

Employee Volunteer Program Operations

The following are key lessons regarding the operations of Excellent EVPs.

Excellent EVP's have a formal program that gives grants to organizations where employees volunteer

Eighty-nine percent of Excellent EVPs have “dollars-for-doers” grants in which the company gives grants to the nonprofits where employees volunteer. Most commonly, companies provide set monetary contribution to a nonprofit where an employee volunteers a minimum number of hours. The overwhelming majority of Excellent EVPs give grants between \$100 and \$500, with the average being \$219; and require the employee to volunteer between 20 and 50 hours, with the average being 32. Some EVPs, including Cisco, contribute a dollar amount for every eligible hour volunteered, usually between \$10 and \$15. Virtually all Excellent EVP dollars-for-doers programs have maximums, usually between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per employee.

Some Excellent EVPs go beyond the standard dollars-for-doers grant program to more effectively support nonprofit organizations, incentivize volunteering and better meet the EVP's goals. For example:

- Cummins strengthens its environmental impact and sends a stronger message by planting a tree, as opposed to giving a monetary donation. For every hour that an employee gave toward the 90th Anniversary Environmental Challenge a tree was planted.
- Intel incentivizes volunteer support for schools, a key focus area for the company, with a two-tiered volunteer matching grant program. Schools can receive up to \$25,000 annually based on total volunteer hours, while nonprofit organizations are capped at \$10,000.
- UniSource Energy Corporation (UNS) strengthens the impact of both their financial giving and volunteering by encouraging and supporting employees who serve on nonprofit boards to leverage the company's charitable and in-kind contributions. Employee volunteer leaders also provide nonprofit mentoring for UNS's Grants That Make A Difference (GTMAD) program, a competitive grants program focused on encouraging nonprofit collaborations and leveraging volunteer involvement.
- Old National Bank promotes team volunteering through its dollars-for-doers program. If ten or more employees participate in an EVP event, the company donates a minimum of \$250 to the agency and if 20 or more employees participate it donates a minimum of \$500 to the agency.

Excellent EVPs have a volunteer release time policy

Eighty-three percent of Excellent EVPs offer employees paid time off to volunteer. The number of hours offered per year runs from a low of four to Bank of America's high of 96, with the average being 29. Several companies – including Carolinas HealthCare System, Cisco and PwC – do not have a maximum but instead leave it to supervisors' discretion.

Among companies that have paid release time, the annual utilization rate runs from a low of six percent of employees to a high of 78 percent, with the average being 45 percent. Among those companies that offer a set number of hours, the percentage of the total “pot” of release time hours available to the employee varies from a low of less than one percent to a high of 62 percent held by Cbeyond, which offers eight hours per full time equivalent. On average, employees at Excellent EVPs use 32 percent of the total available release time hours.

Merck connects paid release time to business in an innovative manner. In addition to allowing individual employees to devote volunteer time to their communities, it uses paid release time to gather dispersed departments, including its sales team, around volunteer projects.



Excellent EVPs organize group volunteer projects

All Excellent EVPs offer opportunities for employees to participate in employer-sponsored volunteer events and the majority offer a high-profile all-company service event, often as a day of service but sometimes spanning a week or longer. For example, Bank of America's call to action for its employees to volunteer, during its enterprise initiative of Global Service Month, includes ample opportunities for employees to participate in group projects in addition to individual activities. Global Service Month is in April, an appropriate month for an EVP that helps to create opportunities for individuals and families by meeting critical needs such as financial empowerment through free tax preparation.

Excellent EVPs have recognition programs

All Excellent EVPs reward the efforts and accomplishments of employee volunteers. Excellent EVPs demonstrate a rich variety of rewards programs including Cisco recognizing the top 50 "Cisco Citizens of the Year" and all its Civic Council leaders with certificates signed by CEO John Chambers. Cummins' supervisors and managers recognize volunteers in staff or all-plant meetings, and Discover Financial Services distributes eye-catching employee badges that identify those employees as participants in the Discover Cares Month.

