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Scaling and Deepening Global Impact through Service

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How can companies with a multinational presence effectively scale and deepen their volunteer engagement across their global footprint? Through a series of Learning Labs in 2014, Points of Light's Corporate Service Council (CSC) explored this topic further. More than twenty global companies and organizations participated in the Labs as contributors and learners, including Citi, Hilton Worldwide, Disney, GE, GlaxoSmithKline, HP, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and LBG Associates.

Through these Labs, we identified the following overarching recommendations to help employee volunteer program (EVP) leaders effectively scale and deepen their global programs:

- **Identify drivers** for your global volunteer program, including business, employee and social goals. Keep these goals in mind during all stages of the program, from design, to implementation, to evaluation.

- **Be sensitive to cultural nuances** around volunteerism, both within a region and within a company's organizational culture. Tailor communications and program design appropriately.

- **Challenge assumptions and your own cultural biases** by identifying local informants who can teach you about their culture and how volunteering is perceived. Put a priority on sharing experiences and building learning throughout the system.

- **Build a network of champions** to serve as front-line leaders for the program. **Use volunteer committees and councils** to help operationalize and localize global strategies. GSK has established a global network of PULSE Hubs that manage local community engagement programs in their own culture and language. These local Hubs have allowed PULSE to grow and be more flexible in diversifying employee participation and reaching a wider employee base. Employees who are passionate about volunteerism can become Hub leads and champion the PULSE program.

> "Be globally strategic but locally relevant."
> - Janine Rouson, Director of Global Engagement, GE

- **Be flexible about how you operationalize global priorities.** Adapt your volunteer programs to the needs of local communities.

Additional findings and takeaways from the Learning Lab series are summarized in this brief.

Identify Specific Goals and Drivers to Scale Global Volunteer Programs

Leaders of global volunteer programs agree that the starting point for success is answering the following questions:

- Why is the company investing in building out a global volunteer program?
- What are the goals most important to the company?
- How does a volunteer program help the company achieve those goals?

The answers to these questions become the program drivers. Clarifying these priorities and creating the right story can help EVP leaders create a strong foundation from which they can later scale their program, especially in the early stages as they are socializing it and gaining buy-in.

Examples of drivers for global volunteer programs are:

- **Enhancing Philanthropy**: Motivated by the struggling global economy, **Citi Foundation** looked for ways to contribute more than financial investments. This led to the emergence of their "More than Philanthropy" approach, a process of combining business resources and people to enhance their philanthropic investments and improve communities.

- **Addressing a Social Issue**: **Hilton Worldwide** set out to address the global youth unemployment crisis and build the next generation of leaders. Recognizing that the travel and tourism industry offers career opportunities for youth, the company created its Careers@Hilton Live program, which aims to raise the profile of hospitality as a career choice. Careers@HiltonLive meets both a social and business need for talent acquisition.

- **Improving Corporate Citizenship**: Disney has aligned its brand, mission and core strategy with its global volunteer program to drive success. With a well-established citizenship platform, the company can clearly communicate its volunteer program's objective of promoting the happiness and well-being of kids and families.

Understand How Culture Affects Global Volunteer Programs

A variety of factors affect the way global volunteer programs are designed and implemented, including availability of resources, the nature of the business, the makeup of the workforce and community needs. EVP leaders identified regional and organizational culture as other important factors.

Consider this:

- A company's corporate culture may influence the policy and design of a formal EVP created at headquarters. However, **there is a constant tension between corporate HQ culture and a "canteen culture,"** or the informal rules and behaviors of regional offices, which can impact employee engagement and participation.

- Cultural differences in communities in which global companies operate can also influence EVP success. For example, the use of appropriate colors, images and language when branding and promoting a program can help engage employees and nonprofit partners. Understanding the value societies place on individualism and collectivism, the roles of the government and the private sector, and personal space versus work space are also important factors.

