

Trends Of Excellence Employee Volunteer Activities

Points of Light Corporate Engagement Award of Excellence finalists constitute, by definition, a benchmark of excellence in Employee Volunteer Programs (EVPs). This report presents the volunteer activities of these exalted EVPs and complements earlier *Trends of Excellence* publications that have focused on other aspects of EVPs.

An EVP is defined as a planned, managed effort that seeks to motivate and enable employees to effectively volunteer under the leadership of the employer. For convenience, this report refers to the 2012 Points of Light Corporate Engagement Award of Excellence finalist EVPs as “Excellent EVPs.”

Excellent EVPs described in this series consist of the 13 finalist programs selected from a field of 33 submissions to the 2012 Corporate Engagement Award of Excellence. These Excellent EVPs represent a diverse set of businesses (for a complete list see the back cover) comprised of:

- More than half a dozen industries including construction, professional services and hospitality
- International (77 percent) as well as U.S. (23 percent) businesses
- A range of sizes from fewer than 2,000 employees to more than 350,000
- Business-to-consumer (B2C) companies (69 percent), business-to-business (B2B) companies (23 percent) or both (8 percent)

This report focuses on the refreshing variety and creative volunteer activities of Excellent EVPs.



“In addition to improving our communities, volunteerism has helped Cbeyond create a dynamic corporate culture that enhances our workplace. Our employees are encouraged to not only give back, but also expand their capacity, and grow personally and professionally through their volunteer efforts.”

— Jim Geiger, founder, chairman, president
and chief executive officer, Cbeyond

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Service Sabbaticals

Some Excellent EVPs intensify their impact on both employees and societal causes by allowing employees to take partial or full leave from their jobs to dedicate themselves to a nonprofit for several weeks or months.

- The Wells Fargo Volunteer Leave Program provides selected employees full pay and benefits, from three days up to four months, while they volunteer on projects of significant impact at a nonprofit organization.
- Timberland employees, with a particular skill that meets a defined need of a nonprofit organization, can apply to work full or part time with an organization on a capacity building project while receiving their full salary and benefits.

Days/Weeks of Service

The majority of Excellent EVPs hold high-profile, time-limited and usually companywide volunteer events where large groups of employees volunteer together.

- Caesars Entertainment organized CFL Distribution Day in celebration of Earth Day during which employees across dozens of resorts distributed tens of thousands of energy efficient light bulbs and educational materials to residents, senior centers, other nonprofits and retailers in low-income communities.
- Cbeyond celebrated a Week of Service in October during which employees prepared more than 10,000 meals and contributed more than 3,000 hours of volunteer service to local communities.
- Honda Manufacturing of Alabama organized a day where employees donated and read books at an elementary school as part of Read Across America Day in March.

Many companies participate in service events promoted by third party organizations. For example, Honda Manufacturing of Alabama participates in the United Way's Day of Action, Citi participates in USA TODAY's Make A Difference Day and Constellation participates in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service organized by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Stakeholder Friendly Volunteering

Several Excellent EVPs enhance the impact of their volunteer activities by inviting customers, business partners and other company stakeholders to participate.

- Forty-one percent of volunteers at Timberland's 2011 Serv-a-palooza day of service were business partners, vendors, consumers, factory partners, and friends and family members. As part of the 20th anniversary of this event, in 2012 Timberland will further strengthen its engagement with these non-employee participants. For example, the Taiwan location will issue Timberland T-shirts to consumers who volunteer 24 hours throughout the year and a pair of Earthkeeper boots to those who volunteer 40 hours.
- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company pioneered a global "voluntourism" program where hotel guests can personally connect to the places they visit by identifying and signing up for local volunteer opportunities online and join employees in group volunteer experiences.
- Cbeyond involved customers in its Week of Service activities.

Family Volunteering

Offering volunteer events open and appropriate for children can facilitate the participation of employees who are busy parents, give the EVP an attendance boost and infuse the employee volunteering with a fresh, fun energy.

- Constellation offers monthly family friendly volunteer projects. These projects include the annual Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day, food preparation for local shelters and book donations.
- As mentioned previously, Timberland welcomes family members, including children, to its day-of-service events.

Volunteering Augmented with Repurposed Workplace Assets

Many Excellent EVPs have found clever ways to augment their impact by leveraging company assets, some of which have little to no value to the company but hold significant value to a societal cause.

- Caesars Entertainment's EVP integrated soap collection into hotel guest room cleaning procedures. Housekeeping staff collects partially used soap (as well as shampoo and other hygiene products) and Caesars sends the collected items to the Clean the World Foundation. The Foundation then sterilizes, recycles and distributes the soap to impoverished families across the globe to reduce their incidence of preventable diseases.
- Kraft Foods transformed 8,000 square feet of its corporate campus into an organic garden benefiting the community and resulting in a donation of more than 6,000 pounds of fresh produce to local agencies.
- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company repurposed their internal life-skills training modules to develop the Succeed Through Service program, a comprehensive, multi-lingual life skills curriculum designed to engage and inspire young students through career exploration, life-skills training and community projects.