Some Excellent EVPs cleverly customize the award program to better support the EVPs concrete goals. For example, the Global Intel Involved Hero Award recognizes extraordinary employee volunteers for high-impact volunteer efforts that improve how a nonprofit or non-governmental organization operates, uses technology, or increases its capacity to meet the needs of the clients and communities they serve.

Some Excellent EVPs integrate their volunteer recognition into company reward programs.

- At Campbell's Quarterly Employee Forums, extraordinary employees are recognized through the Extraordinary People, Extraordinary Moments program and those recognized are often employee volunteers or teams of employee volunteers. Furthermore, one of the categories of Campbell's overall employee recognition event, the Extraordinary Performance Awards, is corporate social responsibility and community.
- Through Carolinas HealthCare System's WorkWELL Incentive and Reward Program, employees can earn up to a \$600 cash incentive applied to their health insurance premiums when they meet certain wellness criteria. One out of ten criteria for earning the cash incentive is eight hours of volunteering.

Some Excellent EVPs draw upon employee wisdom, or crowd sourcing, as part of their rewards and recognition. In AT&T's highly competitive Cares National Volunteer Week Contest employees vote for the most interesting, engaging and deserving project submitted by their fellow employees. AT&T funds the employee projects receiving the most votes with contributions ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Excellent EVP's use employee councils or committees

The vast majority of EVPs have established formal employee councils or committees to support the management or operations of the EVP. AT&T, for example, benefits from valuable input from across the enterprise through its AT&T Cares Council, made up of key representatives from business units. Cummins, on the other hand, uses a network of more than 170 Community Involvement Teams (CITs) around the world to leverage the skills, passion and commitment of employees to organize volunteer activities and respond to community requests for donations.

Excellent EVPs leverage the workplace to offer accessible opportunities

The vast majority of Excellent EVPs offer onsite volunteer opportunities, thus facilitating involvement and boosting participation. For example, AT&T and Junior Achievement's Job Shadow initiative provides employees the onsite opportunity to help students learn the types of job skills they will need to be successful in the future. Cummins has 24-hour sewing stations on-site in Fridley, Minn. and Merck provides employees the opportunity to tele-mentor students on their school science projects.

Excellent EVPs leverage technology to facilitate operations

All Excellent EVPs have an online portal where employees can learn about the program and most allow employees to track volunteer hours and sign up for events. Companies have also found other ways for their technology to support the EVP. AT&T, for example, encourages employees to create personalized websites to raise awareness and increase donations to the causes of their choice.

Some Excellent EVPs incorporate volunteering into company milestones

An emerging practice is to use volunteering to help companies celebrate corporate milestones, such as key anniversaries. To mark Cisco's 25th anniversary, CEO John Chambers asked employees to participate in a "Cisco@25 Volunteer Challenge" by volunteering at least four hours. Similarly, in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the AT&T Foundation, employees were invited to nominate a charity for a \$25,000 grant. A judging panel selected one winning nonprofit per quarter and contributed a total of \$100,000 in grants. During Intel's 40th anniversary year in 2008, CEO Paul Otellini called on employees to volunteer in their communities instead of celebrating with parties and presents. In response, employees volunteered more than 1.3 million hours and participated at the highest rate (55%) since the program was launched in 1995.

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Excellent EVPs design opportunities that leverage what the company does commercially to increase impact

Some EVPs strategically use the company's commercial strengths to better support societal causes.

- Cummins' EVP helps electrify rural villages in India in an environmentally sound manner by installing Cummins generators that use green straight vegetable oil technology.
- AT&T, on the other hand, encourages the community to drop off used cell phones at hundreds of locations for recycling. Working with a nonprofit partner, AT&T donates the recycled phones to a nonprofit that provides deployed members of the armed forces free calls home.
- UniSource Energy Services employee volunteers often staff tables at nonprofit events, such as a safety or health fairs, to remind the public of the dangers around electricity and gas.

Conclusions

Operational strategies that make EVPs excellent include:

- **Giving grants to organizations where employees volunteer**
- **Offering time off to volunteer**
- **Organizing team volunteer events**
- **Having recognition programs**
- **Using employee councils or committees**
- **Leveraging technology**
- **Incorporating volunteering into company milestone occasions**
- **Designing opportunities that leverage the company's commercial strengths**



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