Examples of cultural nuances around corporate volunteerism are:

Latin America

- Employee volunteerism emerged in the region approximately 15 years ago, as multinational companies established EVPs. GE and LBG Associates have found that Mexico and Brazil have the greatest number of local companies with volunteer programs.
- There is a regional emphasis of volunteerism on social justice and change, and empowering volunteers and those being served.
- Volunteer programs often support education, children's rights, child labor and malnutrition.
- EVP challenges include feelings of skepticism toward corporate volunteering, crime and violence that deter employee participation, difficulty getting internal buy-in, especially from HR departments, and the wide variety of needs between urban and rural areas.
- Micro-volunteering can also be difficult due to language issues and the lack of locally relevant opportunities.

Europe

- Corporate volunteerism is growing in Europe. However, there is a wide variety of regional differences. Volunteerism is shaped by each country's unique history, traditions and religion.
- Volunteering is viewed more as a private activity than something one does with one's company. Remember this when considering what type of volunteer hours you will track and report for your EVP—will you count only "company sponsored volunteering" or volunteering an employee does on his or her own time?
- There is a general reluctance from NGOs to participate in corporate volunteering.

Asia Pacific

- Like Europe, the Asian Pacific region is culturally diverse with multiple sub regions.
- Corporate volunteerism is well developed in this region, with world-class programs established in countries such as Japan and Korea, and pro bono volunteerism gaining much popularity.
- **Over 2/3 of companies surveyed by GE and LBG Associates in Korea have EVPs** and employee participation in these programs is over 40 percent.

- The existence of many Western companies operating in China has also contributed to the growth of volunteer programs in that country.
- Volunteerism is group-focused and volunteer activities extend beyond work life into family life.
- There is a focus on young workers, and programs are built around "volunteer associations" that operate within the umbrella of the Chinese Communist Youth League.
- Companies are driven by numbers and targets. Employee volunteerism is seen as a way to enhance a company's reputation, which leads to a highly competitive volunteering environment.

Africa & Arab Nations

- Corporate volunteering is still in its infancy in the Middle East and Africa, with the exception of South Africa.
- In Africa, volunteering is viewed as a community- and family-oriented activity. It is very organic and local.
- The business case for corporate volunteering is not yet widely understood or accepted.
- Financial giving is more common than volunteering in Arab nations due to the Islamic belief of giving money to help those in need.
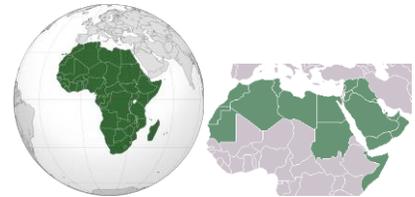
Conclusion

As companies realize the actual or potential impact of their employee volunteer programs, they look to expand these programs. One way of doing so is by growing the programs globally, like the companies discussed in this brief have done. However, global volunteer programs may face certain challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve the same success as domestic volunteer programs. Perhaps the most important obstacle is culture. Understanding the cultural differences related to volunteerism discussed in this document can assist EVP leaders scale and deepen their programs. Being globally strategic but locally relevant with your global volunteer program is an essential recommendation that emerged from this Learning Lab series.

In 2015, we look forward to sharing our next series of Learning Labs, which will address scaling and sustaining global volunteerism, inspiring broad participation in service, social impact measures, and effectively engaging and preparing employees and partners for service.

The Corporate Service Council

The Points of Light Corporate Service Council (CSC) is the premier global platform for advancing corporate volunteerism. Since its inception in 2005, the CSC has convened an elite group of companies to leverage the power of corporate volunteerism to create change in communities. CSC members include more than 75 of the world's largest and most successful companies. To learn more about the CSC, visit: www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/corporate-offerings/corporate-service-council or contact corporateinstitute@pointsoflight.org.

About This Brief

These findings were drawn from a series of Learning Labs held in 2014, featuring presentations of CSR and employee volunteer leaders and practitioners from Corporate Service Council member companies. Thanks to the following speakers for providing their expertise and support in making this series possible: Kenn Allen, IAVE; Linda Gornitsky, LBG Associates; Manu Juneja, GSK; Karen Kawanami, Disney; Janine Rouson, GE; Florencia Spangaro, Citi Foundation; Jennifer Silberman, Hilton Worldwide and Belen Urbaneja, Disney.

For additional resources on employee volunteerism, please visit: www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/resources