



How to link employee volunteering with learning and development

What is Employee Volunteering (EV)?

Employee volunteering (EV) offers employees the opportunity to volunteer with community based organisations or projects with the support of their employer. This may be in a programme developed by their employer, focusing on a business relevant theme e.g. education, employability, health etc. or in the form of working hours allocated for individual volunteering. Typically employee volunteering takes place in work time, although on rare occasions may be outside of work time. Volunteers are paid at their standard rate and many companies choose to offer employees a number of days per year to volunteer (typically this ranges between 1 and 6 days pa.).

More recently there has been an increasing trend towards employers offering or promoting skills-based volunteering to their staff.¹ Five years ago, 99% of team challenges were physical e.g. gardening or painting. This has reduced to 60% with 40% of activities now being skills-based or individual.²

Companies have identified clear benefits in developing more focussed, skills-based volunteering programmes with regards to staff retention, recruitment of high calibre graduates and employee training opportunities. They now want to offer a range of volunteering opportunities to their staff; matching their talents and motivations to community needs.³

Linking EV and learning – hardwiring employee volunteering into your organisation

Community engagement is often used for learning & development purposes and can be a powerful tool to maximise staff potential and their contribution to a company's success. As a result, companies are taking a more joined-up approach to organisational learning, corporate responsibility and HR.

Recent research conducted by the CIPD “clearly highlights the ‘double benefit’ of volunteering and identifies ten key skills and behaviours employees can develop through these activities, such as coaching and mentoring, confidence, communication, team-building, self-awareness and creativity.”⁴

This BITC short guide identifies ten steps companies can take to bring together employee volunteering and learning and development. These steps have been identified from interviews with eight companies that have

¹ This refers both to employees utilising their professional skills when volunteering and employees gaining new expertise through volunteering.

² This trend has been identified from brokerage of BITC's programmes that engage circa 20,000 employee volunteers per quarter.

³ CSV, 'Employee Volunteering: Who is benefitting now?' (2013)

⁴ CIPD, 'Volunteering to Learn: Employee development through community action' (2014)





successfully gone through the process and are now reaping the rewards of greater integration of the two areas⁵.

Getting started

The process of hardwiring employee volunteering into your organisation as part of a personal development offer takes time. It should be considered alongside your company's overall approach to community investment. To find out more about best practice in community investment please visit our [website](#) or access the '[How to develop a community investment strategy guide](#)'.

Before you start the process, as with any new initiative, securing senior support is vital. It will accelerate progress and help to get middle managers on board.

"Steve Holliday, our CEO is passionate about this area and similarly our Global HR director, Mike Westcott, is a volunteer himself and fully understands and supports the business case and shared value benefits of skills based volunteering. We discussed the approach with the senior team at our twice yearly Community and Education Leadership team meeting and also discussed it with them in one to one meetings" Kate Van Der Plank, National Grid

1. Understand the business motivations behind linking EV and professional competencies

You may already have many EV activities in place, along with supporting evidence of the business benefits of your programme. Build on what you already have and explicitly reference learning and development outcomes. Below are some of the main reasons businesses decide to link EV with learning and development:

- To respond to a rise in the number of employees engaging in EV because they see it as a personal development opportunity
- To prove the internal value of EV to middle and senior managers
- To strengthen employees' awareness of ethical issues
- As part of a leadership development programme

Example: National Grid

Two of National Grid's Community Action objectives are to fully leverage the HR benefits from community investment and to maximise the social return on their involvement. Linking EV with skills development allows them to build business and leadership capabilities, engage employees, and strengthen connections within and across teams all whilst sharing their business skills and expertise with communities.

⁵ Companies interviewed: Hogan Lovells, John Laing, National Grid, Nationwide, PwC, Rolls-Royce, UBS and Zurich.





2. Work in partnership with either Corporate Responsibility, Human Resources and/or Learning & Development

Corporate Responsibility (CR), Human Resources (HR) and Learning and Development (L&D) teams need to collaborate for any new initiatives to be a success. Individuals across these teams will need to input into and validate outputs. Working together will utilise everybody's organisational knowledge and expertise to ensure the best possible outcome.

Examples

John Laing: The process undertaken at John Laing was led by HR as they developed a Critical Success Learning Plan for the company. Using the organisation's Leadership Management Programme (which had identified key competency areas) the CR team fed in to make sure that EV was included as a way to develop skills and competencies.

Hogan Lovells: Having the support of HR established a strong business case for EV, acting as a powerful tool to convince middle managers that volunteering is not a passing trend, but a permanent programme in the organisation that adds value.

