ABSTRACT

This article provides insights into how corporate employee volunteer programs are run, what they hope to accomplish and how these results are assessed by their administrators. Data presented was collected in a survey of individuals who administer corporate volunteer programs in the Chicago-area. Findings will be useful to those companies wishing to initiate or fine tune their efforts to encourage employees' work with nonprofits, as well as to agencies and communities seeking to work with corporate volunteerism programs.

A Look Inside Corporate Employee Volunteer Programs

Dr. Ellen J. Benjamin

INTRODUCTION

A great deal has been written about the nonprofit sector's reliance on volunteers and the habits of volunteers themselves (Lake; Saxon-Harrold). As a result we know much about who volunteers, where and why people volunteer, what is expected while on the job, what turns volunteers off and how officials within nonprofits might effectively administer their volunteer programs (Brudney; Cnaan and Amrofell; Hedden). Research has focused narrowly on defining the terms (Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth) and broadly on identifying the determinants (Fleishman-Hillard Research; Smith), resulting in resources for nonprofit administrators that range from websites (www.energizeinc.com; www.volunteertoday.com), to textbooks (Fisher and Cole), to journals *(The Journal of Volunteer Administration).*

Among the critical things we have come to realize is that while most Americans believe more volunteerism is needed today than five years ago, they are devoting fewer hours to it themselves (Marchetti). Corporate employee volunteer programs, which include a variety of company-sponsored efforts to encourage employees (and sometimes retirees) to donate time and skills in service to the community, are potentially one method for addressing this problem (Meyer; Van Fossan). These volunteers have the potential for supplying the nonprofit sector with new talent, energy and resources, as well as a fresh perspective and low cost solutions to meeting needs (Vizza, Allen and Keller).

While still offered by only a limited number of American businesses, these programs appear to be increasing in number, size and scope (Points of Light Foundation), a trend that may in part result from attention drawn to corporate employee volunteerism through the President's Summit on America's Future in April 1997. Curiously though, much less is known about or published on the subject of corporate employee volunteer programs than about the societal need for volunteers and the motivational characteristics of volunteers themselves. This disparity was underscored in a recently published 29 item bibliography on volunteerism (Golensky) that included only one citation dealing with corporate employee programs.

In part, the lack of citations is due to the fact that several publications pertaining to corporate employee volunteer programs are now out-of-print and hard to obtain (e.g., *Evaluating Corporate Volunteer Programs; Building Partnerships with Business: A Guide for Nonprofits).* Other excellent pieces are decades old and seem to have

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been forgotten (Wattel), or, were produced primarily for local audiences and not widely circulated (Corporate Volunteer Coordinators Council N.Y. Metropolitan Area; Corporate Volunteerism Council of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Area).

Of the literature that is available, four surveys stand out as presenting particularly useful overviews of the field (Points of Light Foundation; Rostami and Hall; Volunteer—The National Center, 1985; Wild). For the most part however publications on corporate employee volunteerism focus on guidance for company administrators, rather than on analyses of either data or theoretical questions. Topics include suggestions on how to:

- participate in a corporate volunteer council (Kirk, Klug and Monroe);
- identify stakeholders, define levels of company support, identify benefits to the company (Seel);
- develop volunteer motivation and recognition, work effectively with nonprofits, communicate for success (Corporate Volunteerism Council);
- align volunteerism with a corporation's mission and philanthropy, connect employee interests and community needs, shift toward decentralized employee-run programs (Mathieu);
- set goals, develop structures and corporate policies (SSR, Inc.);
- select program options for inclusion such as a clearinghouse, skillsbank, matching monetary or in-kind awards (Plinio and Scanlon);
- create family friendly volunteering (McCurley; McKaughan);
- manage legal liability and insurance issues (Tremper and Kahn); and,
- recruit volunteers and evaluate program impact (Vineyard).

Some of these publications include moving portrayals of employees' experiences as volunteers (Forward), others present case study examples of the sponsoring businesses (Fleishman-Hillard Research; McKaughan; Plinio and Scanlon; Solomon, Ragland, Wilson and Plost; Vizza, Allen and Keller) or provide samples of company materials utilized to promote employee volunteerism, such as newsletters, award certificates, and employee forms (Corporate Volunteer Coordinators' Council). This is a qualitatively rich literature written, for the most part, not by scholars but by those with personal experience running corporate programs who intend to offer practical advice and encouragement.

The relative inattention of academicians to corporate volunteerism is surprising given that so much research has been conducted about the other half of this equation—the nonprofit programs that want volunteers. The processes of supplying and receiving volunteers are, after all, symbiotic and could perhaps be even more effectively linked if each party better understood the other's desires and constraints (Heidrich).

