



Driving Social Change

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Global Employee Volunteer Programs Must Contend With Cultural Challenges to Succeed

Global corporations report that “one size fits all” does not work when taking domestic employee volunteer programs overseas

STAMFORD, CT—June 20, 2014—To make employee volunteerism successful across countries, corporations have to be flexible and allow for local adaptations, according to LBG Associates latest research report, “Global Employee Engagement: Challenges and Solutions.”

LBG Associates interviewed 36 multinational companies and six service providers about the issues they struggle with when taking employee engagement programs such as volunteerism outside the home country. The study found that what is successful in one country will not necessarily be successful in another, due mainly to cultural attitudes about service, and those attitudes may not be obvious at first.

“While it is tempting to think that the Western world views volunteerism in the same way, in fact that is not the case” said Dr. Linda B. Gornitsky, founder and president of LBG Associates. “The reality is that employee volunteerism in a country involves more than whether people enjoy helping other people.”

For example, employees in countries with Socialist policies expect the government to take care of the needy and would not necessarily respond to calls to volunteer in a social service capacity. They might, on the other hand, enjoy a project with an environmentally focused nonprofit.

Similarly, employees may be willing volunteers on their own time, but not yet be open to the concept of volunteering with their employer. In many places, volunteering is a personal choice and experience and not typically done with an employer. It takes time to acclimate employees to the notion of company-sponsored volunteering.

Local Knowledge is Key

Getting employees to volunteer requires an intimate knowledge of the local culture and norms of service. The most successful companies rely on local volunteer councils or champions for advice on what types of projects will appeal to employees. Companies will also field employee surveys and hold focus groups to understand what elements of

a volunteer program might be embraced by that staff. The employee base can also be surveyed about the most pressing social issues in that location and even which nonprofits have the best reputation for addressing those issues.

The Role of Third Parties

Because finding reputable nonprofits is not easy in many countries in the world, even with employee inputs, companies can turn to third parties to source volunteer projects. The companies interviewed for the research reported using the HandsOn Network and VolunteerMatch to find appropriate nonprofits. These service providers have already vetted the nonprofits in their networks, reducing the risk to the corporation of accidentally supporting a nonprofit that is not what it seems.

A webinar will be held on the highlights of the report on July 16th at 1 PM Eastern. To register for the webinar, go to www.lbg-associates.com.

The report details many more solutions to both the top three challenges as well as challenges that are unique to different employee engagement programs. Through the generosity of Microsoft, the report can be requested for free by visiting the LBG Associates website at www.lbg-associates.com or by calling 1-203-325-3154.

“Global Employee Engagement: Challenges and Solutions” was made possible by the generosity of these sponsors:

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About LBG Associates

LBG Associates is a woman-owned consulting firm focused on designing, implementing, and managing corporate citizenship and community outreach programs and initiatives. Founded in 1993 by Dr. Linda Gornitsky, LBG Associates drives social change through expert advice; cutting-edge research; implementation of strategies, programs, policies, and procedures; and training that equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills to grow and advance in the field of corporate community involvement. Find more information at: www.lbg-associates.com.

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