

a summary

employee
volunteering
the guide



foreword

The United Nations declared 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. To support activity in England, I agreed to chair a group that has been sharing experience and trying to find ways to encourage more companies to realise the benefits that employee volunteering can bring - to the company, to employees and most importantly to the communities in which they operate.

Employee volunteering isn't new in England. Business in the Community set up their first campaign to promote activity in 1990 and, from a base of around five companies, over 600 of their members now have some sort of employee volunteering programme. But this is still just scratching the surface.

Employee Volunteering – the Guide is a central part of our International Year of Volunteering programme and will help us achieve our objective that employee volunteering should happen in every corner of England and at every level of an organisation. Its practical approach will help private, public and voluntary sector employers find the approach that is right for them. Volunteer-involving organisations will also be supported with advice and guidelines on what works best for employers.

This booklet serves as an appetiser for the in depth resource of the book *Employee Volunteering – the Guide*. I hope you find them both valuable tools to help your employee volunteering programmes.

Amanda Bowman

Chair IYV2001 Employee Volunteering Sub Group
Head of Community Involvement, Diageo

introduction

In Britain, around 22 million people formally volunteer to help out in their local community each year. An increasing proportion of these are supported in their community activity by their employer.

Why is this form of volunteering – employee volunteering – becoming so popular? It's because everyone involved – the organisations that provide employee volunteers, the organisations where employee volunteers help out, the wider community and the employees themselves – has something to gain.

Whether you are:

- a private, public or voluntary sector organisation that is seeking to develop your employees and support the community at the same time
- an organisation that is thinking of starting or has just started an employee volunteering programme
- a voluntary or public sector organisation looking for partners
- a 'broker' organisation aiming to encourage these types of partnership

... then this booklet is for you!

It shows how you can benefit from employee volunteering and gives clear, practical advice on setting up employee volunteering programmes. It is produced by the National Centre for Volunteering and supported by Business in the Community, two of the leading organisations involved in employee volunteering, so you know you're getting the best advice.

The booklet is a summary of a book, *Employee Volunteering - The Guide*, published by the National Centre for Volunteering. The book contains more detailed information on the topics covered in this

booklet, as well as a full list of essential contacts.

If you'd like to order the book, please contact the Centre's marketing assistant on 020 7520 8900 or visit www.volunteering.org.uk.

the case for employee volunteering

Employee volunteering and corporate social responsibility

All employers, whether they are a company, a public sector organisation or a charity, have an impact on the community in which they operate.

All of these are increasingly recognising the importance of playing an active part in their local communities – a prosperous, healthy and crime-free community benefits all who live and work there.

Your organisation can become involved in your local community in a number of ways. The main ones are:

1 Financial donations

Donated money often backs up employee activity in the community, to help ensure that the projects they support are successful. Giving money now enjoys a number of tax benefits (see box).

Tax benefits

The government has introduced a number of tax benefits to encourage charitable donations, including:

- Gift Aid – tax-deductible donations
- Tax relief on gifts of shares
- Tax relief on some sponsorship payments or gifts.

See the Inland Revenue website at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk for more details.

2 In-kind support

You can put to good use resources that your organisation no longer needs, by donating items such as furniture or computer equipment to local voluntary or community organisations.

3 Employee volunteering

People giving their time and expertise to support projects of real value to the community can be the most effective donation of all. And the benefits aren't just one-way (see box).

Everyone's a winner...

Employers

Employee volunteering helps employers to:

- Improve their public image. Customers, potential recruits and local people will see your organisation as socially responsible and constructive. And employee volunteers make great ambassadors!
- Increase employees' commitment and motivation. Employee volunteering works wonders in strengthening team spirit and company loyalty.
- Enhance the skills of employees. They may get the opportunity to develop and practise a wider range of skills than they do in their paid work – especially teamwork, leadership, decision-making and communication.
- Improve levels of recruitment and retention – because employee volunteering

creates such a positive culture.

- Innovate. Employee volunteering can give access to local networks and alliances, perceptions and problems, which can inform management decisions and help innovation.

Employees

Employee volunteering helps employees to:

- Build new skills and meet new people.
- Get the chance to make a difference to something they care about.
- Explore new situations and challenges.
- Add variety to their work.
- Change or enhance the way they feel about themselves and their employer.