Job-Integrated Volunteering

Some Excellent EVPs increase employee participation in volunteer activities while enhancing employee work-life by folding volunteering into the everyday workplace experience.

- One such case is the example mentioned earlier in which Caesars Entertainment's housekeeping staff collects soap when cleaning hotel rooms, which is then sterilized and distributed to underprivileged families globally to help prevent disease.
- Constellation's Retail Energy team folded volunteering into its annual sales meeting by offering attendees the opportunity to participate in the building of energy-efficient homes.
- Cbeyond's career shadow program partners with local schools and nonprofits to offer employees the opportunity to help youth prepare for careers in the technology industry.



Green Volunteering

As demonstrated by Timberland, ensuring that volunteer events minimize waste and use resources sustainably increases the benevolence of the events and can support the company's environmental agenda. In order to ensure that every service event reflects the company's commitment to the environment, Timberland developed the GREEN Service Standard. Each volunteer event is designed to meet the five goals that make up the acronym:

- Meeting a defined GRASSROOTS need
- Using RECYCLED materials where possible and recycles all recyclable waste from a service site
- ENGAGING and EDUCATING the local community to ensure there is a sustainability plan for the contribution we make
- Being as carbon NEUTRAL as possible

Brand-Resonant Volunteering

Some Excellent EVPs have leveraged employee volunteering to strengthen the company's brand or a specific product's brand.

- Timberland's EVP is designed to build authenticity for Timberland's Earthkeepers, the company's fast-growing line of environmentally conscious products. Both annual global corporate service days focus on community greening and include potential customers in order to expose them to the company's Earthkeepers values and build the Earthkeeper brand.
- With more than 76 distinct companies in North America alone, Hitachi is one of the world's most diversified companies. The EVP plays a powerful role in unifying Hitachi as "One Hitachi" around the shared value of service.
- Cbeyond's 2011 internal "Fans to Fanatics" campaign focused on creating internal and external 'fans' for the company. Through the campaign, Cbeyond utilized volunteers as brand ambassadors to make an impact in local communities while also promoting the company's culture, character, and brand internally and externally.

Microvolunteering

A new type of skills-based service performed remotely in short units of time, from five minutes to two hours, and facilitated by online technology is emerging. “Microvolunteering” can provide a nonprofit with suggestions on how to make a logo more memorable, a draft contract or tips for recruiting board members. At least one Excellent EVP offers “microvolunteer” opportunities to employees as a way to increase the convenience and volume of skills-based volunteering. More than 350 Kraft Foods employees across the globe reached out to 134 nonprofits in seven countries via microvolunteering to donate their marketing, research, social media, translation and other skills.

Skills-Based Volunteering

The vast majority of Excellent EVPs go beyond hands-on volunteering, and offer skills and expertise to societal causes, contributing to the community and developing their employees’ skills.

- The transportation and infrastructure construction company, Flatiron, has deployed multi-disciplinary teams to Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua to build footbridges over impassable life-threatening river crossings. These activities not only help alleviate critical societal issues, such as lack of access to health care and education, but also provide professional development to employees in project management, leadership, team building and other skills vital for Flatiron’s success.
- Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation has paired employees one-on-one with inner-city grade-school students who visit its workplace on a weekly basis for five years of support, positive role-modeling and horizon-expanding experiences.
- Kraft Foods has piloted a skills-based volunteer program as part of its Cheese & Dairy Marketing Group on-boarding curriculum that helps develop junior marketers while also supporting the community.
- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company’s EVP leverages employees’ core competencies and work skills by involving culinary teams in teaching at-risk youth new cooking skills that will support them in securing jobs. In addition, they train staff at schools and hunger relief centers on how to make low cost and nutritious meals, and help students learn safe food handling skills.
- Hitachi’s Universal Design program allows any employee to pick up a toolkit and deliver content to youth in classrooms and through nonprofit organizations that generate interest in design and engineering at an early age.
- Citi employees have delivered lessons on saving and budgeting to tens of thousands of K-12 students.
- Wells Fargo employees have given presentations that have helped more than tens of thousands of young people develop responsible credit habits.
- Constellation employees offer long-term consultation services to local nonprofits.
- PwC offers employees opportunities to utilize their skills and develop valuable leadership skills.

“I’m so proud that our employees are part of the fabric of their communities – making a delicious difference year after year.”

— Irene Rosenfeld, chairman and chief executive officer, Kraft Foods



Travel-Enriched Volunteering

One way to support some of the world's most pressing issues and provide employees with a deeply enriching experience is to have employee volunteers travel to the global locations where such problems exist.

- Flatiron's bridge building projects in impoverished areas of the world, described previously, is an example of high-impact volunteering that also develops deeper significance to employees due to the remote and unfamiliar locations in which they take place.
- PwC's employees have the opportunity to travel to Belize to lead an effort teaching children and teachers about financial literacy, supporting a three-year relationship with various schools in the region.
- Kraft Foods' United Nations Volunteer Program has sent employees to 29 countries on volunteer missions to provide technical assistance in food processing, such as helping to make coffee from dates in Morocco or revamping chocolate production in Madagascar.

