



MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERING IN TOUGH TIMES

A research study of more
than 8,000 employees and
213 volunteer managers
from 36 companies



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary of some of the highlights and key findings from LBG's research on motivating volunteering in tough times.

Introduction

LBG began developing this project in late 2008-early 2009, as the effects of this painful recession continued to spread and more and more companies were forced to deal with its often dire consequences. During that time, as we talked to corporate contributions and foundation professionals, we learned that (not surprisingly) they were increasingly looking to their employee volunteers to help offset declining contributions budgets. Soon, analysts and consultants everywhere began touting the importance of employee volunteering to help maintain a company's community commitments, image, and visibility.

But as the emphasis on volunteering grew, LBG Associates and LBG Research Institute wondered: ***How motivated are employees to volunteer during this recession?***

We developed this research study to provide the answer to this question—and much more. Our goal was to provide insight into employee attitudes toward volunteering motivation, recognition, and communication during these tough times.

LBG created two online surveys, one for employees and one for volunteer managers. The results are based on responses from 8,032 employees and 213 volunteer managers, from 36 companies, to surveys completed in June and July 2009.

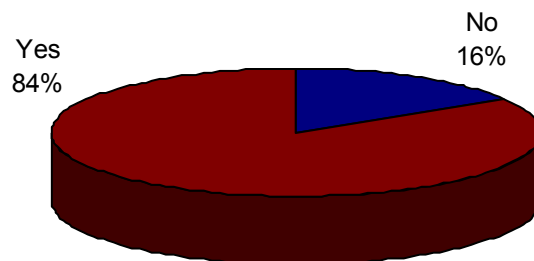
Survey Results: Employees

General Volunteering

Volunteering Is Seen As Part of Corporate Values

The vast majority (84%) of employee respondents say that support for volunteerism is part of their company's values. This is very good news for the participating companies, indicating that they are doing a good job demonstrating their commitment to volunteerism and its importance in the corporate value system.

Do you believe support for volunteerism is part of your company's values?



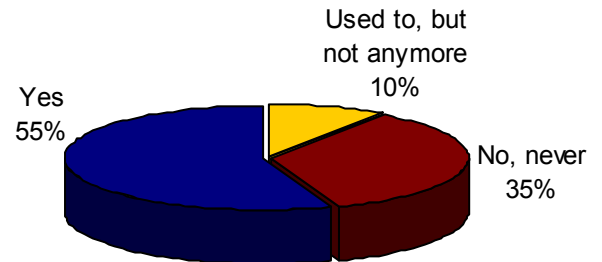
Volunteering Programs Improve How Employees Feel about their Company

Good news: There is no doubt that volunteering programs make most employees feel more positive about their companies: Almost 71% say this is the case. Only 125 people (2% of those who responded) say these programs make them feel “more negative about the company.”

The Majority Volunteers for Company-sponsored Events

The other good news in our survey results is that the majority of the respondents (55.6%) volunteer for causes through their employer’s volunteer program.

Do you volunteer for causes through your employer’s volunteer program?



Volunteering Motivation and Recognition

Personal Causes and the Economy Drive Decisions

Employees were asked to rate on a 1-5 scale (1-unimportant; 2-somewhat unimportant; 3-somewhat important; 4-important; 5-very important) the reasons they decide to volunteer in company-sponsored programs. For most employees, their primary motivator is the importance of a cause to them personally. The recession is also clearly influencing them. The top five motivators are shown in the table below.

Please rate how important each of the following is when you decide to participate in company-sponsored volunteering programs	Average rating (1-5)
The cause is important to me personally	4.35
Community organizations are experiencing economic hardship	3.61
My volunteering results in a donation for the organization from my company	3.53
The cause is important to my company	3.35
The charity came to the company to talk about what they do in the community	3.08

For Recognition, Donations to Employees’ Charities Rate Highest

When it comes to recognition, employees are altruistic. They rank “a donation made to my charity when I volunteer” highest among all other forms of recognition. This again reflects their concerns about the economy and the difficulties nonprofits are having.

Workday and Pro Bono Volunteering

More than a Third Say They Are Allowed to Volunteer During the Workday

Many companies are trying to encourage volunteerism among employees via programs that provide time during the workday (release time or paid time off) to volunteer. Among our survey respondents, more than 34% say their companies have such a program. Slightly more than one-quarter say their company does not have a workday volunteering program. Just under 40% do not know if their company allows workday volunteerism.

