and professional growth.

Put simply, everyone stands to gain from promoting volunteerism in the workplace. There are benefits for those who volunteer, for the companies which support the concept, for the voluntary organizations that have access to these volunteers — and for the broader community.

Employee volunteering is an excellent way to tap into the diverse human resources of a community. It can also increase the public's awareness of community needs and issues and build understanding between the voluntary sector and the corporate sector.

The workplace can be a major source of volunteers for community organizations. Companies have a potential to mobilize immense energy for the common good. Virtually anything that an employer does to support the volunteer work of its employees or to encourage its employees to become involved as community volunteers will promote volunteerism and thus benefit the community.

There is no set blueprint for how a company can support employee volunteerism; a variety of models are available. Policies and programs must be designed to meet the individual needs, priorities, and culture of companies, as well as the interests of their employees. Volunteer centres and other community organizations should be aware of the various options so that they can tailor their suggestions to businesses and provide guidance and advice when called upon to do so.

As a clearly defined force, employee volunteerism is in its early stages in Canada, especially in comparison to the United States and Great Britain. But the movement is relatively new, and continues to grow. Formal initiatives have been launched in a number of Canadian cities. And much is already happening informally, without the assistance of structures such as corporate volunteer councils.

In the 1990s, the need to forge stronger links between the corporate and voluntary sectors in Canadian communities is urgent. Creative strategies must be found to link the needs of voluntary organizations with the reserve army of willing volunteers in the workplace. And, hopefully, new models of working together will also emerge.

Appendix A

Employee volunteerism in Canadian communities: a growing movement

Employee volunteerism is an emerging movement in Canada. As a clearly defined force, it is much less established here than it is in the United States or Great Britain. Nevertheless, formal initiatives have been launched in a number of Canadian cities to spur the growth of employee volunteerism. In most cases, these initiatives have been spearheaded by the local volunteer centre.

The most popular way to structure an organized approach to promoting the concept of employee volunteerism in a community is through a *corporate volunteer council* (CVC). Representatives from member companies sit on the CVC, and one of them serves as the chairperson. The Volunteer Centre is an active partner, although its precise role vis-à-vis the CVC may vary according to local circumstances.

In recent years, a number of Canadian cities have established CVCs: Metropolitan Toronto in 1987, Montreal in 1990, Calgary in 1991, the Waterloo Region of Ontario in 1991, and Hamilton in 1991. These vary in size from ten to sixteen members. At present, Calgary and Montreal have the only CVCs with a paid staff person (in both cases, hired on a part-time basis and working out of the volunteer centre).

Another model has been adopted in Ottawa-Carleton and Saint John, New Brunswick. In collaboration with the local business sector, a *corporate volunteer committee* has been established as a standing committee of the volunteer centre. The mandate of these Committees is to promote employee volunteerism in the community and to develop strategies for strengthening collaboration between the voluntary and business sectors. In Saint John, the Committee has close links with the Board of Trade. In Ottawa-Carleton, the members of the committee are drawn from the community at large. They are chosen because of their personal interest in the concept and do not formally represent any company or voluntary organization they are affiliated with.

The Volunteer Centre in St John's, Newfoundland, provides a central link between agencies and businesses in the community by serving as a clearinghouse for employee volunteers and gifts-in-kind. Volunteer Vancouver runs a "Leadership Vancouver" program in collaboration with the Vancouver Board of Trade. Under this program, participants tagged as emerging leaders in the community work in teams on community projects to develop their potential.

It should be emphasized, however, that a lot of activity in this field is taking place on a more informal basis. Many volunteer centres are already offering services that include employee volunteers and many companies support volunteerism even though they are not involved with a corporate volunteer council.

A 1986 study by the Conference Board of Canada showed that there was support for the concept of employee volunteerism in many Canadian companies. A fair number of companies have developed programs and policies that encourage the volunteer activities of their employees in the community. However, much of this activity is informal in the sense that it is being done without the assistance of a corporate volunteer council and without the support of a volunteer centre as an intermediary.

Also important to the Canadian scene is the IMAGINE campaign. Started in 1989 and coordinated by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, this nation-wide campaign aims at raising the awareness of businesses and individuals in Canada about their shared responsibility for supporting the voluntary sector through donations of money and time. Employee volunteerism is emerging as one of the thrusts of IMAGINE's corporate program.

Appendix B

Corporate volunteer councils in Canada

There are now Corporate Volunteer Councils in Metropolitan Toronto, Waterloo Region (which includes Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge), Hamilton, Montreal and Calgary. Their current membership is shown below.

