



# CSR without HR is PR: Connecting Employee Volunteerism with Human Resource Goals

September 2014

*These findings are 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: Caroline Barlerin, HP Social Impact; Lucy Darragh, Director, Corporate Citizenship and Liz Cerullo, Learning Consultant, Human Resources, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts; Eric Garvey, Community Relations, Target; Safiya Jones, Senior Manager, Community Affairs, Cbeyond; Cheryl Naja, Director of Pro Bono & Community Service, Alston & Bird LLP; Matthew Nelson, Corporate VP of Employee Engagement, New York Life; Jai Rogers, Vice President, Business and Community Development, Delta Community Credit Union and Andy Savitz, Sustainable Business Strategies.*

## Connecting Employee Volunteerism with Human Resource Goals

How can volunteerism help you build stronger relationships with your employees from their first interview to retirement? Through a series of Learning Labs in 2014, Points of Light's Corporate Service Council (CSC) uncovered strategies and best practices to enhance recruitment efforts, boost morale and engagement, and provide talent development through employee volunteerism. More than 30 CSC companies participated in the Labs as contributors and learners. National and regional companies like Target, HP, Cbeyond (recently acquired by Birch Communications), New York Life, Delta Community Credit Union, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and nationally-recognized business strategist and author Andy Savitz shared their insights and best practices.

Through these Learning Labs, we discovered that there are three key drivers to effectively connect employee volunteer programs (EVPs) with HR goals:

1. **Partner with key internal stakeholders, especially HR**, to provide service opportunities throughout an employee's life cycle at work.
2. **Instill a culture of volunteerism** by structuring your EVP, setting clear goals and policies, communicating those internally and externally, and gaining support from leadership at all levels in the organization.
3. **Measure how service programs affect HR goals** to demonstrate impact and success.



*CSR without HR is PR.*

- Andrew Savitz, author of *The Triple Bottom Line: How Today's Best-Run Companies Are Achieving Economic, Social and Environmental Success—and How You Can Too*

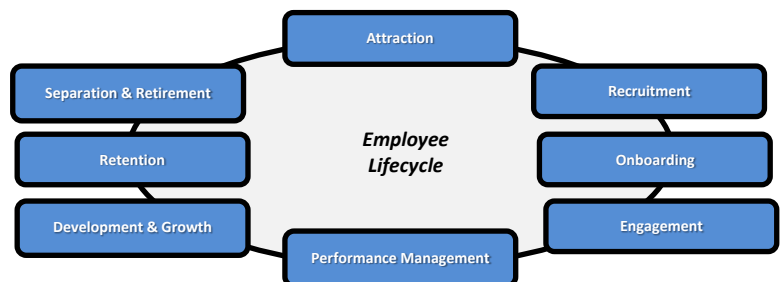
Additional findings and takeaways from the Learning Lab series are summarized in this brief.

### Connecting Service to HR Goals throughout the Employee Life Cycle

To drive business value, partner with your HR department to connect service opportunities to all stages of the employee life cycle.

*Connect service to recruitment, talent acquisition and onboarding*

- **Providing volunteer opportunities early in the employee lifecycle is an effective recruitment strategy**, especially with Millennials, who often seek employer-sponsored community involvement. According to the [2014 Millennial Impact Report](#), a third of Millennials said that their companies' volunteer policies



# CSC Learning Lab Brief

affected their decision to apply for a job and 55% said that such policies played into their decision to accept an offer.

- Engage prospective and new employees in service to introduce them to volunteerism and your organizational culture.
- At **Cbeyond**, a digital showcase of the company's community involvement is one of the first things prospective employees see when they walk into the lobby. Interviews include a discussion of community involvement to determine culture fit and can be a differentiating factor for candidates.
- **Target** engages new employees in a short volunteer activity on the first day of its new hire orientation.

## *Service can drive employee engagement*

Gallup's 2013 [State of the Global Workplace Report](#) shows that organizations with engaged employees are more profitable and have more satisfied customers and employees. The report also shows that organizations struggle to engage their employees. Only 13% of employees in more than 140 countries worldwide are engaged in their jobs, or emotionally invested in and focused on creating value for their organizations every day. That leaves 87% of our global workforce disengaged. Volunteerism can help remedy this engagement gap—a [Rutger's University and Net Impact study](#) found that 45% of employees who volunteered through their employer were very satisfied with their jobs, compared to 30% who hadn't. Here's how companies have used volunteerism to support employee engagement efforts:

- Employee surveys at **Delta Community Credit Union** ensure that its EVP is tailored to employee passions so they feel supported in giving back to causes important to them.
- **HP has found that employees involved in its community engagement program are more engaged**, especially if they are the ones planning volunteer activities.
- At **New York Life**, employee surveys reveal that **different motivators lead corporate staff and field agents to volunteer**. Corporate staff are more social when it comes to volunteering, whereas field agents are more career-oriented. They tailor marketing and communications accordingly.