Organisations who use employee volunteers

Employee volunteering helps voluntary and community groups to:

- Harness new skills, knowledge and energy. Voluntary organisations are having to become more 'business like' to satisfy funders, so can benefit from a greater pool of business skills.
- Gain a fresh perspective – from people who haven't 'always done it that way'!
- Have access to teams of volunteers who can plan and carry out major tasks. Voluntary organisations often have great ideas but lack the resources to carry them out.
- Improve understanding between themselves and the public and private sectors. This can lead to longer-term links and access to more resources and support.
- Raise their profile. Involving employee volunteers automatically increases public awareness of their work.

84% of the public believe that knowing about a company's community involvement activities are important in forming an opinion of that organisation.

(Mori 1999)

An employee volunteering programme should be managed like any other project: by setting clear objectives and by planning, delivering, evaluating and reporting on its successes and failures. This step-by-step guide will help you, whether you are setting up a new employee volunteering programme or aiming to improve an existing one.

If you would like your employees to volunteer

1

Assess the current situation

It is important to find out first of all about the base you will be building on, so that you can monitor the success of your programme at a later date. Questions to ask include:

- What community activity is already taking place?
- What internal structures can be used (eg house magazines,

retiree networks, social clubs, unions)?

- What help is available in the local community for establishing links with community organisations?

Surveys that ask for information about employees' private voluntary activities rarely go down well.

Try alternative ways of gathering information, such as:

- talking to key people such as team managers
- establishing a volunteer award scheme
- adding a few questions to a more general survey
- asking employees to nominate causes they would like to support.

2

Write a policy

A written employee volunteering policy has several benefits, including:

- demonstrating that the employee volunteering

programme has the support of senior management

- ensuring everyone knows the procedures involved
- indicating to employees that the programme is taken seriously and is worthwhile
- highlighting the programme – if you don't tell people about it, you don't get any credit for it.

A good employee volunteering policy will aim to meet the needs of both the supplier of employee volunteers and the receiver, and may include:

- a brief statement of commitment to employee volunteering and the reasons for that commitment
- guidelines on paid time off for community involvement
- guidelines on in-kind contributions
- guidelines on financial support if this is to be linked to employees'

fundraising or personal volunteering activities

- a statement on how projects are chosen and the level of employee involvement in this
- a short statement recognising the value of the voluntary activity undertaken by employees as private individuals, which may be in addition to or instead of participation in the company programme.

3

Set objectives

If you are setting up a new employee volunteering programme, consider how the programme will help to meet your organisation's business aims or strategic objectives.

You will also need to consider the objectives of the community partner you will be working with. Try to define jointly what you want to achieve and how you will measure success. True partnerships are best

achieved by working together from the start.

You may also want to talk to other similar organisations that have already set up an employee volunteering programme. There are several brokerage organisations that can help you with this (see page 18).

It is useful to set objectives that relate to the impact you want the employee volunteering programme to have, such as:

- helping personal development in certain areas
- improving employee morale
- transferring business skills to certain types of community organisations
- improving your profile in the community
- increasing employee retention.

Make sure your goals are realistic. Most organisations looking for

employee volunteering opportunities find that, with the exception of group projects, the number of volunteers for any one opportunity is small.

Decide how you will know if your objectives have been achieved, and make sure you keep records so that you can evaluate this.

If you want to improve an existing employee volunteering programme, then it's easiest to set objectives in relation to the activities already under way. These might include:

- increasing the number of employees participating
- establishing a structure to enable activities to be organised more regularly
- increasing the variety of activities
- encouraging community organisations to contribute their ideas to the programme.

4

Allocate resources

Employee volunteering programmes bring a lot of benefits, but they're not free. For your programme to succeed, there will need to be a member of staff responsible for making it happen. You need to decide who that will be and whether they will do it on a full-time or part-time basis. Or you might want to set up a committee to run the programme, which would involve training key personnel in volunteer management.

Some financial resources will also be needed, for example to fund:

- matched fundraising schemes
- marketing (promotional material such as posters and flyers)
- volunteer recognition awards

Using financial resources for volunteering may at first seem problematic particularly if you are a public sector organisation. By using

budgets creatively – training budgets, for example – funds should be able to be found to cover costs.