The Corporate Volunteer Council of Metropolitan Toronto

- Allstate Insurance Companies of Canada
- Bell Canada
- Consumers Gas
- Honeywell
- IBM Canada
- Imperial Oil
- Manufacturers Life Insurance Company
- McKinsey and Company
- Noranda Inc Foundation
- Royal Insurance Company of Canada
- Shell Canada
- Southam
- Suncor
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Toronto Dominion Bank
- Upjohn Company of Canada
- Warner-Lambert Canada

The Corporate Volunteer Council of Montreal

- Bell Quebec
- Canadian National
- Centraide of Greater Montreal
- Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal
- CP Rail System
- Domtar
- Esso Petroleum Canada
- IBM Canada
- Imperial Tobacco
- Molson O'Keefe Breweries
- National Bank of Canada
- Pratt and Whitney Canada
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Volunteer Bureau of Montreal

Calgary Corporate Volunteer Council

- AGT
- Alberta Energy Company
- Amoco Canada Petroleum Company
- Canadian Airlines International
- Canadian Pacific
- Calgary Chamber of Commerce
- Chevron Canada Resources
- Esso Resources Canada
- Norcen Energy Resources
- Nova Corporation of Alberta
- Petro-Canada
- Shell Canada
- TransCanada Pipelines
- Volunteer Centre of Calgary

The Waterloo Region Corporate Volunteer Council

- Bank of Montreal
- Bell Canada
- City of Cambridge
- City of Kitchener
- City of Waterloo
- Manulife Financial
- The Mutual Group
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada
- University of Waterloo
- Waterloo Regional Police Service

Corporate Volunteer Council of Hamilton and District

- Dofasco
- PasWord Communications
- Bell Canada
- Peat, Marwick, Thorne
- EnMark Associates

Appendix C

The international backdrop: Employee volunteering in the United States and Great Britain

On the international scene, the United States and Great Britain lead the way in employee volunteerism — both in terms of amount of activity in their communities and the level of national coordination in promoting the concept. From the Canadian perspective, it is useful to have an overview of two successful movements that emerged in different settings.

i) The American Experience

The concept of employee volunteering is well entrenched in the United States. The movement became formalized in the late 1970s and gained great momentum in the early 1980s. Corporate volunteerism (the term usually used in the American literature) is now widespread.

During the Regan era, federal spending in social areas was reduced and corporations were given substantial tax breaks. In return, the administration made it clear that corporations were expected to assume greater responsibility for tackling social problems. Employee volunteerism was actively promoted as an important vehicle for corporations to increase their contribution to the community.

Today, some 1,050 American corporations have formal programs to support employee volunteerism. These companies span virtually all segments of the corporate sector, ranging from industrial giants to small service companies and from multinational head offices to local branch plants. It is interesting to note that in spite of uncertain economic times, there has been a steady increase in the number of companies involved over the past eight years.

Employee volunteer programs take a wide variety of forms in the United States. Nevertheless, there are certain typical elements in the way the concept has evolved there. For example, *employer-sanctioned projects* are very common. Many team projects are initiated and managed by employees who work together in the community, either for a voluntary organizations or on their own. Education, health and the environment are among the most popular areas for such involvement.

Companies frequently assign middle and senior managers to the boards of voluntary organizations as part of their career development. Many companies also run matching grants programs which give financial support to the organizations for which their employees volunteer.

The development of the concept of the *corporate volunteer council* (CVC) in the 1970s gave impetus to the American movement. Coalitions of business corporations,

CVCs provide a link between business and the community. They serve as a forum for member companies to work together on a regular basis at the local level to exchange information on their programs, discuss relevant issues and organize joint initiatives to meet needs in the community. There are now over 70 CVCs in communities across the United States, ranging in size from 15 to 60 corporate members.

The National Council on Corporate Volunteerism, part of the Points of Light Foundation, helps to link and strengthen local CVCs and to promote the concept of employee volunteerism at the national level. The Council offers publications, information, technical assistance, direct consultation and training in this area. The Points of Light Foundation recently initiated a program of Awards for Excellence in Corporate Community Service.

ii) The British Experience

Employee volunteerism is a rapidly growing and formalized movement in Great Britain. It forms part of a broader thrust to encourage companies to become actively involved in *community investment* (a concept which also includes contributions of cash, gifts-in-kind and services). Priority areas are local economic development, inner city renewal, education, and the environment.

The Volunteer Centre UK began promoting awareness of employee volunteerism in 1984. Over the last ten years, a number of specialized voluntary organizations have been formed in Great Britain to promote the concept of community investment by business.

Perhaps most significant among these is Business in the Community (BITC). This is the coordinating body for a national network that aims to increase the quality and extent of community involvement by business. BITC was established in 1981 by the corporate sector in partnership with the voluntary and public sectors. BITC is currently supported by over 400 major companies, and its members include representatives of Government departments, voluntary agencies and trade unions.