This study seeks to aid that understanding by contributing further information to existing works on volunteerism. While many of the findings will prove particularly useful to businesses, there are lessons to be considered by both for-profit and not-for-profit executives who seek to promote volunteerism.

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire utilized to collect data for the research reported upon in this article was designed by a DePaul University research team with input from two prominent Chicago-based coalitions focused on philanthropy: The Donors Forum of Chicago (a regional association of grant-makers) and The Chicagoland Employee Volunteer Council (a metropolitan alliance of businesses interested in promoting employee volunteerism). Each of these coalitions proposed topics for inclusion in this study that they considered to be relevant to their membership, yet minimally reported upon in scholarly literature and poorly understood by the effected parties. In addition, corporate foundation directors who had previously run volunteerism programs were utilized

in pre-tests of the survey to refine it for maximum validity, reliability and utility; none of these individuals were included in the subsequent data collection.

The questionnaire was mailed during summer 2000 to the 43 members of The Chicagoland Employee Volunteer Council. Fifteen responses (a 35% response rate) were received and analyzed. All but two participants reported the date of initiation for their volunteerism program. Among these respondents, a third indicated they were reporting upon a volunteerism program initiated before 1981, while nearly twice as many respondents represented programs in operation less than 10 years.

Information was collected from a cross-section of industry types, including the fields of banking, telecommunications, manufacturing, retailing, utilities, and service industries. The majority of respondents (67%) reported on companies with 5,000 or more employees and none had less than 100 employees. Although corporate identification was optional for those completing the questionnaire, nearly half the respondents chose to indicate their affiliation. In total, 60% of the study's respondents indicated that their company was national and an additional 20% international in their operations, rather than regional or local. Given this sample, it is not surprising that every one of the respondents who choose to self-identify listed their affiliation as being with a large and well known corporation, mostly from a corporate headquarters office.

It should be noted that the preponderance of large companies known to have participated in the study through self-identification may be an artifact resulting from the pool willing to self-identify but, probably more importantly, reflects an attribute of the population sampled. For example, both the City of Chicago and the membership of The Chicagoland Employee Volunteer Council contain a disproportionately high ratio of major corporations relative to other cities around the country. As a result, findings of this study cannot necessarily be generalized to practices in all locales or by all businesses.

ADMINISTRATION

Based on a comparison of their 1992 (Wild) and 1999 national surveys, The Points of Light Foundation credits administrators of employee volunteer programs with an increasing application of "disciplined management tools and techniques." Despite the evidence they find of increased professionalism during the past decade, Foundation authors also point to the difficulties apparent today as a result of instability in the volunteer management function (nearly a third have been on the job a year or less) and a juggling of multiple duties for those overseeing employee volunteerism (two-thirds spend less than half their time on this effort).

This first section looks at the administration of employee volunteer programs within Chicago-area businesses by focusing on *Staffing and Financial Management.* The background presented provides a context to draw from in the two subsequent sections that examine PROGRAM DESIGN and PROGRAM RESULTS.

Staffing

Not surprisingly, many corporations make a connection between their philanthropic grant-making and their efforts to encourage employee volunteerism. This is particularly evident when looking at the staffing of volunteer programs.

Three fifths of respondents indicate that primary responsibility for their employee volunteer program rests with philanthropic staff (foundation or corporate giving). While one company indicates that responsibility is shared or rotated among departments and examples emerged of companies that assign management of volunteerism activities to communications, corporate affairs and/or human resource personnel, the predominating pattern is for employee volunteer programs to be run by the same people handling charitable giving.

Although corporate volunteerism programs are generally administered by employees who carry many additional duties within their company and thus cannot dedicate full time attention to this function, two-thirds of respondents report augmenting this staffing through utilization of a committee of employees. In addition to the efficiency of such an approach, this may also be a reflection of the perceived link between grantmaking and volunteerism, since many companies now run their deductible contributions through employee committee systems.

More intriguing though is the possibility that volunteerism committees are being established to meet specific objectives connected to volunteerism itself. Most obvious is the philosophical consistency of staffing a volunteerism program through the use of volunteers. But there is an additional point of importance. Literature on this subject repeatedly suggests that learning "teamwork skills" is a key goal for employee volunteerism programs (Breyer; Raynolds and Raynolds). This study confirmed that emphasis. Ninety-three percent of respondents indicate that it is "very important" to their company that teamwork is experienced among employees as a result of their volunteer program. Formation of internal committees for the purpose of administration can be one tool for reaching this desired outcome.

A different, or additional, motivation for companies to form committees to administer volunteerism programs might be the desire to structure an opportunity for employee input as to the priorities and/or operations of these initiatives. Some evidence arose to support this possibility, although findings are mixed.