5

Gain support

The employee volunteering programme will need the support of the whole organisation if it is to succeed.

Securing the support of top management

- Point to successful programmes in companies that are in the same market area or similar public sector bodies. Business in the Community (see page 18) arranges visits for chief executives and senior managers to see employee involvement in action and discuss the benefits it brings.
- Look for allies. There are sure to be some influential top managers who are already involved in community activities. Talk to them individually. Ask for their help in designing

and supporting the programme and using their influence to promote it.

- Start with a project that relates to your organisational priorities and brings measureable benefits.

Securing support across the organisation

- Middle management support is crucial to the success of an employee volunteering programme, but the most difficult to gain. This is because middle managers are likely to be most affected by volunteering. They may simply see that their team are absent, rather than the benefits that volunteering will bring. To try to overcome this, make sure there are no surprises. Explain:
- what the programme is and how it will function
 - the benefits it will bring
 - how essential they are to the programme's success
 - how they can support the programme
 - that there are clear

guidelines on such areas as use of facilities and paid time off.

6

Consult and involve employees

For an employee volunteering programme to succeed, it will have to be a shared one. Create ways to involve all your employees and enable them to feel ownership of the programme. Involve them in generating ideas and organising activities.

Base all your communications on messages that convey ideas of sharing, support and partnership. Listen to what your employees say. Which causes do they want to help? What kind of support do they want? What kind of recognition would they like? You could think about setting up a steering group where these ideas and activities can be discussed. You could also organise a community visit so employees can see first hand how they can help.

The aim is to show that the programme is employee-led and employer-supported.

Two-way communication

- Are you sure that potential volunteers know what support is offered and who they can contact to find out more, or to suggest ideas?
- Are you liaising effectively with your community partners – do they know what you are saying to your employees, and are you happy about how they are describing your involvement?
- Is the person responsible for the programme always receptive to what people are saying, are they easy to reach, and do they make time to listen properly and discuss?

7

Recruit volunteers

By far the best way of

recruiting volunteers is by word of mouth. Recruit 'employee volunteering champions' to spread the message to their peers. Include profiles of employee volunteers in the staff magazine, or invite people from community organisations to come and speak to your employees about the difference their involvement could make.

Recruitment tips

- Communicate personally rather than relying on written material, where possible
- Develop a distinctive identity for the programme – perhaps involve employees in choosing a name and/or logo for it
- Try and ensure the volunteering opportunities are attractive and varied
- Explain exactly how the volunteers will make a difference
- Spell out what your organisation is contributing
- Make it sound fun!

8

Recognise

Recognising and publicising the contribution that employee volunteers make will demonstrate to your employees that their efforts are appreciated – and will also help to recruit more volunteers.

Ways of recognising employee volunteers include:

- internal award schemes
- recognition events
- articles in newsletters and magazines
- a personal thank you letter from the chairman or chief executive
- presentation of certificates by your community partner.

9

Monitor and evaluate

Evaluation of the programme is vital so that you can improve and build on it. Evaluation is also part of your communications strategy, and should be used both to inform your current

programme and to stimulate feedback about its future direction. And, perhaps most importantly, you may have the go-ahead for now, but in future there may be changes at the top of your organisation that may reduce backing for the programme. So you must continually monitor and evaluate its impact to ensure long-term success.

Questions to ask

Most of the benefits of employee volunteering programmes are qualitative, so you will need to ask a variety of questions to help you evaluate its success. Consider the results for everyone involved: your organisation, the employee volunteers, your partner organisation and the wider community.

The effect on your organisation

- Was the volunteering enjoyable, and did it raise morale?
- Did it improve your community relations?
- Did it improve internal communications and

teamwork?

- Did it enhance your employees' skills?

The effect on the employee volunteers

- Have they volunteered before?
- Did they think this volunteering was well-organised?
- Will they continue to volunteer? If not, why not?
- Did they feel their volunteering activity provided them with new challenges or developed new skills?
- Did they find it worthwhile?
- Did they enjoy it?

The effect on your partner organisation

You will of course need to liaise over this with your partner organisation, but your questions could include:

- Did the end result match the original aim of the project?
- How well-received was it?