BITC promotes the benefits of employee volunteerism to business. With an emphasis on practical action, it offers assistance and advice to companies and coordinates joint corporate projects at the national and local levels. It coordinates the UK Award for Corporate Volunteerism, as well as Employees in the Community Action Day, both of which serve to encourage more companies to get staff involved in the community as secondees and volunteers.

Another agency that plays a major role is the Action Resource Centre (ARC). This national agency serves as the leading broker for secondments and other formal placements in voluntary organizations of employees from business and government. It functions on a fee-for-service basis through 12 branch offices.

Appendix D

Summary of good practice in employee volunteering

The following guidelines are reproduced with permission from Making the Most of Employee Community Involvement by Jo Patton, published by The Volunteer Centre UK in 1992.

For the organization in which the volunteer works

Good practice procedures for managing volunteers in general are largely appropriate to employee volunteers as well. This summary highlights those areas where you may need to review, adapt or add to your usual procedures.

1. Ensure that employee volunteers are welcome to staff. Resolve in advance any major doubts about the ethics of working with a particular employer to recruit volunteers, or about volunteers threatening paid jobs.
2. Design a range of volunteer jobs which provide interesting and worthwhile work. Bear in mind the time constraints of working people. Consider groups and opportunities for skilled and professional volunteers.
3. Make clear the responsibilities and time commitment required.
4. Review selection procedures. Keep all bureaucracy to a minimum.
5. Provide a named person who will be available to the volunteers to answer questions and provide support as required.
6. Offer training as needed. You may need to adapt the time and place of the training to suit the volunteers.
7. Make time to learn from volunteers, particularly ones carrying out skilled tasks.
8. Give volunteers a voice in how jobs are done and a chance to contribute ideas to the organization as a whole.
9. Provide out-of-pocket expenses. If the project has been developed just for the company, check whether the company will pay volunteers' expenses. Occasionally, as in the case of a one-time project with a company made up of highly paid professionals, it may not be necessary to pay expenses.
10. Provide insurance coverage to volunteers. Check to ensure that the employer's policy covers projects which take place on the company site.
11. Say 'thank you' to the employees and to the person who helped you recruit them. If the company made a major contribution to your work, consider acknowledging this publicly.
12. Provide feedback to the employer about the number of employee volunteers and the usefulness of their work. Check with the employees about how to do this in a way acceptable to them.

13. Maintain contact with the company. Provide reports about how your work is going and suggestions for further ways they can be involved.
14. For projects developed just for a company, clarify in advance who will provide and pay for materials, volunteer expenses, training, supervision and insurance.

For the employer

1. Involve senior managers in the program.
2. Ensure that line managers recognize the benefits of employee volunteering to the company and the employees, as well as to the community.
3. Appoint a central co-ordinator of activities, either part-time or full-time. Responsibility for the program must be in someone's job description.
4. Involve employees in decision-making as fully as possible. Activities should be freely undertaken and initiated either wholly by employees or co-operatively with management.
5. Provide regular publicity to keep employees and community groups informed.
6. Provide resources to meet necessary administrative costs.
7. Provide visible, practical support for employees' activities. Provide clear guidelines governing the availability of this support and any limitations on it.
8. Involve partner community organisations as fully as possible in planning projects and in the evaluation of them.
9. Begin modestly.
 - a) Pilot the program in one or two locations
 - b) Hold the PR launch later rather than earlier.
10. Respect the wishes of any employees who do not want any company involvement in, or publicity about, their voluntary work. A general comment recognising 'employees doing unspecified voluntary work' should be included in general publicity about the program.
11. Base communications to employees on the underlying messages:
 - “We support you in what you want to do”
 - “We want to share with you what we are doing”
 - “We want to create a community program together”
 Avoid communications which could be interpreted as:
 - “Employee volunteering (in the abstract) is a good thing.”
 - “We think you ought to be involved in the community.”
 - “When you are involved, it will be as a company representative.”
12. Recognize the contribution of volunteers — through profiles in staff magazines, an award scheme or special celebration events. Recognition of skills developed during voluntary work can be provided by including mention of such work in appraisals on a voluntary basis.
13. In new volunteer projects developed by the company in partnership with a community organization, negotiate in advance who will provide and pay for materials, volunteers' expenses, insurance, supervision and training if needed.

14. Apply normal good management practices to projects organized by the company. Provide project leaders with line management support and draw up clear job specifications for volunteer tasks where appropriate.

Appendix E

Creating a company profile

The following is based on a checklist developed by Shirley Kennedy Keller, who was a major figure in the employee volunteerism movement in the United States. It is reproduced with the permission of the author, with minor revisions to adapt it to the Canadian situation.