For example, without exception, everyone within this study who describes a committee indicates that multiple levels of employees participate. This suggests an interest in promoting participation in program oversight among a broad range of persons. Furthermore, when asked, "Who in your organization provides input into the design of the employee volunteerism program?" 46% of respondents cite "employees." Since, as described later in this paper, employee input is only casually and sporadically obtained as a *follow-up* to volunteerism performed, it seems likely that much of this is acquired through committees during the planning and implementation phases.

On the other hand, an even higher percentage of respondents report that senior management (rather than employees-at-large) are the ones who provide input into the design of their volunteerism programs. And no one suggests that community or agency representatives are consulted. In fact, four companies that *have* committees did *not* indicate that employees provide input into the design of their program. This implies that employee participation is valued, and perhaps useful for administration, but that ultimate authority may reside outside this group process.

This impression regarding authority over corporate volunteerism programs is confirmed by responses to the question, "Who in your company has authority to approve the volunteer projects undertaken?" Tellingly, only one respondent indicated their volunteerism committee chair held authority, while everyone else listed a senior manager (e.g., Vice President Community Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, President). Some of this authority is shared with Regional Community Relations Directors and geographically dispersed local managers, a process that seems logical given that 80% of respondents operate employee volunteer programs at locations other than their headquarters. Even in these cases, however, the data shows that decision-making regarding expenditures and program activities is still centralized downtown with company executives.

Financial Management

Interestingly, one-fifth of respondents are operating their volunteerism program *without* an established budget. Of course

this could mean that expenditures are simply absorbed by the company without record keeping, a potentially positive situation for entrepreneurial administrators. This would, however, be unusual within a for-profit enterprise; and, in fact, only one administrator indicates that they have a "discretionary allowance." Rather, the lack of financial accounting implicit in the absence of a budget raises the question of whether volunteerism programs without a financial plan receive and/or spend very much money on their activities.

Four-fifths of the volunteerism programs *do*, however, create budgets and track expenses. These programs are clear about how, and how much, they spend; as well as to whom this information must be reported within their company.

Table 1 provides details on this circumstance. As shown, everyone who reports budget allocations indicates that money is spent for program administration. In addition, more than one-quarter of respondents who fund administration internally also spend money on outside consultants. Like the development of internal committees, the use of consultants may be a strategy for augmenting the limited amount of staff time corporations devote to their volunteer programs.

TABLE 1

Items Included in Corporate Employee Volunteerism Program Budgets

BUDGETED EXPENSE	
In-house administration of Program	100%
Food, T-shirts or other Items Given to Employees	100%
Photos of Events	91%
Employee Recognition Events	91%
Internal Marketing for Volunteering	73%
Transportation to Volunteer Sites	64%
In-kind Donations to Agencies	55%
Cash Grants to Agencies	45%
External Publicity for the Program	45%
External Consultants to the Program	27%
Loaned Executives to Agencies	18%
Employee Release Time	18%

Interestingly, costs for activities designed to encourage and acknowledge employee participation are as likely to be incurred as administrative costs. Everyone who reports budget allocations indicates that money is spent for gifts to employee participants and 91% report outlays for recognition events and photo-taking.

But if funds for the internal administration of Chicago-area volunteerism programs are limited, they are even more constrained when it comes to external activities. As one looks further afield from a direct corporate interest in employees and toward the potential funding of the agencies where volunteerism occurs, the tendency to spend money wanes. While more companies provide in-kind donations than cash to volunteer sites, only about half of respondents do either directly through their employee volunteerism budget. Perhaps it is possible that grants to volunteer sites are provided independently through these companies' charitable giving programs although, as discussed in the subsequent section on Program Goals, the evidence for this is not strong. What does stand out in examining the budgets reported upon in this study is that the key financial focus for corporate volunteer programs is on the internal elements of administration.

In keeping with this finding, it is of note that substantially more Chicago-area companies allocate funds for internal marketing of their volunteerism programs than to external publicity about the programs (73% versus 45%). In light of the fact that two-thirds of respondents report that creating positive publicity for the company is a "very important" result for their volunteer program, one might expect these figures to be reversed or at least equalized. This is especially the case since the same two-thirds ratio also report that their CEO might wish to increase the external recognition of company sponsored volunteer programs. Perhaps, as is often the case with grant-making programs, companies are hoping that the

recipients of their largess will take the lead in generating the desired goodwill. If this is so, the information may provide a helpful hint to nonprofits regarding corporate expectations.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents report that they "regularly establish goals" for their employee volunteer program, a subject that is further discussed later in this paper. For now it is interesting to note that everyone who reports establishing goals for their corporate volunteerism program also creates a budget. Correlation, not causation, has been determined. Nonetheless, there is a logical link: if you know what you want to accomplish it is possible to determine the resources necessary for getting the job done, while it is tough to lobby for or acquire funds while unclear about how or why such money will be spent. The lack of goals for their corporate volunteerism program may, therefore, help explain why one-fifth of these programs operate without a budget.