- How well did your partnership work on a practical level?
- Were there any problems, and how were they dealt with?
- How can you build on what has been achieved so far?
- Have there been any measurable impacts on society, either to the end-users of the service, or to the wider community?

Methods to use

Some of your aims may have been quantitative – eg, you might have wanted to involve a minimum of 10 per cent of all employees – and these are easy to evaluate if you have kept good records. Qualitative benefits are more difficult to assess. You could try using one or more of the following methods:

- questionnaires or surveys
- asking for reports
- telephone conversations with participants

- interviews
- focus groups
- written records.

More details of how to conduct an evaluation are included in the book on which this booklet is based, or from the Corporate Citizenship Company (see page 18).

The key factors in evaluation

- State clearly in advance what all the groups involved expect to gain from the project or programme.
- Stay in touch with, and seek information from, all the stakeholders in the programme.
- Set up record-keeping procedures to gather and store the information you need as you go along.
- Plan the evaluation, and the data you will need to collect, before the programme begins or as soon as possible after it starts. Data-gathering is much easier to do as you go along than retrospectively!

If you would like to involve employee volunteers in your voluntary organisation

1

Plan and prepare

Before involving employee volunteers in your organisation, it's worth asking yourself these questions:

- Does everyone in your organisation agree that this is the right thing to do?
- Have any initial misgivings been addressed and resolved?
- Do you have enough resources? Involving employee volunteers can take up a lot of work time, for example.
- Are you fully prepared? Thinking ahead about involving employee volunteers is essential. Take some time to think about the questions that a prospective partner might ask you:
- What sort of volunteers

do you need?

- What type of tasks could our employees do?
- What skills are needed, how much time will it take, where will the tasks be based?
- What benefits will it bring to both our organisations?

If you can't or don't want to provide what the employee volunteer is looking for – a specific training need, for example – then it's best to say so at the beginning. Remember, employee volunteering should benefit all the parties involved.

2

Make yourself attractive

Think about the volunteer opportunities you can offer that will attract employees. Organisations that are already taking part in employee volunteering programmes agree that volunteer-involving organisations should try to:

- Give first-time volunteers

one-off, time-limited opportunities that enable them to 'test the water'.

- Offer a variety of volunteering opportunities that can be undertaken at different times.
- Give employees opportunities to volunteer alongside their families.
- Offer opportunities that enable employees to work in groups with their colleagues and friends.
- Ask people to do a specific task or use a particular skill rather than making a general appeal ('Please help the environment...')
- Always be specific about the needs to be met and the time commitments involved.

3

Follow good management practice

Managing volunteers well is important to make the most of their time and skills, and to ensure a long running relationship with

your partner organisation. The following steps will help:

- Make sure there is a clearly defined and worthwhile task for them to do and that there is a task description.
- Remember that volunteers are motivated by tasks that:
 - challenge them
 - they help to create
 - meet some of their own needs
 - give them the opportunity to meet a real need in an effective way
 - use their skills and energy creatively.
- Welcome the volunteers when they arrive. Take the time to show them around and introduce them to everyone. Make sure they know who they should contact if they have any questions or suggestions.
- Offer training and support. Employee volunteers may bring particular skills, but they

are unlikely to have experience of your sort of work, so they will need some guidance. Ongoing support should also be available.

- Say thank you – both to the individual volunteers and to the organisation involved. If you have a party or present certificates during Volunteers Week, for instance, make sure you include senior representatives from both organisations as well as the volunteers themselves.

4

Feedback

The supplier of employee volunteers need to assess whether their employee volunteering programme is worthwhile. They will need evidence, such as the number of employees participating, to prove to senior management that it is a success. No evidence may mean an end to their contribution. They also need to know of any problems, so they can avoid them next time round.

Ask them how they would like you to give feedback – ideally at the beginning of the programme. Usually feedback is provided on:

- the number of volunteers taking part
- the number of hours worked
- what they achieved
- what problems, if any, arose.

Always tell the volunteers and their employer how it has helped you. If they do not know whether what they are doing is making a difference, they may not continue doing it.

