



EMPLOYEES IN THE COMMUNITY

**Employee Volunteering:
Lessons from America**

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A TRIBUTE TO ROBBIE MATHERS

This report is dedicated to Robbie Mathers, who was tragically killed in a car accident in October 1991 at the age of 38.

As Business in the Community's Director of Campaigns, he played a crucial role in bringing businesses into closer contact with the communities in which they work. He was a driving force behind the employee volunteering movement and launched BITC's Employees in the Community campaign in June 1990. As part of this campaign he provided invaluable leadership and inspiration in developing the American visits which form the basis of this report.

His energy and enthusiasm will be missed by all those who worked with him.

1. Introduction

Employee Volunteering: Lessons from America has been prepared by Business in the Community (BITC) as part of its Employees in the Community campaign to increase the quality and extent of employee involvement with the community. BITC led study trips in March and June 1991 to assess employee volunteering programmes in eight American cities as well as to attend the National VOLUNTEER Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. A list of companies visited appears at the end of this booklet.

The report focuses on:

- the study tour's objectives;
- corporate programme structures and the social issues addressed;
- forms of voluntary sector support; and
- guidelines for practical action, supported by specific corporate examples.

The following companies and individuals have provided invaluable support without which this report would not have been possible:

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Light Foundation
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Roger Watkins, VSU, Home Office
Tim Prideaux, W H Smith
Hazel Cadenhead, BP
David Lumb, ASDA
Vicky Georgelakis, American Express
Trisha Pfaff, Action Resource Centre Leeds

Business in the Community is working to make the American study tour an annual campaigning event and will be leading a visit by 14 representatives from the business and the not-for-profit sector to Chicago and Minneapolis in June 1992.

4. Why companies get involved

The growth of employee volunteering programmes, both in the UK and America, has been enhanced by a general recognition that businesses and their staff can benefit from community involvement in a number of different ways:

- **Building corporate reputation.** A company's public image is a vital key to commercial success. Publicity about employee volunteering programmes can increase awareness of branded products and services as well as creating goodwill and loyalty among customers, shareholders, employees, national and local government, voluntary organisations and the community at large.

Fluor, a Los Angeles-based engineering and construction company, were thrilled to see a *Los Angeles Times* photograph of their staff helping to build a house for a homeless family. Their PR and advertising departments claimed they would have been unable to buy such coverage.

- **Building markets.** Businesses need healthy, thriving communities in which to trade. By investing time and energy in improving those communities, companies and their employees help protect and preserve the business environment, attract external investment and support the growth of new businesses.

- **Building people.** Employee volunteering programmes help establish a business as caring and socially committed, which in turn enhances

- **recruitment and retention** of better-educated, more highly motivated staff;
- **team-building** and employee morale;
- **development of employee skills,** experience and interests
- **transitions from work to retirement** for older employees

In addition, employee volunteering adds value to other corporate community involvement activities including payroll giving programmes.

5. What American companies do

Types of programme

American employee volunteering programmes can take a wide variety of forms but they usually contain one or both of two distinct elements.

The first involves direct placement of individual employees. A volunteering co-ordinator works with local community organisations or through the local Volunteer Center, often based within United Way, America's largest umbrella charity organisation which also administers payroll giving schemes. Volunteering opportunities which arise for individuals are communicated on an ad hoc basis through newsletters, bulletin boards, lift posters or an electronic mail system.

Direct placement is frequently used to place middle and senior managers on the Boards of voluntary organisations and is seen as an essential part of their career development.

The second form of volunteering comprises team projects involving groups of employees working in the community together, usually over a weekend or in the evenings. Examples include food drives, sponsored walks or practical community projects such as redecorating the offices of a charity.

This type of project can be effective in team building and is a useful means of launching employee volunteering programmes. Such activity is often linked with fundraising and can also be conducted in conjunction with other companies in the community.

Many businesses also operate matching funds schemes alongside their employee volunteering programmes, supporting the volunteering contribution with either grants or equipment. A small number of companies also award extra holiday time to employees in recognition of their voluntary activities.

Selecting social priorities

Corporate community involvement programmes are usually focused on areas of greatest interest to employees. These encompass major issues such as education, the environment and homelessness.

Support from the voluntary sector

Companies work together locally on Corporate Volunteer Councils (CVCs), meeting monthly to exchange best practice, discuss relevant issues and organise cross-company initiatives. These councils are often administered by a member of the Volunteer Center. Volunteering activity is also promoted through public recognition of outstanding achievements by volunteers.

President's Annual Points of Light Award

The President's Annual Points of Light Awards (formerly the President's Volunteer Action Awards) were created in 1982 to recognise the contributions of America's 98 million community service volunteers. The programme is co-sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation and ACTION, the federal domestic volunteer agency, in co-operation with The White House Office of National Service. Funding is provided by private corporations and foundations.