1. Categories of Information

1.1 *The Company's Past and Future*

- Past giving areas or projects
 - Is there a history? If so, what activities does the company consider to be most significant?
- Earnings/profits
 - Is the forecast positive?
 - Is this the right time to introduce an employee volunteer program?
- Policies on community involvement
 - Is there a basis to introduce a formal employee volunteer program?
- Current programs involving volunteers
 - Is there a base from which to build?
 - Note that some forms of employee volunteerism may not necessarily be recognized as such by the company (for example, United Way campaigns and Red Cross Blood donor clinics).

1.2 *Company Demographics*

- Size of company — number of employees
 - What is the universe of potential volunteers?
- Geographic location of facilities
 - Does the company have more than one facility in the area? How close are they to your workplace(s)?
- Company priorities
 - Has the company already established priority areas for community involvement (for example, health, education or seniors)?
- Hours of operation
 - Does the company have shifts, flex-time or seasonal employees? Will this affect the level of encouragement for employee volunteerism and the types of support mechanisms and programs that could be established?

- Unions or employee associations
Are there existing structures which are important to involve when planning and administering an employee volunteer program? Is the relationship between the union /employee association and management positive?

1.3 *Employee Demographics*

- Age range
Do most employees fall into a specific or several specific age ranges? Are there opportunities which might particularly appeal to these potential volunteers?
- Type of jobs
What professional categories do the employees tend to be in? What are the volunteer jobs which have tended to 'sell' best to employees with these types of jobs?
- Male/Female
What is the proportion of male to female employees? What kinds of volunteer opportunities might appeal to these employees?
- Geographic spread of employees' homes
Will this affect the types of volunteering you propose to them?
- Current involvement as volunteers
Are employees already involved as community volunteers? What are the most popular types of volunteer activity?

1.4 *Decision-Makers — Formal and Informal*

- Chief Executive Officer (Chairman of the Board, President)
- Senior and middle managers
- Personnel or Human Resources Department
- Contributions or foundation staff
What impact will their support have on an employee volunteer program? Do you have access to each of them?

1.5 *Communications Vehicles for Recruitment*

What are the existing vehicles for internal communication that you may be able to use to recruit volunteers? Examples include newsletters, in-house publications and employee clubs.

2. Sources of Information

2.1 People

- Individuals associated with your own organization
- Friends in various levels of management
- Individuals who have access to the decision-makers in the companies (for example, secretaries, administrative assistants)

2.2 The Company Itself

- Annual reports and any other available sources of information
- Staff in Communications, Public Information or Community Affairs offices

2.3 The Municipal Library

Consult your municipal library for directories of companies in your community, as well as information on specific companies that may have appeared in a newspaper or magazine serving your community.

Appendix F

The corporate volunteer fair: what, why and how

The following is an abridged version of a chapter from the Guide to Building a Corporate Volunteer Program, by the Corporate Volunteer Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Volunteer Centre of Metro Toronto. Reproduced with permission.

Introduction

The Volunteer Fair is the vehicle that corporations use most frequently to introduce and maintain interest in their volunteer programs. The Fair provides, in a relaxed, fun environment, an opportunity for employees to learn face-to-face about volunteer options and services in the community. As with any worthwhile endeavour, the Fair's value can be considerably enhanced when it is planned with care and enthusiasm.

What is a Volunteer Information Fair?

An information fair is an event that gives community organizations an opportunity to recruit new volunteers and to explain their services and programs to the general public. Each agency or organization has the use of a display booth or table for the presentation of printed, visual, and audio-visual information.

Generally held in a location which attracts a large number of people (for example, the lobby, cafeteria or training room), an information fair may include any activity (such as a raffle or free lunch) designed to capture the attention of casual observers.

Some Definitions

Host Company: the company which has undertaken to host and coordinate the information fair. All communication and planning are channelled through the host company.

Booths/Table Displays: the presentations put together by the participating agencies or organizations and placed in the display booths or on tables provided by the host company. Displays may include audio-visual presentations, pamphlets, posters and photographs placed on the tables or attached to the backdrops of the display booth or table.

Site Co-ordinator: the corporate representative responsible for the location of the fair site.

Promotion: any activity undertaken by the host company to advertise the fair and to encourage employee participation. Promotion could include a personal invitation from the President of the company, flyers, cafeteria tent cards, posters or balloons distributed by clowns at the fair.

Why Have an Information Fair?

A decision to host an information fair in your company will be richly rewarded. The long list of benefits that result from an information fair more than justifies the time and energy involved.

The main benefits include:

- increased employee awareness of resources and services available in the community;
- active promotion of community and social service programs;
- promotion and celebration of volunteerism;
- opportunity for networking among participants;
- development of organizational and promotional skills for the employees;
- recruitment of new volunteers;
- an informal, friendly way to inform employees about volunteer opportunities in the community without requiring an immediate commitment.