3. Set clear objectives and a project plan

Setting objectives provides focus and enables companies to manage the project effectively. Between HR, L&D and CR make sure that you identify what you want to get from the process, build your hypothesis (if you are not already measuring the impact of EV on your employee's skills development) and define the stages, lead people and timeline.

Example: PwC

In 2013/14 PwC had 5,500 volunteers in its community programme. Historically, the organisation has had a strong focus on volunteering and there was a desire to understand the impact it was having on the business. A Senior Manager was allocated to the project and was in charge of developing and implementing a project plan and making sure that the objectives were met. The high-level business impacts identified were: skills (explored using PwC's competencies framework), engagement (including indicators such as motivation and wellbeing), personal networks (particularly important for a professional services firm) and awareness of environmental and social issues (because EV can expose individuals to situations and people they would not normally encounter).





4. Use existing frameworks as a base

If there is an existing competencies framework or leadership development plan, use them. First, identify the skills, competencies and behaviours that could be developed through your existing EV activities. For help with this, CIPD has developed a volunteering skills matrix showing key volunteering activities and development areas they identified as part of their recent research⁶. Secondly, map the competencies related to your EV activities to your existing competency framework; this will allow you to demonstrate the link between competencies and one or more volunteering opportunities.

Examples:

Hogan Lovells: Hogan Lovells used their existing competency framework as a base to develop their 'Community Investment Matrix'⁷. This matrix maps EV skills outcomes against their company values.

Rolls-Royce: Rolls-Royce structured their community action activities using an existing competency framework⁸ and set of values (Teamwork, Courage, Common Sense, Breadth, Influence and Delivery) to define which competencies are developed through skill-based volunteering activities. This competency framework was used to signpost opportunities for L&D, STEM ambassadors and high potential employees.

National Grid: National Grid had already identified which business skills and leadership qualities are needed throughout employees' journey from recruitment to retirement. The CR team used this existing framework to map out EV opportunities and how they support the different stages of employee development (from foundation, to skilled, advanced and then expert); as a result the company now has a 'Community Action and Skills Hub'⁹.

⁶ CIPD, 'Volunteering to Learn: Employee development through community action' (2014).

⁷ See Appendix 1 for an example.

⁸ See Appendix 2 for Rolls-Royce's Behavioural Competency Framework.

⁹ See Appendix 3 for a visual of the Community Action and Skills Hub.





5. Consult relevant stakeholders

Identify which stakeholders could contribute to the project development. Consider:

- Employees who have volunteered
- Community partners
- Other experts in the field (e.g. CIPD, CSV)
- Managers

Consult your current volunteers to understand how they are developing their skills and competencies. Ask your volunteers to rate how much they think they are developing. Some useful tips for this stage:

- Plan your surveys; keep in mind the most important skills identified but leave some space for volunteers to list benefits that you might not have anticipated.
- Test any surveys and optimise the questions before running a wider study.
- Consider other methods for gathering information, such as focus groups or round tables.

PwC: PwC has been studying the business impacts of volunteering for over two years. They have implemented anonymous pre- and post-volunteering surveys that help them identify the real changes in their employees. The information and results can be segregated by factors such as team, office or type of role. Having a strong set of evidence helps them to continuously strengthen their programme: *“Around 90% of our volunteers say that they get involved because they want to give something back, but what's really encouraging is that roughly 70% say it's because they want to gain different skills and experience.”* Stephen Hogan, PwC

National Grid: National Grid consulted not only the volunteers but also liaised with the community partners to gain knowledge of the activities and skills gained through them. They also worked in partnership with CSV (their overall delivery partner for EV) to identify volunteering activities that added the greatest value.





6. Communicate

Once you have understood how your employee volunteering activities can support employee learning and development, you then need to tell people. Use creative ways to present the information in the simplest format possible (consider using your intranet, L&D site, interactive PDF's or presentations).

Who to communicate to:

Employees: Making your employees aware of the opportunities and how EV can be used as an alternative to traditional personal development is a critical step¹⁰. Employees need to know where the information can be accessed and that they have the backing of their line manager. If they consult L&D volunteering should be presented alongside other development opportunities. Consider using community leaders and/or champions to promote the benefits of volunteering and encourage volunteers to give their feedback and share their experiences with others.

Line Managers: The support of line managers is key for employees who want to volunteer and appreciate the opportunity to use EV to achieve their personal development goals. Make sure your senior and middle managers reinforce the importance of skills sharing volunteering and that they are aware of any case studies.