Specific activities in which American companies were engaged included:

Education/Youth at Risk

School partnerships
Mentor programmes
Junior achievement
Literacy programmes
Reading enjoyment programmes
Faculty/high school secondment of staff
Sponsoring publications for school children on substance abuse
Helping teachers use computer technology
Citycamps
Funding a science centre for schools
Readiness to Learn programmes
Providing places for teachers on company training programmes
Training employees as temporary teachers
Volunteer teachers - 2 hours a day, 4 days a term on company site
Funding research in universities
Fieldtrip helpers

Environmental programmes

Work with local zoos
Planting trees
Planting bulbs in parks
River bank clean ups
Park clean ups
Adopt-a-highway/freeway/neighbourhood
Adopt-a-highrise
Historical preservation
Providing recycling guides for community
Recycling paper in-house
Providing educational tools for children (colouring books, etc)

Homelessness

Working with local shelters
Manning breakfast/lunchtime/evening sessions
Clothes-drives
Shoe-drives
Mentoring
Adopting-a-homeless family
Family support

6. Lessons learned

In spite of the cultural differences between America and Britain, many useful lessons emerged during the course of the two American visits. While it was felt that some features of programmes could be transferred directly to the UK, others could be modified and even improved.

To plan and implement employee volunteering programmes successfully, a company should:

- **Identify issues which are relevant to employee interests.** The General Mills Volunteer Connection Program, established in 1982, matches employee skills and interests with community needs by:
 - Publishing a catalogue** of requests for volunteer help, a bi-monthly newsletter to recognise and recruit volunteers and a monthly "Volunteer Opportunities" sheet;
 - Conducting regular surveys** to determine organisations and activities for which employees wish to volunteer;
 - Maintaining a network** of employee area co-ordinators who match co-workers with not-for-profit organisations; and
 - Recruiting representatives** from all levels in every department to serve on a volunteer committee.
- The Allstate Helping Hands scheme, established by Allstate Insurance in 1976, involves approximately 75% of Allstate's 57,000 employees nationwide. Group volunteering activities are initiated and managed by employee committees led by Helping Hands co-ordinators. Team decision-making and management is designed to reflect the cultural backgrounds and interests of employees.

- **Identify issues which are relevant to business objectives.** In its December/January 1991 Corporate Philanthropy Report, James Parkel, Director of Office of Corporate Support Programs at IBM cited a number of business benefits derived from community involvement including boosting employee morale; addressing employee concerns, such as education; and building long-term consumer loyalty.
- **Determine appropriate forms of support.** Fannie Mae was established by the federal government in 1938 to provide mortgage funding assistance to homeowners. Its recently-developed Catch the WAVE (We Are Volunteer Employees) programme adds value to its ongoing fundraising activities.
- **Define a budget.** Like other corporate programmes, employee volunteering must be managed in a systematic, business-like fashion; however, official resources are frequently limited. Companies such as General Mills encourage their volunteering teams to secure help-in-kind or, alternatively, to tap into PR and marketing funds to produce newsletters, badges and publicity flyers.
- **Aim for long-term business benefits.** GrandMet Food Sector and its management "believe altruism not anchored to real business interests will have little lasting impact and may even evaporate over time". As a result, volunteering and grant-making programmes have been focused on tangible business interests. Pillsbury, for example, has chosen to target disadvantaged children and youth.

Allstate cites "social action," "employee development" and "community relations" as the principal benefits of its Helping Hands programme, noting that "few corporate investments offer as rich a return" as corporate volunteerism. Although volunteerism can produce short-term improvements in employee morale and motivation, companies should evaluate bottom-line effects in a long-term context.

- **Measure progress qualitatively and quantitatively.** Volunteers in the Department Store Division of Dayton Hudson must complete Project Evaluation Forms, quantifying numbers of participants and hours worked as well as identifying strengths and weaknesses of the volunteering activity.
- **Establish a management structure which promotes:**
 - **employee involvement in decision-making.** Helene Curtis promotes volunteering activities as a vehicle for enhancing employees' sense of control and reducing work-related stress.
 - **support from the top.** IBM encourages and recognises the community involvement of its employees, retirees and their families through its Fund for Community Service, a financial and product grant scheme for community service organisations. Grants are awarded to IBM applicants based on their degree of involvement with the external organisation as well as the extent to which the organisation's activities benefit the community. At IMCERA, volunteering is regarded as a privileged activity. The Community Programme is administered by a hand-picked committee approved by the personnel department and the Chairman,

who thanks each volunteer in a personal letter. Volunteers, regarded as company ambassadors, are given release time during work hours to participate in community projects.

