



WEST VIRGINIA
Business Volunteer Council

2009 Business Volunteer Institute

Business Volunteerism World Café Summary

July 15, 2009
Charleston, West Virginia

Through the World Café process Business Volunteer Institute participants explored the possibility of building a better West Virginia through employee volunteerism. The World Café is an innovative yet simple process to discover new insights into employee volunteerism. Anne Martin of SweetBriar led participants in this networking activity.

Through orchestrated discussions, participants moved between groups to harvest the wisdom of the entire group. Five groups of four individuals participated in this process. Questions were intended to focus the conversation on creating/improving company-sponsored employee volunteer programs. These questions were designed to further learning through real networking. After each set of questions, the participants dispersed throughout the room to form new groups of four.

Summarizing these multiple conversations may not accurately reflect the complexity and diversity of the participant's thoughts. Participant's thoughts have been captured in a bulleted list format. Notes have been taken directly from participants notes and may not directly reflect their intentions. Harvesting out responses are listed at the end of the report.

1 - What is important to you about employee volunteerism, and why does it matter to your company?

Personal Importance

- It is the right thing to do
- People want to help and give back – warm and fuzzes
- Networking opportunities
- Stimulation
- Self satisfaction
- Meeting new people – icebreakers
- Personal touch – we are our community
- Energy, motivation, moral
- Builds skills
- Acknowledge employees other skills
- Part of contributing to the community
- Community development
- Would not work for a company who does not value service
- Employees want more then the traditional career path
- Going green
- Learning about different opportunities
- Recognize accomplishments/volunteers
- Awareness of opportunities/match for volunteerism
- Natural

Company Importance

- Value of volunteerism for employees
- Good for business
- Positive exposure for the company
- Show organization/company's human face
- To gain community awareness and gain goodwill along with promoting our organization
- Build company name in community
- Public image
- Team building with those who would not normally volunteer - helps build business
- Volunteering is natural
- Recruitment
- Mural, support, encouragement – intangible
- Build skills and relationship with other in our community
- Builds relationships
- Part of building community relationships
- Moral and team building
- Used to attract younger business members
- Develop collaborations
- Create awareness
- President and management support
- Volunteerism – attract younger people into the culture of giving back where they live and work
- Allow employee input in selection of volunteer focus
- Passionate about what you do – excitement spreads

Additional Comments

- Communication is a critical component
- Has to be organized
- Plan – if it requires a budget, plan early
- People want to recognize volunteers and be recognized
- Gratitude to employees for volunteering time – name in lights, rewards system
- Newsletters – update, acknowledge accomplishments

- Use the BVC to make the connections work among small nonprofits who need volunteers and employee's looking for ways to be involved in the company
- Important to thank employees for their volunteer time
- Set an example – if you need volunteers, your employees should also volunteer for other organizations

2 - What are the opportunities/dilemmas with employee volunteer program? What do we still need to learn about employee volunteer programs?

Opportunities

- Networking
- Teamwork
- Create connections
- Create a sense of ownership
- Incentives for involvement
- Build sense of community
- Build moral
- Awareness
- What is available
- Advertisement and outreach
- Teamwork
- Networking
- Employee engagement
- Agency awareness
- Small nonprofits
- Small events
- Support employees passion
- Stress relief
- Work/life balance
- Personal satisfaction/pride
- Getting outside your circle
- Recognition week attended by dignitaries
- Encourage employees to volunteer on their own time
- Volunteerism is recognized by the company making a donation to the person's charity
- Emphasize programs and community support
- Get everyone involved in the projects
- Allowing employees opportunities to select volunteer effort and buy into the concept of volunteerism
- Participate in both large and small community service projects
- Keep focused on the benefits of volunteerism
- Need to peruse leadership positions
- Make volunteerism a high priority just like income
- Employee empowerment

Dilemmas

- Time off
- Money
- Replacing volunteers as they retire
- Desire is not present in youth
- Senior management must buy in
- Work/life balance
- Engaging the younger generation
- Hard to make a program fit all ages
- Motivation
- Executive interest
- Getting employees to see the need to volunteerism
- Time management
- Liability concerns
- Tailoring volunteer activities to meet the interest/skills of the participants
- Must change the mindset of employees so they understand the importance of volunteerism
- Meaningful volunteer activity selection
- Tailoring activity to the skills/interest of employees
- Getting the word out – spreading word about volunteer opportunities

3 - If the success of employee volunteer programs was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose?

