

# How to Accelerate Volunteering through Employee Volunteer Programmes

Benjamin J. Lough

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA*

Yvonne Siu Turner

*Points of Light, USA*

This research empirically investigates various company practices and policies associated with high rates of volunteer participation in employee volunteer programmes (EVPs). Data were taken from surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015 among companies in the United States with an annual revenue of \$1 billion or more, with 166 companies included in the analysis. A multivariate linear regression was used to analyse the effects of various company policies on the percentage of employees participating in EVPs. The following policies were assessed in this analysis: including community engagement on performance reviews; awarding “Dollars for Doers” grants for volunteering; providing awards or recognition for engagement; offering paid time off to volunteer; and providing employee training on community engagement. Findings indicate different levels of comparative benefit afforded by diverse EVP policies and practices.

- Volunteer(s)
- Motivations, Recognition
- Training
- Quantitative
- Corporate volunteering
- Employee volunteers

**Benjamin Lough** is an Associate Professor at the School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Faculty Director of International Service at the Center for Social Development, Washington University in St Louis. He also works as Senior Research Associate for the Center for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg. Dr Lough currently serves on the board of directors for the Building Bridges Coalition, a US-based coalition of hundreds of international volunteer-cooperation organizations.

✉ School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1010 W. Nevada St, IL 61801, USA  
Center for Social Development in Africa, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, PO Box 524, Auckland Park, 2006, South Africa

📧 [bjlough@illinois.edu](mailto:bjlough@illinois.edu)

**Yvonne Siu Turner** is Senior Manager for Corporate Resources and Programs at the Points of Light. Yvonne leads the learning communities and development of resources for the Institute’s community of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employee volunteer practitioners. She previously served as the marketing manager for A Billion + Change, a national campaign housed at Points of Light. Before joining Points of Light, Yvonne was the Program Director at the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the Communications Director at the International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC). Yvonne holds a master’s degree in international development from the School of International Service at American University. She earned her bachelor’s degree in international studies from Colby College.

✉ Points of Light, 1625 K Street, NW, Fifth Floor, Washington, DC 20006, USA

📧 [ysiu@pointsoflight.org](mailto:ysiu@pointsoflight.org)

INCREASINGLY, CONSUMER OPINION AROUND THE world is putting a premium on socially responsible behaviour by companies. While making a profit will always be a key function for companies, nine out of ten consumers expect companies to do more than make a profit; consumers also expect companies to operate responsibly to address social and environmental issues (Cone and Ebiquty, 2015). Employees are also viewing their employers through a responsibility lens. In particular, many Millennials (people born between 1980 and 2000) claim they aim to work for a company that “cares about how it impacts and contributes to society” (Mirvis, 2012, p. 94; McGlone *et al.*, 2011). This new generation of working Millennials assert that a “sense of purpose” is the key reason they chose to work for their current employers (Deloitte, 2015).

Given this new reality, companies are viewing employee volunteer programmes (EVPs) as a strategy to meet the growing expectations of consumers, shareholders and employees for companies to demonstrate social responsibility (Rochlin *et al.*, 2015; Kolstad, 2007). EVPs, also called “workplace volunteer” programmes or “company-sponsored volunteer” programmes, are typically one component of a company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme that addresses the company’s involvement in social causes. A practical definition of employee volunteer programmes is when, “a company invites its employees to engage voluntarily and actively beyond their specific job description in charitable endeavors—often in cooperation with non-profit organisations, while possibly investing additional resources” (Lorenz *et al.*, 2011, p. 184).

Consistent with other CSR initiatives, EVPs are justified as a strategy to deepen the engagement of customers (Korschun *et al.*, 2014), recruit new employees (Harter *et al.*, 2002), enhance the commitment and engagement of employees (de Gilder *et al.*, 2005; Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008; Wilson and Hicks, 2010) and reduce employee turnover (DaSilva and Dailey, 2016; Harter *et al.*, 2002). It is viewed as a cost-effective means of developing certain core competences of staff (Wilson and Hicks, 2010). Research involving millions of employees across several industries, found that, on average, each employee participating in an EVP could add up to \$2,400 of value to the company as a result of decreased turnover and improved employee performance (Kropp, 2014). Likewise, a Deloitte survey revealed that Millennials are twice as likely to be very satisfied with their career progression, and may have higher commitment to the company when they have opportunities to volunteer through their employer (2011).

Business case justifications for implementing EVPs are complemented with plausible benefits to the communities in which the volunteers work (Rochlin *et al.*, 2015). Although the vast majority of studies on EVPs have focused on the gains to employees and companies, with far less attention paid to social and environmental benefits (see Dreesbach-Bundy and Scheck, 2017), benefits to non-profit partners as members of the wider community beneficiary group have featured in a number of studies. Non-profit partners benefit from EVPs as the volunteers contribute additional physical and mental labour and use their skills to help strengthen a non-profit’s organizational capacity and human resources (Samuel *et al.*, 2013; Liu and Ko, 2011; Allen, 2012).

While many research studies have investigated volunteers' motivations, less attention has been paid to workplace policies or programmes that may function as antecedents and incentives for volunteering (Rodell *et al.*, 2016). As managers consider how to best develop and strengthen EVPs, many ask what structural policy and programme elements are required to make these programmes appealing and accessible to employees?

