

# [The origin and history of company paid volunteering](https://assignbuster.com/the-origin-and-history-of-company-paid-volunteering/)

Volunteer behavior has been an important dimension of American society throughout its history. (Sundeen, R., 1990 pg, 483-500). Its public face has often, in the past, been tied to religion. Today, the opportunities for volunteering may be government sponsored (Peace Corps), private (non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity) or tied to religion (such as Catholic Relief Services). It was estimated in 1987 approximately 80 million adults in the US volunteered in both formal and informal activities. Previous research into volunteer behavior has found such factors as socio-economic status, place of residence, ethnicity and life cycle variables to be associated with the likelihood of volunteering. (Sundeen, R., 1990 pg, 483-500)

Company volunteering is a practice of utilizing corporations’ employees in community engagement programs. (Corporate Volunteering, n. d, pg 1). Volunteering is a rapidly growing phenomenon, a common passion among executives and a vital issue for corporations to understand. (ABA Banking Journal (2004), pg 12). More than 90% of Fortune 500 companies have volunteer programs and workplace volunteering has become a critical element of many businesses’ strategic plans. ([2007] Corporate Volunteers, pg 31)

Employee volunteering has been around for over 100 years but until recently the volunteering efforts had been tied to the philanthropic efforts of the company. Now with the momentum of corporate social responsibility, corporate volunteering is increasingly being viewed as a strategy to benefit the community, the business and the individual employee. (Corporate Volunteering, n. d, pg 1)

## IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE

The importance of corporate volunteering arises from the numerous benefits it has on both the employer and the employee.

The benefits for the employer include; one, corporate volunteering acts as a good PR tool (Capeling-Alakija, S. (2001), pg 17). It also enables the company to meet expectations about its corporate social responsibilities. (Bové, R. (1987), pg 11). It acts as a good PR tool because it helps enhance the company’s reputation by giving it a good name in the communities it operates. This is mostly because it helps the company demonstrate how it makes a difference to everyone not just the shareholders but also the community as a whole. (Dixon, P. (2004), pg 12). A better reputation can enhance sales and also can be useful when a business wants to relocate or expand and is reliant on the community for a smooth process. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 5)

Two, it also acts as a recruitment tool. (Penttila, C. (2006), pg 100). This is because with the new generation Y workers which are workers between the age of 18 and 26,( [2007] Volunteering programs make a difference, pg 12) there is an increased need for them to work for corporations that behave responsibly and that have good records of corporate community involvement. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 5). Therefore with the existence of volunteer programs, an employer is then able to attract more applicants to its organization.

Three, it also acts as a retention tool. (Penttila, C. (2006), pg 100). Through corporate volunteering, an employer is able to respond to employees’ concerns about the quality of their work and home life. (Bové, R. (1987), pg 11). This sends a clear message that the organization cares about its employees and so an employer will tend to retain more of its workers.

Four, it enhances staff morale and increases work performance. Volunteering helps employees feel good about themselves and about their employer. Due to this their motivation, commitment and performance are increased. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 5). This then benefits the employer as it is in line with the company’s bottom line. Increased performance by the workers means a higher performance for the company.

Five, corporate volunteering can also act as a training and development tool. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 6). Skills-based volunteering has become very popular and with this type of volunteering; every level of expertise in a company is tapped. (Penttila, C. (2006), pg 100). Due to such programs the employees’ skills get reinforced and so the volunteering program then acts as a training tool for the employees. (Bové, R. (1987), pg 11). Corporate volunteering can also complement existing training and development programs, with an added dimension of a real life situation which is not offered by traditional courses. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 6)

There are also several benefits for the employee that stem from company volunteering. One of the benefits to the employee is that it gives the employee the opportunity to broaden their experience (Capeling-Alakija, S. (2001), pg 17). This is because it allows the employee to work in completely different environments.

Another benefit that volunteering has on employees is that it helps them boost their careers. Volunteering has been seen to help employees by giving them opportunities to network with peers, also share existing skills and add to their portfolio of work experience. Therefore volunteering helps employees expand their business contacts. (2007, Volunteering Helps You, pg 74)

A third benefit is that it enables the employees to reinforce their skills in such areas as time management, communication and business skills. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 4) Finally volunteering does help employees to contribute to issues they really care about while at the same time helping them give back to the community. (“ The business case,” n. d, pg 4)

## CONTROVERSY

The controversy in this issue arises due to a lack of a financial case for giving workers paid leave to volunteer or for providing funds directly to support the employee volunteer activities. (Danny Bradbury, 2008)

More traditional managers do not see the benefits of such activities because the financial returns do not amount to what the company pays out. Also they feel that such activities keep their staff away from their desks more than they are normally. (Danny Bradbury, 2008 para. 2)

While the managers who are pro corporate volunteering believe that even though through the volunteer activities the company may not be able to recover in measurable sense its financial outlay., the intangible benefits for the company and the employees are immense in terms of better branding for the company and increased motivation for the employees as they feel better about what they do. (Danny Bradbury, 2008 para. 17)