Less than 5% of all the respondents are participating in a pro bono/skills-based volunteering program (in which employees use their professional skills, such as marketing, finance, writing, human resources, IT, etc. to help a nonprofit). Going deeper into the data, however, of those employees who say their companies offer this program (11% of the total), 41% are participating.

Employee-directed Programs

Split on Participation in Employee-directed Programs

Participation in Dollars for Doers (DFD)/volunteer grants programs is split nearly equally, with 48% saying they do participate; 50% saying they do not; and 2% answering that they participated in the past but decided not to this year. For those who do *not* participate, more than three-quarters say that “understanding the program and how it works” would motivate them to participate.

Effects of the Economic Crisis on Volunteering

Volunteering Attitudes Now vs. a Year Ago

As for the importance of employee volunteering now versus a year ago, respondents are split. Nearly half (48%) of all respondents say it is “more important.” When asked if they are more likely to volunteer at company-sponsored events now than they were a year ago (before the economic crisis), the majority—61%—of respondents say their motivation is the same. But 27% are more motivated than they were in 2008—most likely reflecting the impact of these tough times.

The Economic Crisis: No Major Impact on Willingness to Volunteer

The economic crisis does not seem to have had a serious impact on employees’ willingness to volunteer. The majority give a 3 rating (“no impact”) to the factors shown in the table below.

Please rate the impact the economic crisis has had on:	Very negative 1	Negative 2	No impact 3	Positive 4	Very positive 5	Average rating (1-5)
My willingness to volunteer on my own time for charities of my choice	3.7%	8.3%	58.8%	20.3%	9.0%	3.23
My willingness to participate in company-sponsored volunteering	3.7%	9.0%	63.4%	19.0%	4.9%	3.13
My willingness to participate in pro bono projects	3.6%	6.4%	71.0%	14.3%	4.8%	3.10

Volunteering Communication

E-mail Is the Primary Way Volunteering Events Get Communicated

E-mail is the main way employees find out about volunteering events, followed by word of mouth. Very few (5%) respondents say their company is using new methods to communicate volunteering events.

Top 5 ways employees find out about volunteering events	% of respondents
E-mails	71%
Word of mouth (other colleagues)	61%
Company intranet	50%
Company website	33%
Bulletin board postings	29%

Results for Volunteer Managers—and Comparisons with Employees’ Results

General Volunteering

Volunteer Managers: Plurality Say Volunteering Rates Stayed the Same

The plurality (40%) of the 200-plus employee volunteer managers believe that the rates of employee participation in company-sponsored volunteering events have stayed the same compared to a year ago. Almost 23% say rates have increased, and 24% say they have decreased.

Volunteering Motivation and Recognition

Managers and Employees Agree on Top Motivator—Then Mostly Diverge

Volunteer managers, like the employees, believe a cause being personally important to the employee is the primary motivation for volunteering. In general, however, the volunteer managers’ average ratings for the other motivators are higher on the 1-5 scale when compared to employees’ ratings. The volunteer managers’ top five drivers of employee volunteerism are shown in the table below, as well as the employees’ ratings .

Please rate how important the following types of volunteer recognition are to employees	Volunteer managers (rating, # rank)	Employees (rating, # rank)
Internal communication recognizing an employee’s participation in volunteering	4.02 #1	2.47 #2
A letter from senior management recognizing participation	3.87 #2	2.37 #3
A donation made to the employee’s charity when he/she volunteers	3.77 #3	3.67 #1
A letter from the employee’s supervisor recognizing participation	3.64 #4	2.31 #4
A special lunch or dinner to honor all volunteers	3.46 #5	2.29 #5

On Top Forms of Recognition, Managers and Employees Agree—Sort of

Regarding volunteering recognition, the good news is that both volunteer managers and employees rate “a donation made to the employee’s charity when he/she volunteers” high—well above a 3 (“somewhat important”). The not-so-great news is that managers rate other forms of recognition much higher overall, indicating a lack of awareness of how employees actually feel.

Workday and Pro Bono Volunteering

More Volunteer Managers Say Their Company Offers Workday Volunteering

More than half (54%) of volunteer managers say their companies offer either a paid time off or a release program for employee volunteering. By contrast, only about 35% of employees say their companies have a program enabling workday volunteering—indicating that there might be issues around basic program knowledge among employees.