As companies have invested resources to develop and support EVPs, a variety of programme options have emerged over the past few years. These company strategies aim to create an enabling environment or organizational culture of service in the organization by developing policies that appeal to and support employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Grant, 2012; Points of Light, 2015; Rodell and Lynch, 2016; Gatignon-Turnau and Mignonac, 2015). Examples of such policies include offering volunteer time off and volunteer grants, adding volunteer participation to employee performance reviews, extending awards for volunteering, providing training, and having leadership support for EVPs at all levels within the company (Peloza *et al.*, 2009; Basil *et al.*, 2011; Gatignon-Turnau and Mignonac, 2015; DeVoe and Pfeffer, 2007; Turner, 2016).

In this paper, we first explore employee motivations for volunteering in EVPs. We then link these motivations to EVP policies and describe how different company policies might appeal to these motivations and create a better organizational culture for volunteering. After presenting survey findings, we offer insights as to how managers at companies can build EVPs that foster broad-based participation and, in turn, greater business and social impact.

---

## Creating an organizational culture of volunteering

---

Given the growing body of research demonstrating the competitive and plausible financial advantages of EVPs, additional research has emerged to provide guidance on how to create effective programmes, and how to generate the highest levels of participation among employees. An overriding theme of this work is how to create a culture of service in organizations by adopting policies and practices that support and incentivize volunteerism in the workplace. While each of these policies and practices can play an important role in creating a culture of service, new research suggests that certain policies drive volunteer participation more than others (Hurst *et al.*, 2016; Cocyota *et al.*, 2016).

As examples of these differences, research has uncovered a number of motivations that drive employee volunteers. Understanding motivations for volunteering is important because the types of volunteer activities and policies that companies offer can be designed to explicitly appeal to employees' motivations. The diverse motivations that drive employees to volunteer are often described as falling into three key areas: social, career and purpose-orientations (Pajo and Lee, 2011; Points of Light, 2015; Caligiuri *et al.*, 2013). These categories have alternately been described by Grant (2012) as filling particular characteristics of employee needs including social (i.e. belonging and self-protective), knowledge

(i.e. developmental and career) and task (prosocial and contribution) needs. A portion of employees are also generally uninterested in volunteering. These employees often fail to engage because they do not have a strong belief that volunteering creates a positive impact worthy of their efforts (Points of Light, 2015).

Social-oriented employees may look to a company's volunteer events where they have the chance to volunteer with their peers, friends or family (Points of Light, 2015). For instance, days of service featuring "hands-on" volunteering, such as park cleanups, home-builds, kit-packing projects or helping at the local soup kitchen or homeless shelter would appeal to social-oriented volunteers. These volunteers also desire social support from staff and other employees during the volunteer assignment (Farmer and Fedor, 1999; Geroy *et al.*, 2000). Volunteers may be most likely to participate when their social needs affiliation are not being fully met in their regular jobs (Grant, 2012).

Career-oriented volunteers, on the other hand, are more motivated by skills-based or pro bono volunteer opportunities that allow them to build their skill-sets, network with others in the company and advance their careers (Caligiuri *et al.*, 2013). Some volunteers may seek to develop unmet development skills or knowledge that they could not easily achieve in their regular jobs (Grant, 2012). Opportunities for volunteers to develop skills that can be directly applied to their regular work role are viewed as particularly motivational (Caligiuri *et al.*, 2013). These volunteers may be interested in activities such as mentoring, board service, being part of a pro bono consulting project, a hackathon, or participating in an international volunteer assignment. Career-oriented volunteers are also strongly motivated by formal recognition of their service accomplishments, and look for opportunities to volunteer during work hours, or right after work (Points of Light, 2015).

Purpose-oriented volunteers are motivated by projects that contribute meaningfully to a non-profit's functioning—particularly when the mission of the non-profit has a direct social impact (Caligiuri *et al.*, 2013). These volunteers desire to make long-term sustainable contributions to the performance and missions of non-profits aligned with a particular social or environmental outcome (Hall and Chandler, 2005). This motive is particularly important for the Millennial generation (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Gresing-Pophal, 2013). They are more likely to continue engaging in volunteerism activities if they perceive volunteer tasks to be more meaningful than work completed during their regular jobs (Grant, 2012). Because these employees care about having a direct impact, they may appreciate understanding more about the hosting organizations and communities, and how their volunteer efforts can contribute to meaningful progress.

Hypothetically, policies that appeal to multiple types of motivations would have the greatest influence on participation rates. For instance, policies that may appeal to both social and career-oriented employees, such as paid time off to volunteer or efforts to develop strong non-profit partnerships, may engender higher participation. Along these lines, purpose-oriented workers may be interested in a mix of volunteer opportunities driven by company policies, as they experience purpose in their work by having a positive impact on others,

achieving personal or professional development, and delivering their work through strong relationships (Hurst *et al.*, 2016).

Creating a wide variety of company-sponsored volunteer opportunities, incentives and programmes to harness employee skills, passions and interests, therefore, should hypothetically increase participation in employee volunteering (Points of Light, 2014b). On the other hand, offering employees the wrong kind of incentives may actually disempower employees and discourage them from volunteering (Li *et al.*, 2014). Although we aim to assess organization-level factors that contribute to higher volunteer rates in this study, our conceptual framework is linked to individual motivations, which have been closely associated with volunteer participation in EVPs (Booth and Rodell, 2015).

Given the research on motivations of volunteers, we hypothesize that company policies and practices that are designed to harness specific employee motivations may be more effective than policies implemented without an understanding of what motivates an organization's workforce. Indeed, regardless of well-intended practices and policies designed to shape volunteering decisions, employees may choose not to participate if their motivations do not align well with these efforts. For instance, policies and practices that appeal to employees' intrinsic motivations—such as socializing or developing new skills—are more likely to drive participation in volunteer activities. In the following section, we review how different company policies and practices may appeal to employees' motivations differently, and how these practices may influence employees' participation in volunteer activities.