Rolls-Royce: Rolls-Royce has different ways and strategies to communicate EV opportunities, these include: setting a large collective impact target that gives EV impetus (reach 6 million young people in STEM by 2020); reinforcing this using internal communication channels and social media; presenting EV activities on the learning platform; there is a L&D Award that demonstrates how EV activities have helped with development; and there is a dedicated website for high potential leaders which includes EV opportunities suitable for developing their leadership skills.

UBS: In a recent UBS Employee Volunteer survey, 89% of Line Managers said they were supportive of employees' participation in the volunteering programme, and 67% of employee volunteers believed their volunteering had contributed to their professional skills development. To encourage greater appreciation of volunteering benefits, UBS has put in place a plan to further educate and engage middle managers (e.g. internal 'Seeing is Believing' tours and increased management support). The UBS Global 'Video Journal' competition launched in 2014 has also increased awareness across the firm. These activities are driven by Community Affairs and led by senior management.

Zurich: Zurich has a network of 40 Zurich Community Trust Ambassadors who are middle/senior managers across the Zurich UK business. They help spread the word within the business about the volunteering programme to foster greater engagement. The Ambassadors' "role profile" includes talking about the value of community opportunities as part of personal development.

¹⁰ See Appendix 4 for an example of PwC's Employee Volunteering brochure "Our Communities"





7. Measure the benefit

Continue to measure the implications and impact of linking EV and personal development. Pre and post volunteering surveys and long term trends analysis will help you understand the impact of any changes.

PwC conducts anonymous surveys before and after employees engage in volunteering, measuring perceptions of skills against the firm's competency framework before and after undertaking the activity. Scores on the post-volunteering surveys demonstrated that 92% believe volunteering has enhanced their skills: communication skills, relationship building and coaching are the skills most often cited as having been developed through volunteering. Around 75% of volunteers say that volunteering is helping them to develop further or faster, and that they would not have been able to develop in the same way without volunteering.

8. Communicate your findings

Keeping in mind the business motivations identified in step 1, and using the information gathered in step 7, communicate the main findings with the key internal audiences (e.g. employees, middle managers, board, store managers, etc.). This will help you to secure continuous support for the programme.

PwC surveys show that 75% of volunteers state that volunteering increases their productivity, 94% say EV has increased their engagement with PwC and their work, and 91% state their networks have improved as a result of their volunteering. PwC circulates these findings around the organisation to demonstrate the links between volunteering and personal development, and to encourage more individuals to get involved.



9. Link it to the appraisal process

If your company undertakes periodical performance assessments consider:

- Including a suggestion to line managers to consider EV as skills development opportunities or evidence of skills developed
- Encourage your employees to consider EV as part of their personal and professional development

Hogan Lovells: Hogan Lovells linked their skills matrix to the appraisal process. This helped ensure that the 'Community Investment Matrix' was used and reinforces the importance of EV.

Rolls-Royce: Rolls-Royce has a performance management process that monitors the personal development of an employee. During these sessions, managers and the employee define which activities, including volunteering, they should take into consideration to develop their skills.

Nationwide: Senior leaders at Nationwide have a volunteering target as part of their performance plans but the company deliberately made the decision not to include it in all employees' performance reviews. It encourages directors and senior managers to lead by example and champion regional activities to encourage more and more employees to get involved. Additionally its leadership development programme considers EV and working with charities as a way of developing strategic skills.

10. Review your EV strategy periodically, recognise volunteers and celebrate success

Revisit your EV strategy, policy and programmes regularly and keep strengthening them. Don't be afraid to change things that aren't working. Make sure that the registration process is simple, the information is freely available and that case studies are shared with everyone in the organisation.

Recognising employees is considered a critical step in increasing the number of employees taking part in volunteering activities. From sending thank you emails after each activity to organising thank you breakfasts/drinks with employees or organising internal awards, there are many ways companies can recognise their employees and celebrate successes.



Main challenges and key considerations

The following are the main challenges that companies have faced when building an integrated EV and L&D programme:

1. **Having a good registration process**

Keep it simple and consider having EV opportunities in the same portal as regular training opportunities

2. **IT limitations when collecting feedback from volunteers**

Collecting feedback can be resource intensive. Consider including the post-activity surveys as a step when employees are registering their EV hours and try to use software that is already available in your company.

3. **Feedback response rates**

Engage your community champions and middle managers so they promote feedback surveys. Consider including an incentive if the response rate is lower than hoped.

4. **Having an EV policy**

An employee volunteering policy helps you set the scene, gives employees clarity on what they are entitled to, and ensures that all departments and offices are able to volunteer.