5

Keep in touch and ask for more

Working with a private or public sector partner should be seen as a long-term process. You are likely to get much more out of the relationship if you take the trouble to sustain it. Here are a few simple ways of maintaining contact:

- Send updates on how your work is going –

choosing your activity

such as a copy of your annual report plus information about the help you still need.

- Invite the employee volunteers to special occasions or events that you organise (eg to celebrate Volunteers Week).
- Offer to visit the organisation to speak about how your work is going.
- Acknowledge their help in your annual report or in any relevant press releases. Send them copies.

If you would like your employees to volunteer

With all the support mechanisms in place, you now need to choose what kind of programme would be best suited to your organisation and your employees. You will need to consider factors such as your organisation's size, locality and culture, and the demographics of your employees.

Think about your existing relationship with the local voluntary sector. You may not yet have a relationship with any group at this stage, but perhaps your organisation has donated money to a local charity or community group? You may find they are willing to build a closer relationship with you and share ideas for employee volunteering activities.

Or you may know of a local broker, such as a Volunteer Bureau or Council for Voluntary Service, local Business in the Community or Cares who will help you to make some links

Most importantly, involve

your employees in the discussions. Listen to their ideas and their reactions to your suggestions.

The main ways of approaching employee volunteering activity are shown below. The potential advantages and disadvantages of each are also shown, but it's important to remember that a properly planned and managed programme can enhance the positive aspects while minimising the possible pitfalls.

- **'Charity of the Year' programmes.** Your organisation, prompted by employees, commits to supporting a range of volunteering activities, focusing on a specific organisation.



Enables you to build long-term relationship with community organisation.



Can be seen as top-down choice, contrary to employee-led principle. May not have sufficient spread to create any informal PR.

- **Allocating work time.**

Agreed allocations of work time for volunteering activities, often matched to equal each employee's own time commitment.



Strong indicator of organisation's commitment, and likely to make employees' decision to participate easier. Easy way of setting employee's own commitment.



Can be difficult to sell to middle managers. Keeping track of the hours can be an administrative burden.

- **One-off 'challenge' events.** A task, usually practical, set by local community organisations. Can involve employees' family members, particularly when event carried out over a weekend.



Provides a good 'taster' for those new to volunteering. Brings practical resource to problems. Good for

teambuilding and motivation.



Needs planning and managing, or can result in too many people with not enough to do. Can be difficult to translate into a sustainable programme after the first rush of enthusiasm.

- **Mentoring.** Provides the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills of coaching, listening and motivation through one-on-one relationships set up with clear guidelines as to purpose, limits, timescales and venue.



Effective means of skills development. Highly motivational because its positive effects on mentee are very visible.



Often employer-initiated. Usually limited to school or charity opening hours.

- **Trustees and school governors.**

Volunteers, often bringing professional or managerial skills, serve on school boards or

on the management committees of voluntary organisations. Enables them to experience the strategic management of a whole organisation.



High community visibility. Gives good experience in management, decision-making and developing strategies and policy.



Difficulties can be caused by differences in organisational culture. Usually minimum one year time commitment. Effects can take a long time to show due to long intervals between meetings.

- **Development assignments.**

Short placements in community organisations for either individuals or teams. Projects are clearly defined and meet the development needs of the employee or team – usually focusing on the skills of project management, confidence, negotiation and communication.

choosing your activity



Proven vehicle for improving skills and teambuilding. Enables clear targets to be set and measured. Participants report a high degree of success and self-motivation.



Again, an employer-led initiative. Middle managers can resist demands on work time. Care needs to be taken that participation remains voluntary.

- **Secondment.** Usually full-time and for a period of between six and 24 months. Can be used as a transition associated with early retirement or restructuring, or (less frequently) for mid-career management development.



A positive way of dealing with change for employees. Helps the secondee to develop new skills, and provides very useful support for voluntary organisation.



Initiated by employer

rather than employees. Often becomes popular and can result in too many people applying. Difficult to resolve if it doesn't work out, given the time period.

- **Volunteer award schemes.** Usually annual celebrations of employee achievements where awards are given to nominated individuals or teams, or to the organisations in which they have been active.



Highly motivating, and an excellent way of demonstrating commitment. Can be an effective way of finding out what employees are doing without appearing intrusive, and also helps to build a long-term programme.