Who's in Charge?

An information fair may be organized and hosted by a central coordinating agency in the community, such as a Volunteer Centre or the United Way. Alternatively, planning may be spearheaded by a company.

A coordinating agency is well suited to the task, provided that it is familiar with community organizations and their needs and has the contacts necessary to undertake planning.

Responsibilities and Obligations of the Host Company

The first and most important responsibility is to give everyone enough time to plan! A *minimum* of three months is recommended.

As the host company, you are responsible for the following:

- finding a suitable location and time (for example, the cafeteria at noon);
- recruiting volunteers to help;
- handling promotion and publicity;
- arranging for and setting up the display area (*eg*, display booths or tables, chairs, table skirts, lights, refreshments);
- arranging the opening ceremonies;
- overseeing the event on the day;

- sending thank-you letters and writing an evaluation report.

Organization Set-Up

i) Site Co-ordinator

A staff member should be assigned the task of planning and organizing the fair in cooperation with the Volunteer Centre or a central coordinating agency in the community. The co-ordinator's responsibilities include:

- Company
 - N booking the fair site
 - N overseeing promotion campaign
- Volunteer Centre
 - N liaising with participating agencies and organizations
 - N coordinating the participation of the volunteer agencies
 - N coordinating the volunteers required by the Volunteer Centre
 - N evaluating and reporting
- Miscellaneous
 - N coordinating site and display booths or tables
 - N fielding questions, problems and last minute arrangements prior to and on the day of the information fair

ii) Employee Volunteers

Employee volunteers provide the grease to help the host company and site co-ordinator engineer the information fair. The volunteers report to the site co-ordinator.

Budget Requirements

The budget required to host an information fair is not significant, but there are a number of essential costs which cannot be avoided (a minimum of about \$500). While you should maintain a firm grip on expenditures, keep in mind that the fair should be professional in both its promotion and presentation.

Costs may include:

- renting tables and chairs
- table coverings
- agency name signs or banners for the display area
- promotional materials (*eg*, flyers, balloons, posters)
- postage
- photocopying
- secretarial services

- film processing
- refreshments

It is difficult to give an estimate of the total costs involved in an information fair. Expenses depend on the size of the fair, the amount of promotion required and the cost of materials for the display area.

Promotional Activities and Material

Promotional activities and material are designed to provide employees with information about the fair and to generate interest. Remember to include the date, place, and purpose of the fair. Be imaginative.

Draw up a list of activities and the material required. Establish a time schedule. You won't want to fall behind on your planning and risk disappointment. The printing of special T-shirts or banners, for example, may require several weeks.

Promotional activities might include:

- producing and distributing flyers to employees
- printing posters to be displayed at the fair site and on bulletin boards and tent cards for cafeteria tables
- distributing balloons, bookmarks or shopping bags with the fair's logo and name prior to and on the fair day

Encourage employees to promote the fair within their own department. Word-of-mouth reminders at meetings and a few lines in a newsletter can swell the number of employees attending the fair.

Opening Ceremony

An opening ceremony will mark the occasion with pomp and celebration. Your opening ceremony should make everyone feel proud and excited about the fair.

Invite a special guest or two, such as the President or a Senior Executive from the sponsoring company. Encourage short, concise speeches. Have an activity such as a ribbon-cutting or the release of balloons as the focal point of the ceremony. Your objective is to officially open the fair, to thank participants and volunteers and to celebrate 'people helping people' in the community.

Appendix G

The Corporate Volunteer Fair: a planning checklist

This is the checklist used by the Corporate Volunteer Council of Calgary to keep all the loose ends under control when organizing a corporate volunteer fair.

		Person Responsible	Date Due	Status (Complete/ Incomplete)
Concept	Plan			
Facility	Booth space Electrical Check-in Refreshments Stage			
Agencies	Selection Coordination			
Equipment	Agency needs Provision			
Decorations	Planning Provision			
Entertainment	Booking Schedule Confirmation			
Lunch	Plan Coordination			
Program	Format Speakers Confirmation			
Promotion	Design Production Distribution			
Media	Plan Media Kits PSAs			
Invitations	List Invitations Confirmation			
Activities	Plan Coordinate			
Floor Plan	Design			
Corporate Booths	Design Staff			

Recommended Reading

1 Resources on Employee Volunteerism

i) Canadian

Audet, Beverley A and Janet Rostami. *Partnership Strategies for Community Investment: Finding of National Consultations.* Ottawa: Institute of Donations and Public Affairs Research, Conference Board of Canada, 1993. 80 pp.

This publication focuses on partnerships across the corporate, voluntary and public sectors as a strategy for social change and community development. After examining the definition and scope of the partnership concept, the report outlines the barriers to partnerships and the elements that are critical to success. It also explores key issues in partnerships and offers suggestions for dealing with these. One appendix provides examples of partnerships in various areas.