---

## Company-level factors associated with employee volunteering

---

Companies have developed a wide array of practices and policies designed to strengthen employee participation in EVPs by responding to the needs and motivations of their employees. Previous research has considered a variety of policies and efforts designed to encourage employee volunteerism including: day of service events, time allowances, community involvement incentives, and skills-based volunteering opportunities—including non-profit board services, co-worker volunteering, dedicated staff and financial resources, group-based volunteer events, having top management support, etc. (Cycyota *et al.*, 2016; Aluchna, 2015; Hu *et al.*, 2016; Pelozo *et al.*, 2009; MacPhail and Bowles, 2009).

In this study, we assess a specific set of policies included in a survey of corporate social responsibility based on an initial screening of policies commonly offered by large corporations in the United States (Turner, 2016). These policies include offering recognition or special awards for volunteer service, incorporating community engagement as a formal component of performance reviews, providing matching grants such as “Dollars for Doers” to non-profit and community-based organizations for volunteer time, offering employees paid time off to volunteer, and providing training for skills-based volunteering. We also include the size of the company as a control variable—given previous

links to employee participation and company size. The effect of each of these practices and attributes will be reviewed briefly and then assessed quantitatively in this study.

### **Size of the company**

Although the size of a company is not a planned policy designed to affect volunteer rates, size likely influences the environment or culture of the company in support of volunteering. Larger companies are often more likely to sponsor volunteering programmes than smaller ones, and tend to carry out more structured, formalized programmes with specific policies governing EVPs (Basil *et al.*, 2011, p. 64). Volunteer programmes may also serve a more strategic purpose in large companies, meaning that decisions are “based upon some given company strategy that are made in an effort to attain certain ends” (Basil *et al.*, 2011, p. 63). One study found that only 20% of companies with fewer than 200 employees stressed community service, compared with 52% for larger companies. The primary reason noted for this discrepancy was a high cost associated with supporting volunteering programmes, specifically “worker productivity loss, employee compensation, and organizing” (Kilcrease, 2007). The costs associated with implementing a volunteer programme may also create a perceived barrier to corporate volunteering when the business benefits are not clearly understood by company leadership.

### **Awards and recognition**

One of the common practices companies use to support employee volunteering is offering recognition or awards for service. According to a Boston College (2015, p. 5) report, roughly 60% of companies said they recognized exemplary employee volunteers. The most common ways companies recognized employee volunteers were through write-ups in employee newsletters, nominating employee “ambassadors” and distributing specific awards (Graff, 2004). Companies that used both “internal and external” forms of engagement, such as external broadcasting of employee volunteering in local and/or national news or internal awards, reported a higher average employee participation rate (Boston College, 2015).

Although upwards of 60% of companies offer some form of internal or external rewards or recognition for volunteering (Boston College, 2015; Turner, 2016), a United Way survey looking into the volunteering practices of local US companies found that only 12% of employees said that their company’s reward system actually encouraged them to volunteer (Booth and Rodell, 2015). While recognition may motivate employees, these types of motivations have also been associated with stigmatization from co-workers and supervisors as a perceived distraction from work (Rodell and Lynch, 2016). Other research has found that receiving recognition by companies for volunteering does not necessarily enhance participation—and in fact, may discourage it (Peloza *et al.*, 2009).

Overall, much of the research suggests that, while awards and recognition may help create a supportive culture of volunteering at organizations, they are not the factors that typically drive employees to participate in volunteering programmes.

### **Performance reviews**

Only around 20% of companies surveyed by the Boston College (2015) study used an annual development plan or performance review to engage their employees in volunteering. On the other hand, more than half of all companies named in 2016 as socially responsible companies by the Points of Light included community engagement as a formal component of their employees' performance reviews (Turner, 2016). The prevalence of this practice in such companies may be due to employers' recognition that volunteering is closely linked to higher employee engagement (Basil *et al.*, 2009). Including community engagement in performance reviews may also stem from the desire of companies to more formally institutionalize corporate values such as community service into company policies (Points of Light, 2014a). Similar to awards and recognition, the inclusion of volunteering on performance reviews is likely most appealing to career-oriented employees and may have a less significant effect on overall employee participation in volunteer programmes.

### **Paid time off**

In 2013, about 20% of employers surveyed by the Society for Human Resource Management reported giving their employees paid time off to volunteer—an increase from only 15% in 2009 (Baxter, 2013). The number of companies offering paid time off has continued to grow and in 2016, 82% of companies recognized as socially responsible by Points of Light offered paid time off to volunteer, recognizing a link between community engagement and employee engagement (Turner, 2016). Companies providing paid time off to volunteer may attract employees with diverse motivations, including both social-oriented and career-oriented motivations (Points of Light, 2015). Because these company policies appeal to multiple documented motivations, it will likely be one of the most significant predictors of volunteer participation.