Suite of Services to Individual Nonprofits

Designing employee volunteering programs to meet the collective needs of nonprofit partners, as opposed to focusing on organizing individual events, is an effective way for companies to make meaningful contributions to societal causes.

The nonprofit Bridges to Prosperity, which provides access to health care, education and markets by helping communities build footbridges over impassable rivers, benefits from such synergistic assistance from its corporate partner, Flatiron. As mentioned earlier, Flatiron's signature employee volunteer event consists of teams of employees building bridges in impoverished locations across the globe.

Flatiron also supports Bridges to Prosperity in other significant ways, like helping with the nonprofit partner's governance by having three senior executives serve on its board of directors. It also generates support for Bridges to Prosperity by having students, mentored by Flatiron Engineers at the Colorado School of Mines, design bridges and establish a new Bridges to Prosperity chapter at the school, which also receives financial support from Flatiron. By offering a suite of services to one nonprofit, Flatiron helps to strengthen the nonprofit's capacity, ensure that it has a strong partner for its signature program and generates a greater societal impact.

Volunteering that Supports the EVP

Some Excellent EVPs offer internal skills-based volunteer opportunities to support the EVP. This allows EVPs with limited staff to accomplish more.

- Hundreds of Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation employees serve on planning teams for specific EVP programs. The teams are reminded of the projects' goals, what segment of the community will be helped and how this assistance fits the Company's mission. Planning teams consist of up to 30 people, who have been known to develop "playbooks," checklists and leaders guides that streamline the process going forward and serve as a manual for other teams.
- Hitachi's several dozen Community Action Committees (CACs) design and organize local volunteer opportunities with enough care and professionalism that they apply a total quality management tool, Mastering Community Action Framework (MCA), to their volunteer work.
- Local volunteer chairs at Caesars Entertainment properties perform a significant amount of the volunteer event planning and organizing.

Volunteering Aligned with the Personal Interests of Each Employee

Although most Excellent EVPs have cause focus areas around which they design the bulk of volunteer activities, the majority also engage and support employees' passions (excluding, in most cases, religious and political volunteer activities). This support is often in the form of awards programs, paid time-off to volunteer policies or "dollars-for-doers" grants in which the company gives small grants to organizations where employees volunteer.

- Citi honors employees who have contributed 100 volunteer hours per year, regardless of cause, with the President's Volunteer Service Award.
- Honda Manufacturing of Alabama gives \$200 grants to nonprofits where associates and/or their spouses volunteer 40 or more hours in a year.
- Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation encourages employees to use the company-provided eight hours of paid volunteer time per year to pursue their own special interests at a nonprofit agency of their choice.
- The Wells Fargo "Cash for Your Cause" Sweepstakes awards quarterly grants to nonprofit organizations where employees volunteer based on a random drawing among employees who recorded volunteer hours.
- Cbeyond explicitly positions its EVP as having a "passion-led, employee-driven" approach to community involvement that encourages employees to follow their passion and volunteer in areas of personal interest.



Timberland's mission is to equip people to make their difference in the world, and our Path of Service™ program helps us do just that. Over the past twenty years, we've been consistently amazed by the depth and breadth of positive impact and value our employee engagement can create."

— Patrik Frisk, president, Timberland

Conclusions

Excellent EVPs have shown that volunteer activities can take on many forms. Indeed, it appears that the path to excellence is paved with creative volunteer offerings, including:

- **Service sabbaticals**
- **Days/weeks of service**
- **Stakeholder friendly volunteering**
- **Family volunteering**
- **Volunteering augmented with repurposed workplace assets**
- **Job-integrated volunteering**
- **Green volunteering**
- **Brand-resonant volunteering**
- **Microvolunteering**
- **Skills-based volunteering**
- **Travel-enriched volunteering**
- **Suite of services to individual nonprofits**
- **Volunteering that supports the EVP**
- **Volunteering aligned with the personal interests of each employee**

This report is based on the EVPs recognized as “Excellent EVPs” by virtue of being selected as finalists in the 2012 Points of Light Corporate Engagement Award of Excellence.

Excellent Employee Volunteer Programs

Caesars Entertainment Corporation

Cbeyond

Citi

Constellation

Flatiron

**The Hitachi Foundation and the
Hitachi Group in North America**

Honda Manufacturing of Alabama, LLC

Kraft Foods

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation

PwC

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C.

Timberland LLC

Wells Fargo & Company



For additional information or for assistance with developing or enhancing your EVP, contact Points of Light Corporate Institute.

Points of Light Corporate Institute enables companies to engage their employees and customers in service to the communities in which they do business. It is the go-to organization providing resources, consulting services and on-the-ground activation to companies around the world seeking innovative, multi-channel engagement in Employee Volunteer Programs (EVP), skills-based volunteering and hands-on service.

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