Perhaps, however, some of this looseness regarding the establishment of goals stems from another source: the lack of corporate policy relative to volunteerism. Only 53% of respondents are aware of any formal policies within their company regarding these programs. In addition, of the companies indicating that they both set goals and establish a budget, less than a third report that the same position has the authority for approving both.

As Rostami and Hall point out, these issues are intertwined and have an important impact on the future of an employee volunteer program. Data from their Canadian-based survey led these authors to conclude that companies that do have formal policies for their volunteerism efforts:

- are more likely to support community volunteering in proactive ways;
- have better-managed volunteer programs;
- enhance their support to the volunteer program through integration of volunteer efforts with other corporate community investment activities; and,
- are more likely to increase their level of support for employee volunteerism in the coming year.

In summary, findings suggest a complicated milieu within which to administer a volunteerism program given the limited amount of staff time devoted to corporate volunteerism, the lack of clear corporate policy relative to these programs and the dispersion of authority for approving budgets and activities. These challenges are shown by the data to be, in part, offset by the fact that many staff running corporate volunteerism programs are knowledgeable about the nonprofit sector (through their additional charitable giving duties) and are resourceful in augmenting their staff limitations (through committees and consultants).

PROGRAM DESIGN

This section begins by examining the *Program Goals* of corporate employee volunteer programs. It delves into the motivations for starting these programs and for selecting volunteer sites, then looks into how these intentions are translated into actual *Services and Opportunities for Volunteers*. These findings provide an overview of why and how Chicago-area corporate volunteerism programs are designed.

Program Goals

Companies describe three distinct motivations for starting volunteerism programs: an interest in their employees, the community and/or the corporation. In some cases all three motivations seem to be operating in a mixture of internal and external concerns. In only one instance was concern for "the community" singularly cited.

Most frequently reported (54% of respondents) are motivations related to employees. Comments include opinions that the program is: "a benefit to employees," "an opportunity for employees," and "good for employees." Fewer, but still a significant number of respondents

TABLE 2

Competing Pressures in Selecting Volunteer Sites

IF YOU THOUGHT A POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER PROJECT...	Yes	No	Not Sure
...was valuable but was not with an agency to which the company made charitable cash gifts, would you be likely to send volunteers?	67%	13%	20%
...was socially valuable but could use only a few employees, would you be likely to place volunteers in this project?	67%	13%	20%
...could accommodate a lot of employees but was located in a community where you had few customers, would you be likely to sponsor this project?	40%	33%	27%

(46%) report motivations centered on corporate image and/or objectives, such as a desire to "promote the company as an employer of choice," "enhance business contacts," or to be known as a "good corporate citizen." Much less frequently mentioned (31% of respondents) are the needs of the community.

The emphasis on service to the community picks up, however, when asked "What three words might be placed in a press release to describe why your company has a volunteer program?" In this context (where respondents are asked not just what their motivations may be, but what they might *publicly claim* their motivations to be) "community involvement" and "partnerships" are cited by nearly everyone. In addition, one new motivation surfaces. Here, for the first time, respondents discuss corporate volunteerism in terms of relationships with "customers."

The importance, for many businesses, of connecting employee volunteer programs to their customer base was reconfirmed through a further question. When respondents were asked if they would be likely to sponsor an employee volunteer project if it could accommodate a lot of employees but was located in a community where they had few customers, 33% percent said "no," 27% were "unsure," and 40% said "yes." In other words, for at least one-third (and possibly as many as 60%) of respondents the potential for enhancing customer relations is a factor weighed in making decisions about their corporate volunteer program.

It is interesting to compare these views with other circumstances that might impact the selection of a volunteer site. Table 2 details opinions about some of the pragmatic choices faced by volunteer administrators and how they predict competing pressures might be weighed in selecting volunteer sites.

Findings here suggest that many factors have the potential for entering into the decision to sponsor a new volunteer project, including the social value of a project and the capacity to accommodate a lot of employees. But one factor that appears less influential to Chicago-area companies than it may be to other businesses across the country, is the potential for using volunteer programs to leverage philanthropic giving. While The Points of Light Foundation found in its 1999 survey that "many U.S. companies use their volunteer efforts strategically to reinforce the value of funds given through corporate philanthropy," 67% of Chicago-area companies report that they are willing to send volunteers to a site even if the agency is not one to which the company makes charitable cash gifts.