*Corporate staff are more social when it comes to volunteering, whereas field agents are more career-oriented.*

- Matthew Nelson, Corporate VP, Employee Engagement, New York Life

## *Utilize skills-based volunteering for talent development*

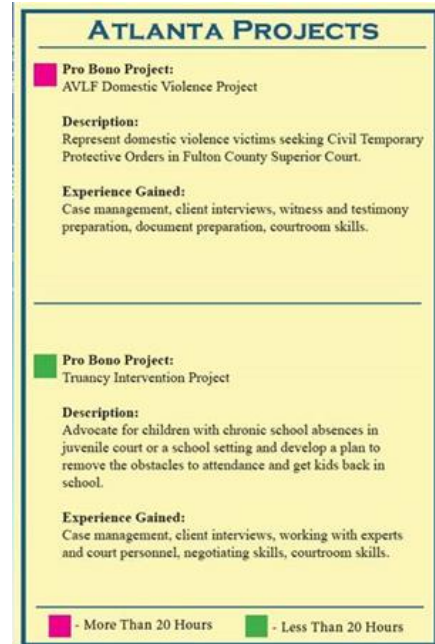
Skills-based volunteer (SBV) and pro bono programs can be powerful drivers of talent development.

- **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts** (BCBSMA) creates opportunities for associates to use existing skills in organizational and operational management, database development, management consulting and more to find solutions for the social sector. In 2012, **BCBSMA launched its SBV program as an intentional**

# CSC Learning Lab Brief

collaboration between its Corporate Citizenship and HR departments to deepen the company's support for community partners by lending the skills and expertise of its associates. The company's HR department especially values the program because it sees it as a vehicle for professional development and skill-building, as well as a way to promote employee engagement and networking within the business.

- Cbeyond's Community Affairs team enhances leadership development by **teaming up with the Learning & Development department to provide volunteer courses**. It also provides employees with opportunities to serve as community liaisons or team leads during volunteer projects.
- Because **Alston & Bird's** associates are motivated by opportunities for professional development, **the company clearly communicates the skills that associates will develop with pro bono assignments** (see figure at right).
- **Research conducted by Deloitte** for Points of Light in 2014 shows that **88% of companies said that SBV has a positive impact on managerial skills**, including relationship management, status reporting, and encouraging diverse points of view. **90% said that SBV positively impacts leadership skills**, including confidence, communication, problem solving and motivation.
- Models for using SBV as a driver of talent development include:
  - **Blending Learning**, an approach that mixes classroom training with leadership coaching and SBV projects for professional development for top performers;
  - **Dial "728,"** a model that offers short-term, full-time SBV assignments to top performers to address a social need;
  - **Prioritizing Service**, in which employees take a pay-cut and dial down from their regular duties to serve the community; and
  - **Service at the Core**, a model in which giving back is part of the organization's DNA, offering short or longer-term SBV opportunities to employees at all levels to build professional skills ("[Developing Leaders from Within: The Correlation Between Pro Bono and Skills-Based Volunteerism and Leadership Development](#)," Deloitte 2014).



## Engage retirees in service

Some companies find it valuable to extend volunteering into retirement to support a culture of service.

- **At New York Life, retired employees can still participate in company-sponsored volunteer opportunities.** "Because our employees spend many years at New York Life, it really is a family environment. It was natural to extend volunteer opportunities to our retirees so that we can continue that feeling of family," said Matthew Nelson, Corporate VP of Employee Engagement at New York Life.

He stated that there may be communication and administrative challenges to engage a retiree population, but that it is worth the effort to cultivate an organizational culture of service.

## Instilling a Culture of Volunteerism

Building an EVP with an effective plan, design and strong leadership involvement will help create a culture of service and enhance the impact of volunteering on HR goals.

- When creating a plan, identify a broad focus for your program. You can then **identify specific social, employee and business goals that are easy to communicate and measure**. With well-defined and specific goals, communications about your EVP can be clear, simple, and consistent.
- When Target committed to donate \$1 billion towards education and 700,000 annual volunteer hours by 2015, the Community Relations team went on a road show, visiting each business unit to share the importance of volunteering, specific program goals and what service could do for their team.

- When designing the EVP, **make tools and resources available to help employees** find, sign up for and track their volunteer activities. These tools can also be used to provide progress updates, share success stories, show impact and inform business decisions.



*It is important that leadership not only supports the concept of volunteerism in the organization, but they should also be driving it.*

- Eric Garvey, Community Relations, Target

- Target has partnered with VolunteerMatch.org to make volunteering accessible to employees and to track hours and activities. Through an internal portal, employees can find or create volunteer opportunities that fit their needs and that are in line with the company's goals.
- **Participation from leaders throughout the company** can be as important as executive support. [Engage middle managers](#) and executives in the design process of your volunteer program, and engage them in volunteer activities such as serving on nonprofit boards.