### **Training**

Training and support of volunteer employees and leaders at companies is a consistent practice of effective EVPs (Points of Light, 2012). Training is closely associated with career-orientated motivations because it contributes to employees' overall career success (Wayne *et al.*, 1999). One study reported that employees' perceptions of acquired skills was directly associated with more volunteer hours and more effective training as employees learned and applied new skills in their volunteer experiences (Booth *et al.*, 2009). Specific examples of training in EVP

include Kraft Food's Leadership for Performance programme, which provides a five-day course on preparing high-potential employees for long-term, skills-based service projects. Another is Cisco's Giving Counselor programme and disaster response training (Points of Light, 2012). Skills-based volunteering, in particular, adds value to training and development programmes when aiming to develop effective business and leadership skills (Deloitte, 2011). It can be particularly appealing to employees who would like to learn new skills outside of their day-to-day job responsibilities. While training can be beneficial, it is also unlikely to drive volunteer participation for a large segment of employees (Points of Light, 2014b).

### Dollars for Doers

Dollars for Doers programmes allow companies to donate cash grants to non-profits based on the level of employee involvement, such as volunteering for a cause or serving as board members (Geroy *et al.*, 2000), and typically range between \$250 and \$1,500 (Points of Light, 2007; Meinhard *et al.*, 2008). As a company match of employee giving, these programmes ostensibly give employees an opportunity to "give twice", by volunteering for an organization while also indirectly contributing financially to its mission. Dollars for Doers programmes may also provide more visibility for both employees and the company, and is an important tool enabling large companies to report their activities. As disadvantages, however, this is a comparatively expensive programme option and can be time consuming to put in place (Points of Light, 2014a).

Although 98% of Fortune 500 companies surveyed in 2014 reported offering a Dollars for Doers programme to their employees, less than one-quarter of employees actually took advantage of the opportunity (Parker, 2015). Some of the reasons cited for the low engagement of employees include low awareness, clumsy processes (employees did not know how to record their hours through online tools), low eligibility (companies often required a minimum of 40–50 hours of volunteering in order to qualify), and incompatible motivations (many employees expressed that they would rather simply donate money to a cause) (Parker, 2015). Other research concluded that Dollars for Doers programmes provide few benefits to volunteers and companies, and are unlikely to drive employee participation—particularly compared with other evidenced practices such as offering paid time off to volunteer, company-sponsored volunteer days, or other types of matching grants (DaSilva and Kerkian, 2008; Parker, 2015; Pelozo and Hassay, 2006; Pelozo *et al.*, 2009).

Because social motivations appear to encourage more employee participation in volunteering, practices that appeal to these motivations should have a significant influence on participation. Keeping this in mind, we hypothesize that company practices and policies that appeal to intrinsic motivations (i.e. freedom through paid time off to volunteer) will be positively correlated with a higher percentage of employee participation in a company volunteer programme. Extrinsic practices and those that primarily appeal to career-oriented motives, such as Dollars for Doers and including community engagement on performance

reviews may create a supportive and enabling environment for volunteering, but may not be key factors that drive it. Policies that appeal to mixed motivations, such as receiving awards and recognition, may be a key driver depending on the type of recognition. In the following section, we investigate the effect of these different policies on employee participation in a company EVP.

---

## Methods

---

### Data collection

Data for this analysis was taken from an independent national initiative called *The Civic 50*, which is a survey conducted each year to recognize the 50 most community-minded companies in the United States. The Civic 50 is an initiative of Points of Light and was founded as a partnership between the National Conference on Citizenship, Points of Light and Bloomberg LP in 2012. It was developed with a working group of lead researchers and industry thought leaders. A variety of corporate advisers provided strategic guidance on the programme's objectives, including defining indicators, developing methodology and identifying partners and participants. In the first two years, *The Civic 50* evaluated and recognized only S&P 500 companies. The survey was expanded in 2014 to include participation by all companies with annual revenue of \$1 billion and over.

The survey was, therefore, open to all large public and private companies with community engagement programmes in the US. The Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) was used as a basis to classify eligible business sectors. These sectors included telecommunications, consumer discretionary, consumer staples, energy, financials, healthcare, industrials, materials, information technology, utilities and real estate. Eligible companies from these sectors used web tools to securely complete the survey online. Data used in this analysis included two years of responses gathered during the national initiative, and represents responses from 166 companies. Although the initiative was initially launched and piloted in 2012, the survey instrument was changed in 2014. Therefore, only data from 2014 and 2015 were available at the time of writing. All data reflected the companies' activities during their previous reporting year.

### Study variables

The dependent variable used in this analysis measures the reported percentage of a company's US employees participating in any type of company-sponsored volunteerism (including hands-on, skills-based and pro bono volunteering). Five independent variables were included in the analysis to assess their correlation with employee participation. These variables were: 1) engagement on performance reviews; 2) "Dollars for Doers" grants for volunteering; 3) awards

or recognition for engagement—including both internal and external awards; 4) paid time off to volunteer; and 5) training on community engagement. Each of the responses options for these variables were yes/no binomial answers based on whether or not the company offered this resource or activity.

## Data analysis

A multivariate linear regression was used to analyse the effects of various company policies on the percentage of employees participating in EVPs. Prior to entering variables in the regression model, univariate analyses were completed to verify that assumptions of regression were met (i.e. multivariate normality where applicable, a linear relationship, low multicollinearity, and relative homoscedasticity of error terms). In cases where a violation of assumptions was detected, variables were transformed or otherwise corrected. Only one variable required transformation (size of the company), which necessitated computing the natural log of the total number of employees due to a high positive skew. Although the company policies are not fully independent of each other, bivariate correlations between variables in the model were all well within acceptable ranges (i.e. well below 0.70), indicating no warning of multicollinearity.