In addition to the choices portrayed in Table 2, most participants (87%) report that "day and time of a service activity" is of concern. As shown in Table 3, business objectives weigh least heavily in selecting a new project. By contrast, employee preferences are "very important" to about three-quarters of administrators. This claim seems in keeping with the aforementioned "interest in employees" as a motivation for starting a corporate volunteerism program. In addition, everyone considers community and agency needs

TABLE 3

Importance of Factors in Choosing a New Project

	VERY IMPORTANT 10	5	NOT IMPORTANT 0
Day and time of service activity	87%	13%	0%
Employee preferences	73%	20%	7%
Community needs	60%	40%	0%
Location of volunteer site	60%	27%	13%
Type of tasks required of volunteers	60%	27%	13%
Agency needs	53%	47%	0%
Business objectives	47%	40%	13%

as having some importance.

The interest in selecting socially valuable projects portrayed in Table 2 seems consistent with the further interest portrayed in Table 3 for community and agency needs. Findings do, however, point to a curious inconsistency between administrators' beliefs and actual practices for designing employee volunteerism programs. For although the majority of administrators report that community and agency needs are "very important" in selecting projects, in reality, employees' needs are solicited and considered with greater regularity. This was seen in the section on *Staffing*, when nary a respondent mentioned community or agency representatives as providing input into the design of their program (only employees and senior management were indicated). And it is shown again in the upcoming section on *Services and Opportunities for Volunteers*, where one learns that the majority of corporations organize episodic volunteer activities that require large groups of volunteers; a way of organizing volunteerism that is convenient for many employers, although it is suitable to only a limited range of nonprofits or community needs.

Services and Opportunities for Volunteers

Among the sample studied, all respondents offer employees a chance to volunteer at one or more nonprofits *pre-selected* by the company. This is handled in a variety of ways.

Less than half (47%) organize activities that operate continuously at pre-selected sites, while nearly everyone arranges some special event at a pre-selected site. Of those arranging a special event, seventy-three percent do this several times per year at a pre-selected site(s), while twenty-seven percent concentrate efforts into one Volunteer Day annually. For respondents in this study (as mentioned just above), the corporate effort for arranging placements, for the overwhelming majority, is oriented toward activities that can be handled episodically by groups.

The unanimity on the point of offering involvement at pre-selected sites is striking. It also suggests an informed or intuitively insightful strategy for offsetting one of the biggest challenges to volunteer recruitment: the fact that many people's failure to volunteer results from not being asked to serve (Saxon-Harrold). By preselecting sites, corporate programs may be overcoming the obstacle that many potential volunteers simply do not know where their service is needed.

Apart from this one commonality however, diversity of approach toward administration and program structure appears to be the most apt descriptor of the corporate volunteerism programs that participated in this study. The lack of uniformity is surprising. A more likely situation would be to find isomorphism among programs since 40% of respon-

dents report that their best external source of ideas for their employee volunteer programs are other company volunteer program administrators. Among the population sampled, the data shows that administrators know one another, share ideas and feel comfortable replicating elements of one another's programs.

Table 4 gives more details on this, indicating that there are some services common to most programs, although only the offering of opportunities at pre-selected sites is universal. Two services organized by the majority of corporate volunteer administrators are: (1) offering employees information about nonprofits in general, which may be used independently by employees in picking a site for volunteering; and, (2) offering placement services on nonprofit boards of directors. It is also of note that four-fifths of respondents encourage employees to carry out volunteering in teams and an equal number report encouraging employees' family members to participate in company sponsored volunteer programs.

In addition to the services just portrayed, the opportunities attached to volunteering also vary among corporations.

TABLE 4

Variation in Services Provided to Employees

SERVICES OFFERED TO EMPLOYEES	PERCENT OF COMPANIES OFFERING THE SERVICE
Provides a chance for employees to volunteer at one or more nonprofits pre-selected by the company	100%
Encourages employees to carry out volunteering in teams	80%
Encourages employees' family members to participate in company sponsored volunteer programs	80%
Offers placement services on nonprofit Boards of Directors	60%
Provides information about nonprofits in general, which employees may use independently in picking a site for volunteering	53%

Differences may be found on two dimensions: (1) what type of incentive/reward is provided; and, (2) whether the incentive/reward is provided to all employees who volunteer, or, only to employees who volunteer at an agency pre-selected by the company. Table 5 provides details on this circumstance.

The data shows that a broad range of incentives/rewards (e.g., recognition at a company event, credit for volunteering in employee performance evaluations) are offered to a broad range of employees. In fact, if an incentive/reward is offered, it is much more likely to be provided to all employees who volunteer than exclusively being offered to those volunteering at pre-selected sites. This suggests that, for companies running volunteerism programs, there is a generalized interest in encouraging employee volunteer efforts, rather than a narrow interest in channeling employees exclusively into activities pre-selected by the company. Given that all respondents indicate that they offer the chance to volunteer at pre-selected sites, this is particularly interesting. Clearly the concept of volunteerism remains a focus for most Chicago-area companies, rather than the more narrow possibility of promoting a particular cause or agency.

