

MINI CHAPTER

# Employee Development Through Corporate Volunteering

Corporate volunteering is broadly acknowledged throughout the world to be a benefit to companies, communities and employees. A number of companies are very explicitly using corporate volunteering as a professional and personal development tool for employees. This is most often done in cross-border and skills-based volunteer programs, but can extend beyond these to other forms of volunteering as well.

**Woodside** partners with Jawun, an Australia-based non-profit organization that supports innovative change management programs in Indigenous communities. Woodside employees volunteer for six-week secondments to share their expertise with Indigenous organizations in the Kimberley, Lower River Murray and North East Arnhem Land. Typically 20 employee volunteers participate each year. Once they return Woodside evaluates several developmental dimensions including teamwork, time management, active listening, communication, adaptability, and problem solving. Additionally they measure employee willingness to recommend volunteering to their colleagues, feelings about the company, job satisfaction, and work motivation. Woodside also attempts to determine if employees have developed increased empathy, an understanding of others and a sense of well-being and happiness. Explaining why they participate in the Jawun secondment program, the Woodside manager explains: “Volunteering contributes to skill development, sensitizes the volunteer to community issues and builds empathy.”

**CEMEX** believes employee volunteering can increase an individual’s performance on the job as well as their overall well-being. For that reason, the social impact and human resources staffs work closely to maximize employee development in the design of the company’s volunteer program. They have incorporated volunteering into the company’s top executive leadership development program.

*Iberdrola, Spain*

For example, at a CEMEX off-site executive meeting in Prague, the organization Impact Hub was enlisted as a partner to design the CEMEX executives' volunteer program. Four NGOs were selected, each with a focus that aligns to CEMEX social impact priorities: STEM careers for girls, homelessness, urban and home gardens and recycling programs. For the first half of the day, executives learned about the activities of the NGOs and engaged in hands-on activities; in the second half, they used their specific professional skills to work with the NGOs on solving some of their top challenges.

**RBC's** Social Impact Learning Program (SILP) is designed for the company's Future Diverse Leaders and Future Global Leaders. The program is a 10 to 12 week skills-based volunteering opportunity where employees use their expertise to advise the company's nonprofit partners on real business decisions, challenges, and opportunities. Projects are typically capacity-building challenges, where volunteers use a broad range of skills, including financial management, strategy development, human resources, marketing and branding, as well as operations and process improvement, data analysis and impact measurement expertise. The company believes employees strengthen their leadership and consulting skills while volunteering in the dynamic

context of an NGO's real challenges. RBC partnered with the Taproot Foundation to execute the program and in 2021, 150 RBC employees from Canada, the US, the UK and the Caribbean region participated in the program. One SILP cohort focused on supporting 30 organizations that serve the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) community.

**State Street Corporation's** global volunteer program has partnered with the company's Talent, Learning and Development group to engage the leadership team (the top 4% in the company) in long-term volunteer projects supporting nonprofit organizations that also receive State Street grants. Working with their partner, Root Cause, executive volunteers are engaged in a very structured program to provide executive coaching plus targeted workshops for 10 grantees each year. As part of three-year strategy, the focus in 2020-2021, was on responding to adapting to the pandemic; in 2021-2022, the theme was continuous quality improvement; and in 2022-2023, the focus is program stability.

**Iberdrola** also has good alignment between the human resources team and those leading volunteering initiatives. Together they developed a system so that when employees sign up for a volunteer activity on the internal company portal, they can see which skills or competencies they are developing through their participation. On completion of the volunteer project, they are able to download a certificate from the portal tagging their contribution to specific SDGs and also indicate the specific skills they utilized in the project.