---

## Findings

---

*Size of the company* was used in this analysis as both a control variable and to verify the influence of company size on employee participation rates in EVPs. Companies in this sample ranged from a minimum of 1,660 to a maximum of 320,000 employees. As predicted, size is significantly associated with the overall percentage of employee participation in a company volunteer programme. Relatively smaller companies that have fewer employees have a significantly higher percentage of employees participating in a company's volunteer programmes ( $b = e^{-.059}$ ,  $t = -4.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Performance reviews.* Findings from the regression model indicate that the inclusion of community engagement on performance reviews was not significantly associated with the overall percentage of employee participation in a company's volunteer programme.

*Volunteer grants.* Companies that provide "Dollars for Doers" grants (i.e. the company matches volunteer hours with a cash grant to a non-profit organization) have significantly lower rates of participation in a company volunteer programme. The regression model indicates that companies providing these grants have a 9% lower percentage rate of volunteer participation on average ( $b = -.093$ ,  $t = -2.69$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Awards and recognition.* There was no significant difference predicted in the total percentage of employees participating in the company's volunteering programme when employees are offered awards and recognition. It is important

to note, however, that companies that offer internal and external awards and recognition to promote their community engagement efforts did have a significantly higher percentage of skills-based or pro bono volunteers: 22% compared with 5% that do not offer awards and recognition ( $t = 2.63$ ,  $df = 160$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Paid time off.* Companies offering paid time off were significantly more likely to report higher rates of employee volunteering after controlling for other variables in the model. Companies that offered employees paid time off to volunteer reported an 11% higher percentage rate of volunteer participation on average ( $b = .101$ ,  $t = 2.80$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Training on community engagement.* Companies that offer training as a resource to expand or improve employee engagement and/or to support sharing of information between employees on community issues is associated with an 11% increase in employee participation in a company's volunteer programme ( $b = .108$ ,  $t = 2.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The influence of the variables included in this analysis (after controlling for other variables in the model) are summarized in Table 1. It is estimated that these variables combined explain about 20% of the variance in the overall rate of people's participation in a company's EVP (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.20$ ).

**Table 1** Effects of institutional variables on participation in a company's volunteer prog

$R^2 = 0.229$ , adjusted $R^2 = 0.200$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	.881	.141		6.27	.001
Number of employees (ln)	-.059*	.013	-.337	-4.60	.001
Engagement on performance reviews	.027	.033	.060	.83	.410
"Dollars for Doers" grants for volunteering	-.093*	.035	-.192	-2.69	.008
Awards or recognition for engagement	-.089	.068	-.094	-1.30	.196
Paid time off to volunteer	.101*	.036	.202	2.80	.006
Training on community engagement	.108*	.051	.156	2.11	.036

\* $p < .05$ ; dependent variable: percentage of employees participating in a company's volunteer programme.

## Discussion

When communicating these findings, we must first acknowledge limitations of the data used in this analysis. Data in this study was self-reported by companies in response to appeals from an independent research firm. The data was used to assess and compare companies' practices and policies as socially responsible. Therefore, while we assume that company reports are reliable and accurate, they are not externally corroborated. The findings are also based on a relatively small number of companies ( $n = 166$ ), and can only be generalized to comparatively large companies in the US with an annual revenue of \$1 billion or more.

Despite these limitations, findings indicate the relative influence that diverse company policies may have on volunteer participation.

The dependent variable in this analysis also only measures participation rates of volunteers without capturing the intensity and regularity of volunteer participation. In practice, participation could ostensibly be a one-off experience that totals one hour a year during a company-wide day of service. While a company prioritizing universal but short-term volunteering may report high rates of participation, they may have lower impact than companies offering greater intensity and regularity of volunteering. We recognize that in practice participation may be less important than social impact. Indeed, many companies favour skills-based activities that may result in low participation compared with high rates of participation measured through a company-organized “day of service” that aims to include all employees (Pajo and Lee, 2011; Grant, 2012).

On the other hand, the value of participation depends largely on the organization’s strategic objectives for volunteering. For example, if one objective is to drive up employee engagement for the purpose of developing emerging leaders, then participation rates are important to the extent they can lead to higher employee engagement or skill development. Moreover, skills-based volunteering may fail to engage employees, including many socially oriented volunteers who would likely prefer a home-building or soup kitchen project where they can be involved in the community while also being social and doing good. Therefore, although it would help to have a measure of participation intensity, a binary rate of participation does have value for certain policy and practice decisions.

Based on our review of prior studies, we hypothesized that company practices and policies that appeal to intrinsic motivations will have a more significant influence on employee participation in EVPs. We also posited that these practices may be more effective in combination with policies that appeal to both social- and career-oriented motivations or formal recognition. Findings from the multivariate analysis largely confirm these hypotheses. From the quantitative analysis, paid time off policies for volunteering and training are positively correlated with a higher percentage of employee participation in a company volunteer programme. We also see that the practices of including community engagement on performance reviews, offering “Dollars for Doers” grants, and providing awards and recognition have an insignificant, or negative, relationship with higher participation in EVPs.

Although the size of a company was included as a control variable, the finding that smaller companies have higher rates of participation is also largely consistent with prior studies (see Basil *et al.*, 2011; Kilcrease, 2007). While the intensity of volunteering is unknown, rates of volunteer participation are often impressively high in small- to mid-size companies—sometimes nearing full participation (Turner, 2016). This is particularly high compared with average reported volunteer participation rates across the sector, which are much lower (Turner, 2016). Nonetheless, it is not entirely clear why companies with relatively fewer employees have higher employee volunteer rates. It could be easier for a company with 2,000 employees to personalize and/or market and disseminate knowledge about EVPs than a company with 200,000 or more

employees; authentic communications and tailored programming may be more difficult with a larger workforce. Also, company executives are typically responsible for corporate volunteer programmes in smaller companies, whereas larger companies often have a designated lower-level staff person responsible for organizing company volunteering (Samuel *et al.*, 2013). Thus, leadership may play an influencing role.