Although this publication is not about employee volunteerism as such, it is a useful resource for anyone wanting to get a better understanding of the broader context of community investment.

Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto. *Corporate Involvement in Volunteerism in the Metro Toronto Area.* Toronto: 1985. 30 pp.

This report looks at the findings of a survey of companies in Metropolitan Toronto to assess corporate involvement in employee volunteerism in human services. Selected corporate profiles offer examples of various ways companies can support employee volunteerism. The study concludes that employee volunteerism offers substantial benefits to the company and its employees, as well as to the community.

Corporate Volunteer Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Volunteer Centre of Metro Toronto. *Guide to Building a Corporate Volunteer Program.* Toronto: 1990. 54 pp.

Aimed at the corporate sector, this guide identifies the benefits of employee volunteerism and examines key elements of successful programs to promote employee volunteerism. In essence, it is a 'how-to' book for companies interested in developing, managing, and evaluating an employee volunteer program. It gives examples of material that show what selected Canadian corporations have done in the area of employee volunteerism. One chapter gives detailed advice on how to organize a corporate volunteer fair.

Decima Research. "Charitable giving in the corporate sector" in *Nation-Wide Attitude Study on Philanthropy.* Toronto: October, 1987. pp 28-36).

Chapter V of this report on the findings of a survey on Canadians' attitudes to philanthropy focuses on the importance that we place on the public image of a company and our views on corporate social responsibility.

Graff, Linda. *Volunteer for the Health of It.* Etobicoke: Volunteer Ontario, 1991.

46 pp.

This report focuses on the significance of volunteer work in improving volunteers' mental and physical health. Although the study does not deal specifically with employee volunteerism, it does support the view that employee volunteering helps improve the morale and work skills of employees.

Hart, Kenneth D. *Employee Volunteerism: Employer Practices and Policies*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 1986. 17 pp.

This report analyzes the results of a study involving some 1,000 executives. It documents the approaches adopted by Canadian companies in support of voluntary activities by their employees, and examines the opportunities and challenges that employee volunteerism offers the corporate sector.

It should be noted that this study is not restricted to volunteering that benefits the community or society as a whole. It also gathered information on employer support for work done on behalf of a Chamber of Commerce, a business or trade association, or a professional association. (These activities ranked very high as types of activities that employers encouraged).

MacKenzie Group International. *Community Relations Practices in Canadian Corporations, 1993*. Toronto: 1993. 48 pp.

This is an in-depth analysis of corporate activity in community relations, based on the responses of 258 private and public corporations. The study examines the degree of importance that companies of various types and sizes give to community relations, the approaches they take and the success of their strategies, and their level of satisfaction with the benefits they perceive.

Magor, Ken. "Spread the Spirit" in *Exchange*, July, 1993. pp 24-27, 37-40.

Aimed at corporations, this article examines the contribution that employee volunteer programs make to the community and explains the role that a corporate volunteer council can play. It also looks at various ways companies can promote volunteering by employees, using examples from Ontario's Waterloo Region.

Market Vision Research. *The Market Vision 2000 Study: A Nation-wide Study of Consumers' Attitudes Towards Business*. Toronto: 1993.

This document presents the key findings of a survey of the attitudes of Canadians towards business and its social responsibility to the community.

McLelland, Phoebe. "Corporate Volunteer Recognition Campaign" in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*. Summer, 1993. pp 22-25.

This article describes an innovative campaign undertaken by Ottawa-Carleton's Corporate Volunteer Committee to encourage employers to recognize the volunteer efforts of their employees.

Pecore, Gina. *Project Connect: Bringing Corporate and Volunteer Resources Together*. St John's, Newfoundland: The Volunteer Centre of the Community Services Council, 1992. 68 pp.

This is the report of a study on the status of corporate volunteerism in St John's and Mount Pearl. Based on a sample of 60 businesses and 150 community agencies, this study examines the needs, attitudes and concerns of both the corporate and the voluntary sector. It also offers recommendations

on how to strengthen the links between these two sectors through employee volunteerism as well as other kinds of corporate support. The appendices include copies of the interview questionnaires and their covering letters.

Rostami, Janet. *Corporate Community Investment in Canada 1992*. Institute of Donations and Public Affairs Research, Conference Board of Canada, 1993.

This report is based on the results of a survey to which 184 companies responded. The survey gathered information on donations, gifts-in-kind, and employee volunteerism.

The Saint John Volunteer Centre. *Bridge the Gap: A Corporate Volunteer Program Study*. Saint John, New Brunswick: 1990. 52 pp.