Publicity needs to be carefully managed so employees don't feel you are using their private efforts to gain free PR. Selection needs to be open and participative to avoid suspicions of favouritism.

These activities can be successfully supported with

- **Matched giving and financial support.**

The employer makes a contribution to match funds donated or raised by employees; or the employer makes a financial contribution to charities in which employees are involved.



Visible and welcome resource for voluntary organisations; popular with employees.



If not capped, can exceed budgets. Can appear a remote and easy option if this is the only form of activity.

- **Contributions in kind.**

Generally results from requests from employees on behalf of organisations in which they are active. Ranges from donating new or used equipment, furniture or stationery to occasional use of facilities such as meeting rooms.



Can be a welcome resource, especially when targeted at a specific need.



Can risk being a dumping ground for equipment that is of no more use to the community organisation than to the company.

If you would like to involve employee volunteers in your organisation

If you want to obtain support from private or public sector employers in your area, you can help identify which ones to approach by asking the following questions:

- Which organisations have a history of involvement in the community? More specifically, do any already have links with your organisation?
- Which organisations would be interested in what you could offer?

- Which organisations have the skills you are looking for?
- Do you have a personal contact in any of these organisations?
- Which organisations have undergone a recent restructuring or have recently moved into the area that might make them keen to build links with the community?

Many organisations find it easiest to use the services of a broker (see box).

Brokerage

Brokers are the intermediaries who enable employee involvement in the community by matching the needs of all parties. They are useful for three main reasons:

- Companies, public sector bodies and community organisations all lack the time to research potential partners.
- Brokers know the needs of all sectors and are experienced in

translating these into negotiated outcomes.

- Brokers understand local community issues and can match suitable partners to bring about positive change.

For more information see the National Centre for Volunteering's booklet, 'Brilliant Brokerage' (see page 18) and visit the website www.volunteering.org.uk/brokerage.

And there you have it! We hope that this booklet has stimulated you to start employee volunteering or to build on your existing activities.

This booklet is based on the book, 'Employee Volunteering - The Guide', published by the National Centre for Volunteering. For details of how to order the book, please contact the Centre's marketing assistant on 020 7520 8900 or visit www.volunteering.org.uk.

some essential contacts

Business in the Community

A membership organisation which can advise on all areas of corporate social responsibility. BITC provides advice, information and support on all aspects of employee community involvement, including consultancy, events and seminars and can help with designing employee volunteering programmes.

Tel: 0870 600 2482

Website: www.bitc.org.uk

Business Community Connections

Not for profit organisation dedicated to helping charities obtain more support from business.

Tel: 020 8875 5700

Website: www.bcconnections.org.uk

Cares

An initiative of Business in the Community, Cares is a national campaign which aims to increase the quantity and impact of employee volunteering. Cares brokers employee volunteering opportunities on a local basis in a number of cities.

Tel: 0870 600 2482

Website: www.caresinc.org.uk

Corporate Citizenship Company

Gives practical guidance on many aspects of corporate citizenship including measuring the business benefits of employee community involvement.

Tel: 020 7945 6130

Website: www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk

CSV

CSV aims to help employers and volunteer users to work together and can mould a volunteering programme to the specific requirements of each client.

Tel: 020 7278 6601

Website: www.csv.org.uk

Employees in the Community Network

Provides a forum for private, public and voluntary sector organisations and brokers to meet, to develop and share their knowledge and skills. Based at the National Centre for Volunteering (see below).

Tel: 020 7520 8900

Website: www.volunteering.org.uk/eitcn0.htm

National Association of Volunteer Bureaux

The membership organisation for Volunteer Bureaux in England. Can put you in touch with your local bureau.

Tel: 0121 633 4555

Website: www.navb.org.uk

National Centre for Volunteering

Promotes excellence in volunteering in England. Offers a range of services designed to support volunteer managers and organisations that involve volunteers. Publications include Brilliant Brokerage. To obtain a copy, please contact the Centre's marketing assistant on 020 7520 8900 or visit www.volunteering.org.uk.

Tel: 020 7520 8900

E-mail: Information@thecentre.org.uk

Website: www.volunteering.org.uk

Also visit the new website

www.EmployeeVolunteering.org.uk funded by the Home Office's Active Community Unit

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**MARKS &
SPENCER**