Consistent with previous research, the inclusion of community engagement on performance reviews does not seem to be a key driver of volunteer participation. A company's decision to include community engagement on performance reviews does not necessarily mean requiring volunteer participation. Rather, it often means that managers consider community engagement as part of an employees' overall performance. To the extent that companies have a high proportion of career-oriented employees, the inclusion of community engagement on performance reviews may lead to higher volunteer rates—but likely only if companies also offer volunteer opportunities that speak to employees' desire to advance their careers, along with other supportive policies. Despite the lack of significant association between volunteer participation and inclusion in performance reviews, there may be other reasons why companies continue to adopt this practice. For example, the practice often intends to more fully integrate community engagement in a company's organizational culture, and to heighten the company's overall commitment to communities (Turner, 2016; Allen, 2012). Regardless, the finding that performance reviews do not necessarily increase volunteer participation is a useful finding in the workplace context. Because managers typically link concentrated work time to productivity in the work environment, giving back through volunteering can be viewed as potential downtime.

Although Dollars for Doers grants were expected to have a negligible effect on volunteer rates, the negative relationship between these programmes and volunteer participation was unexpected. Parker (2015) argues that many Dollars for Doers programmes suffer from low awareness, low eligibility and clumsy processes, which make employees less likely to use them. However, the fact that Dollars for Doers grants are negatively associated with high volunteer rates may be better explained if we consider that employees are often unlikely to take advantage of these programmes if they are not motivated to volunteer. This finding may indicate that companies offering Dollars for Doers programmes are not creating the overall environment needed at their companies to increase volunteer participation rates beyond offering a Dollars for Doers incentive. Indeed, some employees may simply wish to donate money to support a cause rather than giving their time as volunteers.

Consistent with prior studies, awards and recognition did not appear as a critical driver of volunteer participation overall (Booth and Rodell, 2015; Rodell and Lynch, 2016; Pelozo *et al.*, 2009). Recognition is typically associated with extrinsic motivations (i.e. being seen by others, receiving praise or "impression management"). On the other hand, the secondary finding that companies offering awards do have higher rates of skills-based or pro bono volunteering suggests that career-oriented volunteers may respond well to formal recognition

opportunities (Boston College, 2015). This finding is also consistent with research that suggests career-oriented volunteers are more likely to participate in skills-based or pro bono volunteering (Points of Light, 2015). Future research that concurrently measures employee motivations and company policies may be able to make more accurate predictions about this relationship.

The positive relationship between companies offering paid time off to volunteer and higher employee volunteer rates is also consistent with previous research (Points of Light, 2015; Snyder, 2015). Because paid time off is one of the few policies that appeal to both socially motivated and career-oriented volunteers (Points of Light, 2015), it was expected to have a strong influence on volunteer rates. When companies are unable to offer volunteer time off policies, corporate volunteer leaders could offer alternative times and spaces for employees to volunteer—either on company time or on holiday time. Future research could investigate to what extent these alternative policies are associated with comparative increases in employee volunteer rates.

The positive relationship between training on community engagement and employee volunteer rates supports claims that training is necessary to create the most effective EVPs (Points of Light, 2014b; Booth *et al.*, 2009). Training on community engagement likely helps corporate volunteer leaders communicate aspects of their volunteer programmes that may appeal to their employees' specific social, career or purpose orientations. Training also helps to raise awareness about volunteer opportunities and company policies and incentives that employees can take advantage of. Additionally, information sharing can also take place through corporate volunteer councils or other resources that companies make available to support volunteering.

Although the data measured only training on community engagement, it is likely that volunteering may compound when companies offer additional trainings, such as trainings about the benefits of volunteering or the impact of volunteering on employee skills or societal causes. Given the influence of training on volunteer rates, it is also likely that participation would increase when companies offer more information-sharing opportunities through resources such as online portals or corporate volunteer councils. Future research can investigate the impact of such additional trainings, and whether sharing information on community issues through such trainings may have greater appeal to, and more effectively mobilize, social or purpose-oriented employees (see Points of Light, 2015; Grant, 2012).

---

## Conclusion

---

Overall, findings indicate a potential link between employee motivations to volunteer and the policies and practices designed to appeal to these motivations. The applicability of these findings could be improved in future research through qualitative interviews with leaders, company representatives, and volunteers to better understand whether their motivations for volunteering

compare well to the results from this study. Leaders at companies with an EVP would benefit from better understanding the factors that drive their workforce to volunteer, and then creating an enabling environment for their employees to volunteer. Future research would also benefit from concretely analyzing how diverse company policies influence employees with specific types of motivations—measuring both individual and company-level variables. This may be particularly important for recruiting and retaining Millennials, who consider social purpose as a motivating factor when choosing a workplace (Mirvis, 2012; Deloitte, 2015).

These and future findings can help companies create policies that can most effectively harness their employees' motivations, skills and passions as they volunteer to create value for partnering organizations and communities. As consumers and employees continue to prioritize socially responsible behaviour by companies, companies have ample opportunity to design and create meaningful employee volunteer programmes that can appeal to their employees' motivations, while also improving the communities in which they operate. Understanding the key drivers behind why employees want to volunteer, and then designing and adopting policies and programmes in line with a company's strategic goals, will almost certainly lead to higher rates of employee volunteerism.