This is the report of a survey aimed at testing the receptiveness of the corporate and voluntary sectors in Saint John to the prospect of a corporate volunteer program run by the Volunteer Centre. Based on interviews with 150 businesses and 50 community agencies, the study concluded that the community was 'ready' for such a program. It offers recommendations on how the Volunteer Centre should develop and organize its corporate services. Copies of the questionnaires and their covering letters are appended.

The Saint John Volunteer Centre. *Bridge the Gap: Follow-up Study*. Saint John, New Brunswick: 1991. 16 pp.

This is a report on the second phase of the Saint John study (see above). Having determined that there was potential for the innovative corporate involvement in the services offered by the Volunteer Centre, this follow-up study looked at the respective needs of community agencies and businesses in the development of a new corporate services program. Copies of the questionnaires sent to business and community agencies are appended.

Keller, Shirley Kennedy. *Corporate Volunteerism: A Different Approach, A Greater Return*. Information packages prepared for workshops sponsored by the Corporate Volunteer Council of Calgary in March of 1993.

Two kits, one geared for corporations and the other for voluntary organizations, provide information on employee volunteer programs and other forms of corporate support to community organizations.

Based on information culled from a variety of Canadian and American sources, these kits offer a concise overview of the importance of employee volunteerism and present a variety of ways in which employers can support volunteerism.

Voluntary Action Centre of Hamilton and District. *Volunteer for a Greater Hamilton: Workplace Recruitment*. Hamilton: 1988. 28 pp.

This is the final report of a one-year pilot project in workplace recruitment. The study concluded that two things were urgently needed to make volunteer recruitment from the workplace a real success: i) public education to dispel the many misconceptions about the role of the voluntary sector and myths about volunteer work; and ii) market research to discover the needs and motivations of people who are not volunteers. The report also emphasizes the fact that, while volunteer work is unpaid, it takes resources to recruit, place, train and manage volunteers.

ii) American

Allen, Kenn, Shirley Keller and Cynthia Vizza. *Building Partnerships with Business: A Guide for Nonprofits*. Arlington, VA: Volunteer — The National Centre, 1987. 27 pp.

Intended for the voluntary sector, this guide focuses on strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers from the workplace. It examines why American corporations sponsor volunteer programs for their employees and how these programs work. It also offers advice to nonprofits on how to compete successfully for employee-volunteers.

Haran, Loyce, Siobhan Kenney and Mark Vermilion. “Contract Volunteer Services: A Model for A Successful Partnership” in *Leadership*, January to March, 1993, pp 28-30.

This article presents the advantages of a model employee volunteer program in which the company contracts with local volunteer centre to develop and manage its program.

Klug, Jeanne. “Reaching the Corporate World Through Effective Corporate Volunteer Council Partnerships” in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, Spring, 1993. pp 29-31.

This succinct article describes the role of Corporate Volunteer Councils as the concept has evolved in the United States. It also addresses the relationship between CVCs and volunteer centres.

Vizza, Cynthia, Kenn Allen and Shirley Keller. *A New Competitive Edge: Volunteers from the Workplace*. Arlington, VA: Volunteer — The National Centre, 1986. 245 pp.

This well written book is based on extensive research involving companies, unions, and volunteer centres and other voluntary organizations across the United States. It focuses on the activities of twenty companies and five labour unions that are actively involved in employee volunteerism. These profiles give useful insights on how employee volunteerism programs function in specific corporate cultures.

Conference Board. *Corporate Volunteer Programs: Benefits to Business*. New York: 1993. 35 pp.

This report is based on the results of a recent study of employee volunteerism in American corporations. It examines in detail the strategic applications and benefits of volunteer programs and policies. Although it focuses on the American situation, the report will be of interest to anyone trying to understand the corporate perspective on employee volunteerism. It is also an excellent source for ideas on how to sell the concept to business.

What emerges clearly from the study is that many American corporations view employee volunteerism as a business strategy related directly to the ‘bottom line’. This is evidenced by the fact that levels of employee volunteerism have not declined in the recession of the early 1990s.

Corporate Volunteer Coordinators Committee of New York City. *Building a Corporate Volunteer Program*. New York: 1984. 30 pp.

Written from the corporate perspective, this resource binder contains information on how to establish a successful employee volunteer program. It

addresses a variety of issues, including recruitment methods and how to motivate employee-volunteers.

Corporate Volunteerism Council of Minneapolis-St Paul Metro Area. *Volunteerism Corporate Style*, 3rd edition. Minneapolis, Minn: 1987. 87 pp.

Intended for the corporate reader, this guide provides detailed information and advice on promoting volunteerism in the workplace, establishing and managing a volunteer program, and working with nonprofits. Examples drawn from a wide variety of American companies show the variety of possibilities for organizing an employee volunteerism program and supporting employee-volunteers.