5. **Time and resource**

This project will require some investment of time and money, consider:

- Having a Community Investment strategy with clear goals and defined programmes before starting out. If your company doesn't have a well-defined strategy please visit our website or access the How to develop a community investment strategy guide (BITC member only content).
- Allow at least a year to plan, manage and activate your action plan.
- Make sure that when planning the project you allow enough time to collect data from a representative sample.
- Team up with CR, HR and L&D and identify ways of sharing the load.

6. **Support**

Getting the support across the business once the mapping is ready and getting line managers to use the resources can be challenging, consider:





- Having an interactive way of presenting the opportunities and the link between EV activities and skills (see examples in the appendix)
- Including it in the appraisal process
- Sharing case studies to celebrate success

Good luck!

We hope you found this guide useful and it's given you some ideas on how you could effectively link employee volunteering with learning and development in your business. If the process works for you and you found the guide useful, then please share your experience with us by contacting communitymark@bitc.org.uk.

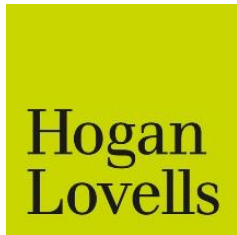
Please also visit our website to find out more about CommunityMark companies and access their case studies.





The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network

Thank you to all the collaborating businesses



Appendix 1. Hogan Lovells' Community Investment matrix

Community Investment matrix

Developing skills and capabilities through volunteering

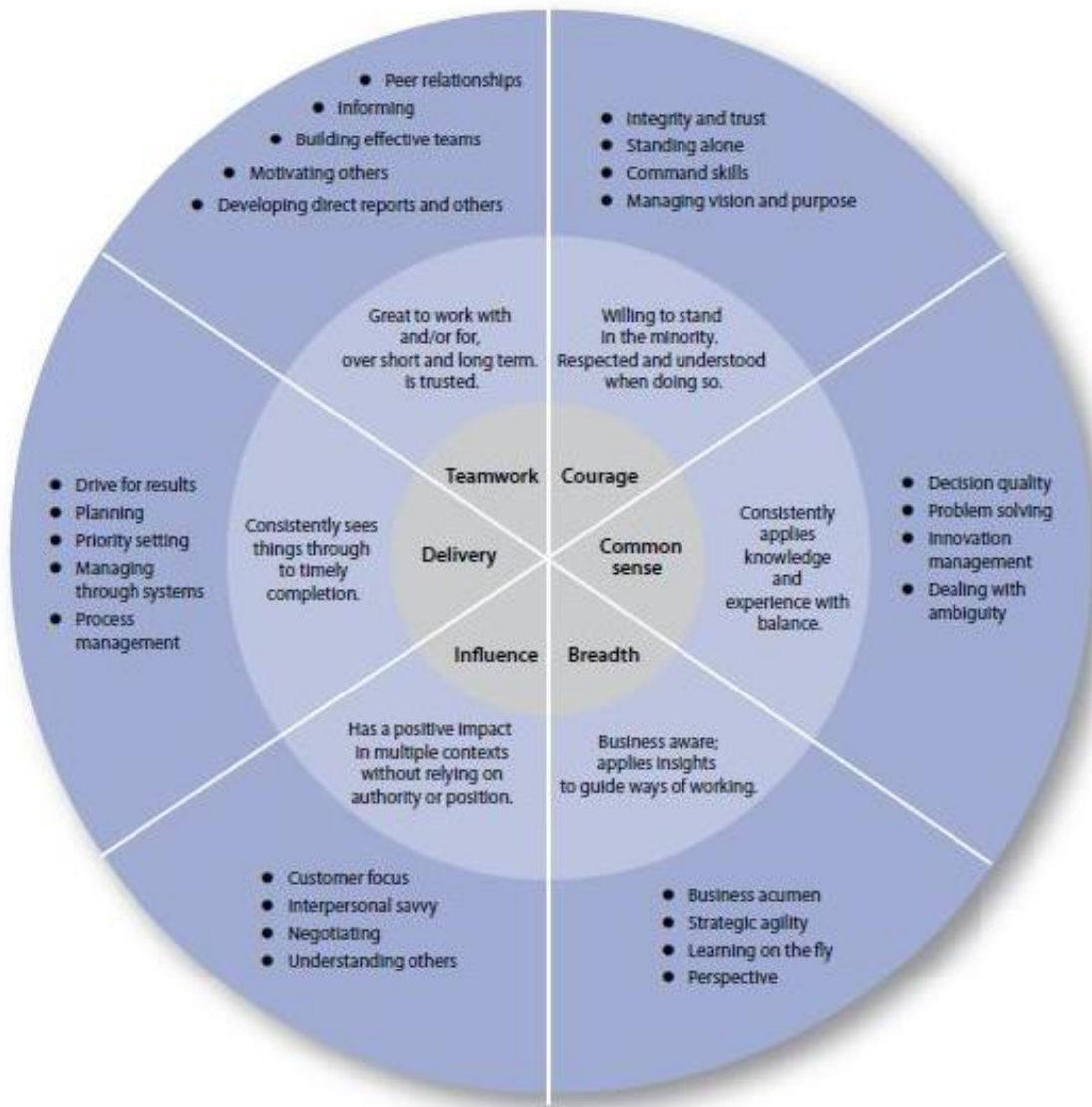
Everyone learns something different from their volunteering experience. Taking part in volunteering programmes can be an effective way to develop particular skills and capabilities used in the workplace. This matrix is an indication of how each volunteering programme could help develop skills and knowledge based on the firm's core values. This is not intended as an extensive guide and should not be viewed as the only way to develop these areas.