Findings may be understood within the broader context of what it takes to create an effective EVP based on the strategic goals of the organization and its unique culture. By comparing a handful of popular EVP policies in critical perspective and prioritizing these policies based on their utility for engaging employees, this study offers a useful contribution to the field. It provides additional information for companies to use when devising policies to enhance employee participation in EVPs—thus allowing these companies to be more critical of their focus and priorities. As managers consider how to best develop and strengthen EVPs, findings suggest different levels of comparative benefit afforded by diverse company policies. Understanding the relative benefit of these different practices can ultimately influence employees' participation in EVPs as companies choose strategically among the many options available.

---

## References

---

- Allen, K. (2012). *The Big Tent: Corporate Volunteering in the Global Age*. Madrid: Ariel and Fundación Telefónica.
- Aluchna, M. (2015). Employee volunteering as an element of corporate social responsibility: The evidence from Polish listed companies. In Idowu, S.O., Frederiksen, C.S., Mermod, A.Y. & Nielsen, M.E.J. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Governance* (pp. 117-141). Geneva: Springer.
- Basil, D.Z., Runte, M.S., Easwaramoorthy, M. & Barr, C. (2009). Company support for employee volunteering: A national survey of companies in Canada. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85(2), 387-398.

- Basil, D.Z., Basil, M., Runte, M.S. & Usher, J. (2011). Company support for employee volunteering: Does size matter? *Journal of Business Research*, 64(1), 61-66.
- Baxter, A. (2013). More companies encourage workers to volunteer, on the clock. *National Public Radio (All Things Considered)*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2013/08/14/211961622/more-companies-encourage-workers-to-volunteer-on-the-clock> [accessed 16 November 2016].
- Bhattacharya, C.B., Sen, S. & Korschun, D. (2008). Using corporate social responsibility to win the war for talent. MIT Sloan Management talent. Review, Winter. Retrieved from <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/using-corporate-social-responsibility-to-win-the-war-for-talent/>
- Booth, E.J. & Rodell, B.J. (2015). *Employee Volunteering Report: A Global Study of Employee Motivation to Engage in Corporate Volunteering Programs*. Alexandria, VA: United Way Worldwide.
- Booth, J.E., Park, K.W. & Glomb, T.M. (2009). Employer supported volunteering benefits: Gift exchange among employers, employees, and volunteer organizations. *Human Resource Management*, 48(2), 227-249.
- Boston College (2015). *Community Involvement Study 2015*. Boston, MA: Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship.
- Caligiuri, P., Mencia, A. & Jiang, K. (2013). Win-win-win: The influence of company-sponsored volunteerism programs on employees, NGOs, and business units. *Personnel Psychology*, 66(4), 825-860.
- Cone & Ebiquity (2015). *Global CSR Study*. Boston, MA: Cone Communications.
- Cycyota, C.S., Ferrante, C.J. & Schroeder, J.M. (2016). Corporate social responsibility and employee volunteerism: What do the best companies do? *Business Horizons*, 59(3), 321-329.
- DaSilva, A. & Dailey, W. (2016). *2016 Cone Communications Employee Engagement Study*. Boston, MA: Cone Communications.
- DaSilva, A. & Kerkian, S. (2008). *Past. Present. Future. The 25th Anniversary of Cause Marketing*. Boston, MA: Cone LLC.
- Deloitte (2011). *2011 Executive Summary: Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey*, Deloitte Development LLC.
- Deloitte (2015). *Deloitte Millennial Survey*, Deloitte Development LLC.
- DeVoe, S.E. & Pfeffer, J. (2007). Hourly payment and volunteering: The effects of organizational practices on decisions about time use. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 783-798.
- Dreesbach-Bundy, S. & Scheck, B. (2017). Corporate volunteering: A bibliometric analysis from 1990 to 2015. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 26(3), 240-256.
- Farmer, S.M. & Fedor, D.B. (1999). Volunteer participation and withdrawal. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 9(4), 349-368.
- Gatignon-Turnau, A.-L. & Mignonac, K. (2015). (Mis)Using employee volunteering for public relations: Implications for corporate volunteers' organizational commitment. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(1), 7-18.
- Geroy, G.D., Wright, P.C. & Jacoby, L. (2000). Toward a conceptual framework of employee volunteerism: An aid for the human resource manager. *Management Decision*, 38(4), 280-287.
- de Gilder, D., Schuty, T.N.M. & Breedijk, M. (2005). Effects of an employee volunteering program on the work force. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 61, 143-152.
- Graff, L. (2004). *Making a Business Case for Employer-Supported Volunteerism*. Dundas, Ontario.
- Grant, A. (2012). Giving time, time after time: Work design and sustained employee participation in corporate volunteering. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(4), 589-615.