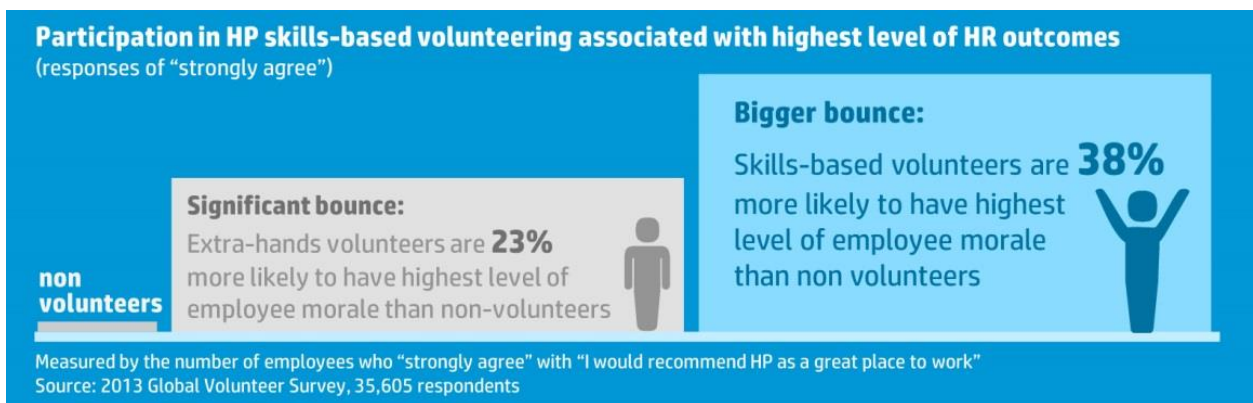
## Measuring the HR Impact of Volunteerism

Measuring how service programs impact HR goals is also important for demonstrating success. HP conducted research to measure the impact of community involvement on specific HR goals. Findings included:

- **Quasi-experimental research suggests that company-organized community involvement increases morale.** Low-morale employees who participated in company-organized community involvement opportunities had a 29% year-to-year increase in morale, compared to a 20% increase for those that did not participate.

# CSC Learning Lab Brief

- **Company pride, intention to stay and engagement are higher among employees who participate in company-organized community involvement activities.** Impact on these outcomes was even greater if employees were involved in organizing these activities rather than simply participating in them.
- **Skills-based volunteering appears to have an even greater effect than "hand on" or "extra hands" volunteers.** Skills-based volunteers in company-organized events were 38% more likely to have the highest level of employee morale than non-volunteers, while "hands on" or "extra hands" volunteers were 23% more likely to have the highest level of morale than non-volunteers (see figure below).



## Conclusion

Research has shown that volunteerism increases employee engagement and that organizations with engaged employees are more profitable and have more satisfied customers and employees. The business case for service is thus clear and compelling. This brief outlines how companies can connect their volunteer programs with HR goals to drive business value by partnering with HR, creating the appropriate infrastructure for an EVP and by measuring the impact that volunteering has on HR goals. Whether it's offering a service activity as part of new employee orientations, using pro bono projects as leadership development opportunities or engaging retirees in service, there are many ways companies can connect service with HR goals to drive value for their organization.

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



## Corporate Service Council

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](http://www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/corporate-offerings/corporate-service-council) or contact [corporateinstitute@pointsoflight.org](mailto:corporateinstitute@pointsoflight.org).

### About This Brief

These findings are 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: Caroline Barlerin, HP Social Impact; Lucy Darragh, Director, Corporate Citizenship and Liz Cerullo, Learning Consultant, Human Resources, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts; Eric Garvey, Community Relations, Target; Safiya Jones, Senior Manager, Community Affairs, Cbeyond; Cheryl Naja, Director of Pro Bono & Community Service, Alston & Bird LLP; Matthew Nelson, Corporate VP of Employee Engagement, New York Life; Jai Rogers, Vice President, Business and Community Development, Delta Community Credit Union and Andy Savitz, Sustainable Business Strategies.

For additional resources on employee volunteerism, please visit: [www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/resources](http://www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/resources)

The [Points of Light Corporate Institute](http://www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute) is the go-to resource for community-minded companies looking to build and expand effective employee volunteer programs. With our global network of 250 affiliates and a team of experts, we can help you create a customized volunteer program, engage your employees, learn best practices, network with other leading companies, and gain visibility for leadership and excellence.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/). To use or distribute this resource, please attribute publication to the Points of Light Corporate Institute. For more information, please visit [www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute](http://www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute) or contact The Points of Light Corporate Institute at [corporateinstitute@pointsoflight.org](mailto:corporateinstitute@pointsoflight.org).