	IT Mentoring	Spanish PC Pals	Job Club	Debate It!	Reading Club	Shoe Lane Library	Number Partners	Community Links
Excellence in all we do								
Planning and organisation	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2
Problem solving	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	2
Performing effectively under pressure	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	3
Clients come first								
Client focused approach	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Flexibility and adaptability	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Building effective client relationships	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
One team worldwide								
Communication skills	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Teamwork	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	1
Building internal networks	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	1
Commitment to our firm's success								
Represent the firm externally	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Time management	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2
Leadership and responsibility	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2
Good Citizenship								
Reliability and accountability	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Broadening knowledge of issues that affect local communities	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	3
Motivating and developing others	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Key	
Highly effective	3
Effective	2
Less applicable	1

Appendix 2. Rolls-Royce's Behavioural Competency Framework

Rolls-Royce has identified six competencies that are important to the business. Through Community Investment activities they can keep strengthening and reinforcing these behaviours.



Appendix 3. National Grid's Community Action & Skills Hub

An interactive document that helps employees choose the right EV activity based on their journey in the company and/or the competencies they would like to strengthen further.

Appendix 4. PwC's 'Our Communities' brochure 2014

PwC developed a brochure containing information about their Community programme and how employees could get involved by sharing their skills and expertise. Below are some examples of how they highlight the importance of EV in personal development.

Personal development

As well as being great for our communities, volunteering also helps our people in their personal development. We know, from our surveys of volunteers, that people's skills, social awareness, personal networks and engagement with the firm have all increased as a result of their volunteering experiences. That's why we encourage people to include it in their objectives and it's why we promote volunteering as a route to personal development.

Skills and knowledge matrix

Everyone gains something different from their volunteering experience. This matrix outlines how volunteers have told us they have developed through taking part in our different volunteering programmes, in relation to the firm's PwC Professional development framework. Click on the name of the activity you are interested in to go directly to the relevant description in the brochure.

Name of activity	Beneficiaries	Skills and knowledge											Social issue understanding	Environmental issue understanding		
		Facilitation and coaching	Leadership	Communication skills	Project management	Relationship building	Client focus	Decision making	Adaptability	Creativity	Problem solving	Influencing and negotiation			Technical development	
Beyond Food Foundation volunteering	Socially excluded/vulnerable people	●														
Connection at St Martin's volunteering	Socially excluded/vulnerable people		●		●					●						
Corporate Sustainability Champion			●	●	●	●										
Enabling Enterprise volunteering	School students		●		●						●	●	●			
Financial literacy volunteering	School students															
Headteacher/Teacher co-coaching	School teachers	●		●												
Impact measurement training delivery	Social entrepreneurs		●	●												
Office visit/hosting	School students		●													
'One Firm' volunteering event	Various		●													
Prince's Trust team programme group facilitation	Socially excluded/vulnerable people		●													
PwC Pantomime volunteering	School students		●		●											
PwC Social Entrepreneurs Club mentoring	Social entrepreneurs		●		●											
School governor	School governing body		●													
School student CV and interview skills training	School students		●													
Social entrepreneur mentoring	Social entrepreneurs		●	●	●											
Sport England club leaders mentoring	Voluntary sector leaders		●	●	●											
Student employability skills workshops	School students		●			●										
Student mentoring	School students		●			●										
Teach First coaching	School teachers		●		●											
Team volunteering (team leader)	Various		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Team volunteering (team participant)	Various		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Voluntary sector leader mentoring	Voluntary sector leaders		●		●											
Work experience buddying	School students		●													
Young Enterprise Company Programme group mentoring	School students		●			●										
Young Philanthropy	Various		●		●	●										