The one exception to this stance shows up when looking at release time for employees. In this case, employees are far more likely to be permitted time off during normal business hours if the company has pre-selected the volunteer site. This is a reminder of the fact, pointed out in Table 3, that for most administrators "day and time of service activity" is a very important factor in choosing a new project. Agency representatives may wish to note that this points to a clear advantage for nonprofits making it onto a pre-selected list, should they desire volunteers Monday through Friday, during the day.

In summary, one sees that although impacting customers and the community are both desirable goals for volunteerism programs, employee preferences are a more critical concern. In keeping with

TABLE 5

Incentives/Rewards Offered to Employees

	YES, IF EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERS AT AN AGENCY PRE-SELECTED BY THE COMPANY	YES, FOR ALL EMPLOYEES WHO VOLUNTEER
Release time for employees to volunteer during normal business hours	53%	7%
Cash grants to nonprofits where employees volunteer	27%	73%
Recognition of volunteers by the company (at an event or in a publication)	27%	60%
In-kind donations to nonprofits where employees volunteer	27%	46%
Credit fo volunteers in performance evaluations (should this be volunteering)	13%	20%
Enhanced salary or bonus pay for volunteers	0%	0%

this priority, the data shows that programs are designed to offer a range of incentives and rewards to nurture employee participation. This is consistent with earlier reports on budget expenditures which were shown to also pay attention to encouraging employee participation (versus nonprofit participation which is only minimally funded). Having learned this much about the "why" and "how" of corporate volunteerism programs, one naturally then wonders about the results of these efforts.

PROGRAM RESULTS

Attitudes and practices regarding selection of projects, as described in previous sections, can be compared to administrators' beliefs about the importance of different types of results to their company, as well as to claims in the literature about what businesses could accomplish through employee volunteerism.

The perceived benefits of employee volunteerism seem to be wide ranging. For example, one study reporting upon inclusion of family members in corporate volunteerism programs suggests that improved corporate image in the community, enhanced employee morale in the workplace and employee feelings of well-being may all be achieved through such programs (McKaughan). Another study contrasts the potential for tangible and intangible benefits, suggesting that the latter are more achievable although tougher to assess. Nonetheless, as the authors of this second study point out, "in today's environment of increased accountability, it will be important for volunteer programs to be able to demonstrate their value in concrete ways" (Rostami and Hall).

In its publication *Evaluating Corporate Volunteer Programs,* Volunteer—The National Center argues against assumptions that volunteering is "doing good," high on warm fuzzies, low on results, but to be valued for its own sake whether or not there is a concrete outcome. It asserts that volunteering is a form of work, albeit unpaid, and may therefore be judged as are other productivity activities: on the basis of the effectiveness of the process, the results achieved versus those expected, and on the impact upon those involved.

This section examines desired *Outcomes* for the corporate volunteerism programs that participated in the Chicago-area survey, looking also at the ways in which these results are measured through *Evaluation.*

Outcomes

Table 6 shows that the four most frequently cited "very important" results desired from corporate volunteerism programs are: helping needy people in the community (93%), having employees experience teamwork (93%), boosting employee morale (87%) and giving nonprofits assistance (80%). Reinforcing corporate culture and building relationships with nonprofits are each "very important" to nearly three-fourths of respondents. And, in each of these instances, almost all respondents consider each of these results as being at least somewhat important.

In general though, company centered objectives (such as creating positive publicity or increasing exposure to potential customers) are of importance to fewer respondents than are employee centered results, or, community and nonprofit centered results. While this seems consistent with earlier findings regarding the importance of meeting employees' preferences, this also points to a recurring incongruity in that such a high percentage of respondents claim to value achieving results for needy people and nonprofits, but only 50-60% of respondents focus upon community and agency needs when selecting new projects.

This portrait is especially interesting when compared to findings of the two national American studies that sought to understand this same subject (Wild; The Points of Light Foundation). Here the authors report that during the decade in the 1990s between their two surveys, there was a significant increase in the utilization of employee volunteer programs to "support core business functions." Included within this concept of support for core business functions was the idea of developing employee skills, an outcome of corporate volunteerism which was found to be valued by an identical 60% among those studied in both the national and the Chicago-area studies.