National Council on Corporate Volunteerism. *Corporate Volunteer Council Survey Findings*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Foundation, 1992. 31 pp.

This report presents the results of a comprehensive survey of the 59 corporate volunteer councils in the United States. The survey gathered information on the successes, strengths and challenges of the corporate volunteer councils, as well as on their visions for the future and the support needed for future growth. The focus was on cooperation among corporations and joint projects with long-term goals for social change.

Points of Light Foundation. *Five Words You Never Thought You Would Hear From a Charity Organization*. Washington, DC: 1992. 18 pp.

Targeting the corporate sector, this booklet promotes the concept of employee community service. Using text and photos, it profiles the 'corporate activism' of five major companies. It also briefly describes the role of corporate volunteer councils, volunteer centres and the Foundation itself in promoting employee volunteerism in the United States.

Points of Light Foundation. *Developing a Corporate Volunteer Program: Guidelines for Success*. Washington, DC: 1993. 46 pp.

This is a how-to guide for managers of corporate volunteer programs. It is designed to show companies how to make community service and volunteering an integral part of their business operations. It addresses such topics as the benefits of employee volunteerism, corporate policies to support volunteerism, and evaluations of employee volunteer programs.

Volunteer — The National Centre. *Evaluating Corporate Volunteer Programs*. Arlington, VA: 1988. 32 pp.

This guide offers detailed information and practical advice on how to evaluate an employee volunteer program. Sample questionnaires are included.

Volunteer — The National Centre. *Developing and Strengthening a Corporate Volunteer Council*, 2nd edition. Arlington, VA: 1986. 38 pp.

This resource provides detailed information on how to develop or expand a corporate volunteer council. Included are sample by-laws, mission statements, agendas for meetings, letters of recruitment, membership guidelines and surveys.

iii) British

Paton, Jo. *Making the Most of Employee Community Involvement.* Berkhamsted, England: The Volunteer Centre UK, 1992. 81 pp.

Aimed at managers of volunteers, this well written handbook offers useful insights into what motivates companies to become involved in employee volunteerism. It also has a wealth of information on how voluntary organization can attract and manage employee-volunteers. The non-British reader will also get a good sense of the employee volunteerism movement as it has evolved in Great Britain.

Christie, Ian, Michael Carley, and Michael Fogarty. *Profitable Partnerships: A Report on Business Investment in the Community.* London: Policy Studies Institute, 1991. 175 pp.

This report is based on the results of a major research project. It examines the contribution of British business to the community and discusses the benefits that companies have gained from initiatives in community investment of all kinds (donations, gifts-in-kind and employee volunteerism). The primary focus is on major joint ventures involving the private, voluntary and public sectors. A large portion of the report is devoted to case studies of three cities that have taken successful initiatives to develop their inner-city areas. An appendix outlines the roles of the various agencies and networks that have been established to support employee volunteerism.

Business in the Community. *Employee Volunteering: Lessons from America.* London, England: 1992. 11 pp.

This booklet is the summary report of a British study team that toured the United States to gather information on employee volunteerism. It provides a brief overview of the American scene and assesses the feasibility of adopting specific American approaches in the British context.

The Volunteer Centre UK. *Understanding Employee Volunteering.* London, England: Business in the Community, 1992. 23 pp.

Intended for business, this information package gives information on how companies can benefit from employee volunteerism and how they can develop appropriate programs. The activities of ten British companies are highlighted.

2 Popular Books on Management for the Corporate Sector

The following are well known books on management, leadership and organizational effectiveness. They are geared at the corporate sector. Although they do not specifically refer to employee volunteerism, the philosophy of management that they advocate is entirely consistent with the rationale behind employer support for volunteer activities. These works can thus be used as a reference point for convincing companies of the benefits of employee volunteerism.

- Covey, Stephen R.** *Principle-Centred Leadership*. New York: Summit Books, 1990.
See in particular Chapters 25, “Principles of Total Quality” and 26, “Total Quality Leadership”
- Drucker, Peter F.** *The Frontiers of Management*. New York: Harper and Row, 1986.
See Part IV, “Social Needs and Business Opportunities”
- Naisbitt, John and Patricia Aburdene.** *Re-inventing the Corporation*. New York: Warner Books, 1985.
See in particular Chapters 2, “Ten Considerations in Re-inventing the Corporation” and 3, “Re-inventing Work”.
- Peters, Tom.** *Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1998.
See Section IV, “Achieving Flexibility by Empowering People”
- Peters, Tom and Nancy Austin.** *A Passion for Excellence: The Leadership Difference*. New York: Warner Books, 1986.
See Part IV, “People, People, People”.
- Peters, Tom and Robert H Waterman, jr.** *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.
See Chapter 8, “Productivity Through People”.