- Volunteer success
- Budget/line item in companies
- Financial resources
- Timely organized meetings
- Empowering to employees
- Goal and opportunity
- Volunteer museum – showcase
- Having leadership volunteer
- Decide it is a priority
- Give people opportunity to be empowered
- Recognition dinner
- Give employees time on the clock
- Commit staff
- Create a position - volunteer coordinator
- Make it a goal
- Empowered employees
- Increase reading level of WV students
- Decrease dropout rates
- Increase recognition of volunteers
- Pride of place
- Build attitude of personal satisfaction is important as well as salary and perks
- Volunteerism should be part of our lives
- See it, see it through

4 - What's taking shape here? What are we hearing underneath the variety of opinions being expressed?

- No money to donate, but have people – team building
- Economic Downturn should promote volunteerism
- Volunteers should make it not for profit
- Lead by example from the top down
- Create awareness for the need
- Have a plan in place for “volunteers”
- Educate workforce of opportunities
- Changing the mind set of management
- Economic hardship as motivation
- Volunteering time to be available
- Team work – organized
- Empowerment of employees
- Acknowledgement
- Networking
- Need to celebrate volunteers
- Need to model/set expectations
- Gathering a pool of ideas
- What it could look like/how to be applied
- There are perks to volunteering
- Act as a resource/connection
- Help businesses be proactive
- Use opportunities to reach out to other groups
- Helps small organizations benefit from management

- Challenge
- Volunteering provides experience that helps in job searches
- Volunteering is important BUT we still have challenges implementing a culture of volunteerism
- There are valuable benefits to business when they support good community programs - better image, self satisfaction, and networking
- In the current economy we can give time if not money
- Volunteering is a way to boost morale

Business Volunteerism Harvesting Out

What is important about volunteerism...

- Volunteerism – attract younger people into the culture of giving back where they live and work
- Going green – what is corporations doing about going green?
- Not just the traditional career path employee wants more
- People want to recognize volunteers and be recognized
- Value of volunteerism for employees
- Teamwork
- Has to be organized
- Networking opportunities
- Good/Right thing to do
- Builds moral and skills

Opportunities/dilemmas...

- Educating the younger generations to value volunteerism since it has not been instilled throughout their life
- Selection of the volunteer activity
 - Meaningful
 - Tailoring to interests/skills of employee
 - Getting word out there is a need for volunteerism – organizational marketing
 - Finding the time
 - Getting outside your circle
 - Natural

What bold steps might we choose...

- Hiring a volunteer coordinator
- Plan well ahead (for budget too)
- Address issues in WV to
 - Increase reading rates
 - Decrease dropout rates
 - Increase pride in place
- Making time = money
- Increase volunteer recognition by having volunteer museum
- Give time on the clock to volunteers
- Volunteer clearinghouse
- BVC is a resource and volunteerwv.org
- Part of promotion and evaluation – part of career path
- Empowering the employees to have input in volunteer activities

What's taking shape here...

- Networking
- Lead by example
- Create awareness for the need
- Buy in of management

- Celebrate volunteerism
- Good leader is a servant
- Must plan
- Good for business and community

What conversations started today can...

- Start bigger than planned – don't do the little stuff do the big
- Get to know the organizations you want to support. Sell the volunteer job by promoting or talking up the skills needed
- See it, see it through
- Current economy equals great opportunity to promote volunteerism and in-kind
- Lots of new contact and networking

Summary of Findings

Through the World Café process we learned that companies in West Virginia support volunteerism for both personal and professional reasons. Volunteerism provides positive benefits to business by increasing employee morale, team building, as well as developing skills and relationships. Companies also see positive public image benefits from volunteerism.

Participants in the World Café process experience many opportunities/dilemmas with their employee volunteer programs. Employee volunteerism provides networking and teamwork opportunities. Also, volunteerism provides personal satisfaction to employees, which allows them to maintain a positive work/life balance. However, all situations come with challenges. Companies find it difficult to provide their employees with time off to volunteer. It is also difficult for companies to tailor activities to meet the interest/skills of all their employees.

As the country faces serious economic challenges, West Virginia companies feel it is important to give back to their community. Through this process, participants had an opportunity to network with like-minded business professionals that support volunteerism. Participants feel it is important to positively affect the community where they live and work.