Findings of these studies are, however, divergent on a different and critical point. Far fewer Chicago-area companies cur-

TABLE 6

Importance of Possible Results

	VERY IMPORTANT 10	5	NOT IMPORTANT 0	NO RESPONSE
COMMUNITY AND NONPROFIT CENTERED RESULTS				
Needy people in the community are helped	93%	7%	0%	0%
Nonprofits get our assistance	80%	20%	0%	0%
Relationships are built with nonprofits	73%	27%	0%	0%
Community problems are solved	67%	33%	0%	0%
EMPLOYEE CENTERED RESULTS				
Teamwork is experienced among employees	93%	7%	0%	0%
Employee morale is boosted	87%	0%	0%	13%
Employees' individual skills are developed	60%	40%	0%	0%
Employee self-confidence is enhanced	60%	40%	0%	0%
COMPANY CENTERED RESULTS				
Corporate culture is reinforced	73%	20%	7%	0%
Company cohesiveness is encouraged	67%	33%	0%	0%
Positive publicity is created for the company	67%	33%	0%	0%
Exposure is increased to potential customers	46%	40%	13%	0%

rently report an effort to utilize their employee volunteer program to fulfill their company's public relations goals (67% locally as compared to 83% identified in the national sample). Perhaps this difference results from real distinctions between the priorities of companies in different geographic regions. It is also possible though that these differences will evaporate over time and that local companies will in the future behave more like the national profile, given The Points of Light Foundation's strong conviction that there is an increasing emphasis on meeting company business goals through employee volunteerism. Such a forecast would comport with the findings of an IBM sponsored study (cited by Wild) which suggests that the majority of businesses now connect their volunteer programs to factors "directly affecting profitability" (Lewin).

This picture is further elaborated when data is examined regarding how Chicago-area administrators perceive their companies' CEOs to be viewing these programs, individuals whose support is critical for successful corporate volunteerism (Mathieu).

When asked "What might the CEO of your company wish to increase in your volunteer program?" the most frequent response (67%) was "external recognition of company-sponsored volunteer programs." A nearly equal number (60%) suggest that their CEO might wish to increase "effectiveness of volunteer activities in meeting community needs." It is important to bear in mind that this data records administrators' suppositions about their CEOs' views, rather than directly recording such opinions. Nonetheless, it tells us something about the experience and perceptions of those within a company regarding their volunteer program.

Table 7 shows the similarities and differences in what administrators believe should be increased in their volunteer programs versus what they imagine their CEO might wish to change. Notice the particularly large differences when it

TABLE 7

What CEOs Versus Administrators Might Wish to Increase in Their Volunteer Program

	CEO'S PRESUMED VIEW	ADMINISTRATOR'S VIEW
External recognition of company sponsored volunteer programs	67%	53%
Effectiveness of volunteer activities in meeting community needs	60%	40%
Senior management involvement	53%	67%
Relevance of company sponsored volunteer activities to business objectives	53%	27%
Quantity of hours and/or persons involved in company sponsored volunteering	47%	40%
Connection between employees' job skills and volunteer responsibilities	47%	20%
Diversity of types of agencies where employees volunteer	33%	13%
Quantity of hours and/or persons involved in volunteering generally	27%	20%
Hourly employees' involvement	20%	13%
Diversity of geographic locations for volunteer sites	20%	13%
Internal funding of program	7%	47%

comes to internal funding of the program, desire to connect company sponsored volunteer activities to business objectives, and, the potential for making a connection between employees' job skills and volunteer responsibilities.

Evaluation

Although 73% of respondents are willing to cite some "accomplishment" of their program, the data of this study suggests that the basis for these opinions is primarily hear-say.

For the most part, feedback on corporate volunteerism programs is received in an informal and ad hoc manner through "word of mouth," "phone calls," "letters," "personal contact," and e-mails." Two companies report supplementing this feedback by looking to media coverage of their activities for assessment of their programs.

Although one-third report that they receive feedback from both nonprofits and employees, evaluations are proactively solicited only from the employees and even this process is extremely limited. Two companies survey their employees regarding their experiences in volunteering but none do this with agencies or communities. When, and if, companies hear from volunteer sites the message offered seems to be a "thanks" rather than an evaluation of achievements or suggestion about future directions.

As a result, and in contrast to practices reported in The Points of Light Foundation's national survey, Chicago-area administrators seem to be aware in only a limited fashion of whether their goals and desired results are being transformed into actual achievements. When asked "How do you know what is accomplished in your employee volunteer program?" a fifth of the companies are unable to suggest any method of assessment. One respondent straightforwardly confides "evaluation is our weakest component, we have no concrete documentation."

When pushed a little further as to whether there is a process to "measure the results" of their employee volunteer program, 73% report that there is none. Ironically, many of those lacking a measurement process nonetheless report regularly establishing goals. And, significantly, of those who attempt to calculate accomplishments, more people report that they tabulate output (quantity of hours and volunteers) than impact (effect of volunteerism).