- Grensing-Pophal, L. (2013). Pitfalls of employee volunteerism and how to avoid them. *Society for Human Resource Management*. Retrieved from <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/ethics/articles/pages/employee-volunteerism.aspx> [accessed 12 June 2017].
- Hall, D.T. & Chandler, D.E. (2005). Psychological success: When the career is a calling. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(2), 155-176.
- Harter, J.K., Schmidt, F.L. & Hayes, T.L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(2), 268-279.
- Hershatter, A. & Epstein, M. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: An organization and management perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 211-223.
- Hu, J., Jiang, K., Mo, S., Chen, H. & Shi J. (2016). The motivational antecedents and performance consequences of corporate volunteering: When do employees volunteer and when does volunteering help versus harm work performance? *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 137, 99-111.
- Hurst, A., Pearce, A., Parish, S., Erickson, C., Schnidman, A., Vesty, L., Garlinghouse, M., Pavela, A. & Kotansky, H. (2016). 2016 *Global Report. Purpose at Work: The Largest Global Study on the Role of Purpose in the Workforce*. New York: LinkedIn and ©Imperative.
- Kilcrease, K.M. (2007). Increasing small business volunteerism: Overcoming the cost factor. *Ivey Business Journal Online*, 71(March). Retrieved from <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/increasing-small-business-volunteerism-overcoming-the-cost-factor/>.
- Kolstad, I. (2007). Why firms should not always maximize profits. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 76(2), 137-145.
- Korschun, D., Bhattacharya, C.B. & Swain, S.D. (2014). Corporate social responsibility, customer orientation, and the job performance of frontline employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 78(3), 20-37.
- Kropp, B. (2014). *Maximizing the Effectiveness of Corporate Volunteer Programs [webinar]*. Unpublished webinar. Cited in Points of Light (2014c). *The Civic 50: A Roadmap for Corporate Community Engagement in America*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Corporate Institute. Retrieved from [https://s3.amazonaws.com/pol-website/media/civic50/Resources/Civic50\\_2014\\_SummaryReport\\_FINAL.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/pol-website/media/civic50/Resources/Civic50_2014_SummaryReport_FINAL.pdf).
- Li, N., Chiaburu, D.S. & Kirkman, B.L. (2014). Cross-level influences of empowering leadership on citizenship behavior: Organizational support climate as a double-edged sword. *Journal of Management*, 43(4). Retrieved from <http://jom.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/08/05/0149206314546193.abstract>
- Liu, G. & Ko, W.-W. (2011). Social alliance and employee voluntary activities: A resource-based perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 104(2), 251-268.
- Lorenz, C., Gentile, G.-C. & Wehner, T. (2011). How, why, and to what end? Corporate volunteering as corporate social performance. *International Journal of Business Environment*, 4(2), 183-205.
- McGlone, T., Spain, J.W. & McGlone, V. (2011). Corporate social responsibility and the millennials. *Journal of Education for Business*, 86(4), 195-200.
- MacPhail, F. & Bowles, P. (2009). Corporate social responsibility as support for employee volunteers: Impacts, gender puzzles and policy implications in Canada. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(3), 405-416.
- Meinhard, A., Handy, F. & Greenspan, I. (2008). *Employer Supported Volunteering Programs in Large Corporations*. Centre for Voluntary Sector Studies, Ryerson University, Ontario.
- Mirvis, P. (2012). Employee engagement and CSR: Transactional, relational, and developmental approaches. *California Management Review*, 54(4), 93-117.
- Pajo, K. & Lee, L. (2011). Corporate-sponsored volunteering: A work design perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 99(3), 467-482.

- Parker, D. (2015). Dollars for doers programs are not an incentive, but still essential. RealizedWorth.com. Retrieved from <http://www.realizedworth.com/tag/dollars-for-doers> [accessed 20 August 2015].
- Pelozo, J. & Hassay, D.N. (2006). Intra-organizational volunteerism: Good soldiers, good deeds and good politics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 64(4), 357-379.
- Pelozo, J., Hudson, S. & Hassay, D.N. (2009). The marketing of employee volunteerism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85(2), 371-386. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9734-z>
- Points of Light (2007). *Policies and Procedures of the Best Employee Volunteer Programs: Benchmarks of Excellence Series*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Foundation.
- Points of Light (2012). *Trends of Excellence: Innovations in Employee Volunteering*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Corporate Institute.
- Points of Light (2014). *Dollars for Doers Programs: Employer-sponsored, but Employee-driven*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Corporate Institute.
- Points of Light (2014b). *Seven Practices of Effective Employee Volunteer Programs: An Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Corporate Institute.
- Points of Light (2015). *What Makes Your Employees Tick? Understanding your Workforce and Engaging your Employees in Service*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Corporate Institute.
- Rochlin, S., Bliss, R., Jordan, S. & Kiser, Y.C. (2015). *Defining the Competitive and Financial Advantages of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability*. Boston, MA: IO Sustainability.
- Rodell, J.B. & Lynch, J.W. (2016). Perceptions of employee volunteering: Is it "credited" or "stigmatized" by colleagues? *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(2), 611-635. Retrieved from <http://amj.aom.org/content/59/2/611.abstract>
- Rodell, J.B., Breitsohl, H., Schröder, M. & Keating, D.J. (2016). Employee volunteering: A review and framework for future research. *Journal of Management*, 42(1), 55-84. Retrieved from <http://jom.sagepub.com/content/42/1/55.abstract>
- Samuel, O., Wolf, P. & Schilling, A. (2013). Corporate volunteering: Benefits and challenges for nonprofits. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 24(2), 163-179.
- Snyder, B. (2015). These 10 companies offer big incentives for volunteering. *Fortune*. March 21, 2015. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2015/03/21/companies-offer-incentives-for-volunteering/>.
- Turner, Y.S. (2016). *The 2016 Civic 50: Turning Good Intentions into Sound Business Practices*. Washington, DC: Points of Light Corporate Institute.
- Wayne, S.J., Liden, R.C., Kraimer, M.L. & Graf, I. K. (1999). The role of human capital, motivation and supervisor sponsorship in predicting career success. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(5), 577-595.
- Wilson, A. & Hicks, F. (2010). *Volunteering: The Business Case. The Benefits of Corporate Volunteering Programmes in Education*. London: City of London.