- **two-way communication between management and volunteers.** Allstate encourages its volunteering co-ordinators to assess results by getting feedback from group leaders, supervisors and officers.
- **Market programmes internally and externally.** Union Planters National Bank of Memphis, Tennessee promotes its IMPACT (Individuals Making Progress And Changing Tomorrow) volunteering programme to employees through a quarterly in-house newsletter as well as merchandising products such as car license plates and diaries. It also incorporates IMPACT activities into its corporate advertising campaigns.
- **Involve the entire company "family".** GrandMet/Pillsbury encourages not only employees but retirees and families to participate in its REACH (Recognizing Employee Actions in Community Help) and Golden Ambassadors programmes. General Mills also targets company retirees through its Retirement PLUS (People Lending Unselfish Support) programme.
- **Recognise employee achievements, both in-house and publicly.** At Helene Curtis the Managing Director writes a letter to employees inviting them to participate in volunteering programmes. Allstate offers detailed guidance to its volunteering co-ordinators for developing media contacts and writing press releases. Both voluntary organisations (such as VOLUNTEER) and companies publicize employee achievements in corporate newsletters.

7. Companies visited in America

Atlanta	Community Fund Foundation	Dan Sweat
	Opti-World	Don Chapman
	IBM	Ann Cramer/Sybil Langley
	United Way	Renee Dixon
	Olympics	Linda Stephenson
	Georgia Power	Jean Crews/John Varner/Mary Ann Manley/
		Beth Armstrong
	Bell South	John Brooks/Jim Breedlove
	Rich's Department Stores	Carole Reiser
	Atlanta Zoo	Clare Richardson/Mary Beth McKay
	Pizza Hut	Jerry Buss
Boston	GTE Laboratories	
Chicago	Northern Trust Bank	Marj Lundy
	Sara Lee Corporation	Renee Alen
	Allstate Insurance	Marge Rogers
	Helene Curtis	Jenny Welch
	IMCERA	Colleen Keast
	Nutrasweet Co	Sheila Lapping
Los Angeles	ARCO	Myrna Plost
	IBM	Anne Patterson
	Security Pacific	Charmain Carillo/Chris White
	Carnation	Olga Torres
	Fluor	Susanne Esber/Jane Doseff
	Disneyland	Patty Randall
Memphis	South Central Bell	Shirley Burford
	Schering Plough	Junius Davidson
	Federal Express	Lisa Daniel
	Union Planter National Bank	Becky Davis
	International Paper	Tim Whalen
	Volunteer Center of Memphis	Virginia Patterson/Susan Wise
	National Association of Partners in Education	Barbara Russell
Minneapolis/St Paul	The Pillsbury Company	Ray Krause/Susan Enright
	Cray Research	Joanne Whiterabbit
	Soo Line Railroad Company	David Carlson
	Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services	Laura Lee Geraghty
	Honeywell	Ron Speed/Sharon Beatty/Pat Hoven
	General Mills	Connie Schilling/David Nasby
	Dayton Hudson	Debra Kitt/Penny Hunt/Chris Park
New York	American Express	Connie Higginson/Mary Beth Salerno
	The Conference Board	Anne Klepper
	Chase Manhattan	Kerry Yeager
	Metropolitan Life	Sheryl Miller/Steven Scicere/
		Blanche Lawton
	Time Warner	Tony Feay/Taiga Ermonsons
	IBM	Walt Smith/Jack Sabater
	Westchester Volunteer Center	Bill Straubinger
	Mayor's Volunteer Centre of New York	Winnie Brown/Susan Rothschild/ Violet
		Fore/Alex Rossides/Rose Klein
Washington	National Volunteer Center	Mimi Gallagher
	Points of Light Foundation	Pat Bland
	American Gas Association	Linda Wood
	National Alliance of Business	Bill Kohlberg/Fred Wentzel
	The Independent Sector	Virginia Hodgkinson
	Fannie Mae	Carole Smith
	Virginia Power	Deborah Thomkins/Shirley Kimble
	Bell Atlantic	Jeanne Klug
	Washington Gaslight	Licia Cardinale
	The World Bank	Yosef Hadar
	American Assoc. of School Administrators	Shirley Keller



BUSINESS in the COMMUNITY

Business in the Community (BITC) is the leading authority on the promotion of corporate community involvement. Our mission is to make community involvement a natural part of successful business practice and to increase the quality and extent of business activity in the community.

BITC is an independent organisation, financed by contributions from over 400 member companies with special project funding from both the private and public sectors. Supported by a network of eleven regional offices, BITC's personnel work closely with member companies to:

- promote business partnerships with local and central government, the voluntary sector and trade unions;
- collect and share examples of good practice;
- provide expert advice on developing and communicating community involvement programmes;
- achieve practical action by matching business resources with community needs;
- conduct a year-round programme of events to stimulate debate and develop new approaches in addressing community involvement issues.

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