

The Increasing Importance of Employee Involvement

Thomas Knowlton

As companies recognize the value of employee involvement programs, and statistics show an increasing shift toward non-cash contributions, employee volunteerism has become the fastest growing corporate citizenship program in the country. With the increasing demand from new employees (nearly two-thirds of Gen Y prefer to work for an organization that provides opportunities to volunteer their skills), TCC is helping companies of all sizes and in every industry to develop a range of programs to engage their employees in giving back to society.

Retailer Gap Inc. has long been recognized as a leading corporate citizen. The company's leaders have instilled a culture that encourages engagement with social issues, and its social responsibility reports provide a level of transparency that is rare - the company made headlines a few years ago by reporting honestly on its progress towards improving working conditions at factories and noted that not all factories had yet reached an acceptable level. This culture has also translated into a robust employee involvement effort. Gap developed and senior management actively endorses multiple programs, from "Hands-On"



volunteering to Skills-based volunteering, at all levels of the company.

A recent article in CSRWire about

IBM's Corporate Service Corps (CSC), noted the program's power to retain employees: "An independent evaluation is done by the Harvard Business School, and 100 percent of the participants in the CSC indicated that participation in this program increased their likelihood of completing their career at IBM, so obviously the benefits to the business are huge. From an HR standpoint, the ability to retain top performers who have been with the company for 10 or so years is highly beneficial from a corporate standpoint. It's not only been a way of training your best leaders but retaining your best too."

Developing programs and communication that reach all levels of employees has been shown to provide company benefits through improved reputation and branding, strengthened retention and recruitment, and improved

employee morale. TCC categorizes employee involvement at four levels: Capacity Builder (skills-based volunteering and Board service), Committed Volunteer (volunteers that commit significant time to volunteer efforts), Active Volunteer (participates in walks, runs, and one day events) and the Limited Engager (employees that can play an ambassador role for the company but are unable to volunteer their time).

TCC has worked with a number of companies on their employee involvement programs, including AstraZeneca, CA, and UBS, and the firm will be presenting on the subject in a number of upcoming forums.

Join Vice President Tom Knowlton at a Skills-Based Volunteering workshop at the *Corporation for National Community Service's conference* in New York on June 29. He and others members of TCC Group's Corporate Citizenship team will also offer several sessions on employee volunteerism and workplace giving at the Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers program on *Maximizing Corporate Community Investments* at the Southeastern Council of Foundations on June 9 and 10 in Atlanta.

For more information about Corporate Citizenship and Community Involvement, contact Tom Knowlton at knowlton@tccgrp.com.