Given the paucity of information available, it is not surprising that only 53% of respondents make a formal report on the results of their employee volunteer program. Of those that do report, memos to senior managers within the company and notices in employee-wide forums (such as newsletters) are most commonly utilized.

Companies are, however, willing to discuss their programs externally. Forty percent report that they send out press releases on their corporate volunteerism and 33% speak publicly about their activities, although only one company includes information on their volunteerism program in their corporate annual report and none provide a report to their corporate board of directors.

Why, one wonders, in a corporate setting where results-oriented management is presumably the norm would so few programs evaluate their accomplishments. Sixty-seven percent indicate a "lack of personnel" as being a deterrent and 53% site a "lack of time." As shown in Table 8, these findings are a reminder that corporate volunteer programs are run by staff who carry many additional duties.

It should, however, also be noted that for 40% of respondents "measurement isn't a priority." This finding stands out. For, while one might reasonably debate many elements of calculating and evaluating program results (e.g., the value of quantitative vs. qualitative data, the relative importance of various potential assessors, the indeterminate nature of this work), the fact that goals and results are not compared and aligned is contradictory to generally accepted management

TABLE 8

What makes measuring the outcomes of your program difficult?

FACTORS	RESPONDENTS
Lack of personnel	67%
Lack of time	53%
Knowledge of effective measurement practices	47%
Measurement isn't a priority	40%
Lack of defined or measurable objectives	40%
Lack of money	27%

principles and the practices of the majority of corporate employee volunteer programs (The Points of Light Foundation).

In summary, findings suggest that while Chicago-area administrators hold clear views about desired results for their employee volunteerism programs, these outcomes are not rigorously measured. This stands in contrast to the findings of a national study (The Points of Light Foundation) in which 70% of respondents report conducting both internal and external impact assessments of their corporate employee volunteerism program, assessing benefits to the company, to the community, to the employee and to the company's partnership with the community.

In commenting on the merit of evaluation, The Corporate Volunteer Coordinators' Council urges companies that, "To do a thorough job of assessing the results of the volunteer program, you need to look at the impact a volunteer has on the agency, the community and the problem being attacked; you need to consider changes that take place in the employee's morale, work performance, self-confidence; and you need to examine the merits of spending corporate resources on volunteerism vs. spending them on other kinds of social action programming. These things apply whether you're reviewing the work of one volunteer or 100." Despite the merit of this guidance and the good intentions of local administrators, the staffing and budgetary realities unveiled through this study suggest that such a process is unlikely to be implemented in the near term among many Chicago-area employee volunteerism programs.

CONCLUSIONS

This study complements and elaborates upon themes about corporate employee volunteerism programs raised in other literature on the subject. Among the topics for which confirming evidence was found are: a hope that goodwill will be generated through these programs and a desire to meet the needs of the community. The most recurring emphasis, however, is on serving employees through these programs.

Lessons may be gleaned by both corporations promoting employee volunteerism and by those nonprofits and communities hoping to work with these programs. Tying the findings together, three points stand out:

1. Administrators of corporate volunteerism programs face many challenges in running their programs given the limited amount of staff time devoted to this function, the lack of clear corporate policy relative to these programs and the dispersion of authority for approving budgets and activities. One consequence of this circumstance is that program accomplishments are rarely evaluated or compared to desired results. Another consequence, perhaps confusing to outsiders, is that many different individuals within a company may appear to be involved in overseeing corporate volunteerism while no one seems to have full time responsibility for the function.
2. Although the majority of corporate volunteerism administrators report that community and agency needs are "very important" in selecting projects and in attaining desired results, in reality, employees' needs are solicited and considered with greater regularity. Given these priorities, companies might wish to consider ways to

increase their attention to community and agency interests. Meanwhile, nonprofits will need to recognize the priorities and constraints of their partners.

3. Promoting volunteerism broadly remains the primary focus for most companies (rather than promotion of a particular cause or agency), despite the universal practice of organizing volunteer events at pre-selected sites. While there may be some advantages to nonprofits which make it onto a company's pre-selected list, corporations may more importantly be viewed as a valuable resource for locating and soliciting the volunteers which so many agencies find difficult to obtain.

"In terms of its prevalence, visibility, and monetary value, corporate volunteerism may be the largest and most popular form of non-cash philanthropy," suggest Independent Sector authors Plinio and Scanlon. But if, as they urge, companies are to go beyond the satisfaction of being "do gooders" they need to shape volunteer programs to result in "good doers." Hopefully the findings of this study will assist in that process, assuring that volunteer hours really count for the stakeholders involved.

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