Pro Bono/Skills-based Volunteering: More Information, Please

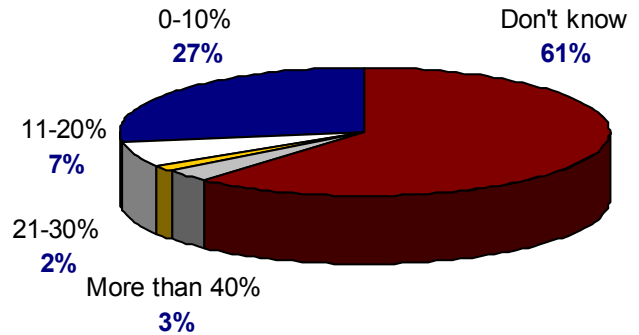
A comparison of how volunteer managers and employees answer when asked if their company offers a pro bono/skills-based volunteering program shows a distinct knowledge gap—just 11.2% of employees say their company offers pro bono/skills-based volunteering, while one-quarter of the volunteer managers say the same.

Employee-directed Programs

Volunteer Managers Cite Low Participation Rates

The volunteer managers report low program participation rates for employee-directed programs such as Dollars for Doers and volunteer grants. Of the nearly 40% of volunteer managers who know the participation rate, the largest group (27%) says it is less than 10%. *(The numbers in blue are the percentages of respondents answering.)*

What percentage of employees use the Dollars for Doers/volunteer grants program?



Effects of the Economic Crisis

More than Half the Volunteer Managers Say Volunteering Is “More Important” Now

More than half of the volunteer managers believe that volunteering is “more important” than it was a year ago—16% more than employees who say the same.

More Volunteer Managers Say Volunteering Opportunities Are Increasing

While the majority of both employees and volunteer managers say “there is no change” in the number of volunteering opportunities the company is offering compared to a year ago, a much higher portion of volunteer managers say they have seen an increase. This difference could indicate a problem with the communication of volunteering opportunities to employees, or it could simply reflect two very different perceptions of the corporate volunteering environment.

Compared to a year ago:	% of volunteer managers	% of employees
The company is offering more opportunities for volunteering	29.5%	14.5%
The company is offering fewer opportunities for volunteering	9.6%	12.9%
There is no change	60.8%	72.6%

Volunteering Communication

Miscommunication? For Volunteer Managers, Word of Mouth Is Number One

The top three communication vehicles—word of mouth, e-mails, and the company intranet—are the same (although in different order) for volunteer managers and employees. (See the table on the next page.)

As for the number-one communication method, most managers (80%) choose word of mouth. The highest percentage of employees, however, seem to be finding out about volunteering activities via e-mail messages.

Top 5 ways volunteer managers say employees find out about company-sponsored volunteering events	% of volunteer managers (%, # rank)	% of employees (%, # rank)
Word of mouth (hearing about it from other colleagues)	80.4% #1	61.2% #2
E-mails	74.5% #2	71.1% #1
Company intranet	73.4% #3	50.5% #3
Bulletin board postings (in the common areas or cafeteria, etc.)	59.8% #4	29.0% #5
Posters	58.7% #5	25.3% #6

Conclusion

During these challenging economic times, companies are looking to employee volunteering to help enhance their images as good corporate citizens—and in many cases, replace declining contributions. This growing importance of employee volunteering, combined with the accepted business case in support of it, makes getting these programs “right” a business imperative.

But when it comes to motivating volunteering, what resonated with employees in 2007, or even last year, will not necessarily work today. The downturn has wrought serious changes in business, and it has taken a toll on employee trust and morale. Anxious, cynical, or depressed employees need much more support, reassurance, and information than they did in the past in order to feel comfortable participating in company-sponsored volunteering efforts. And companies need more feedback from employees about what matters most to them when they volunteer.

There is only one solution to this dilemma: **better and more frequent communication**. Companies can throw money at expensive volunteer initiatives, but until they determine what will make employees want to participate; effectively communicate corporate support for such initiatives; and ensure that employees fully understand these programs, the ROI will likely be disappointing.

By encouraging, promoting, and supporting volunteerism in the right way, and engaging in two-way communication to ensure understanding, companies will have a far greater chance at successfully leveraging the beneficial opportunities that employee volunteering presents.



Driving Social Change...

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