



Volunteerism ROI Tracker Case Study

Timberland

Revenue: \$1.43 billion

Employees: 5,000 globally

Volunteer hours: 78,241 hours in 2011

Volunteer support: Up to 40 hours of paid volunteer time for all fulltime employees

Overview

Timberland's employee volunteerism is a core element of its legendary commitment to corporate social responsibility. The Path of Service™ program, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, provides all fulltime employees with up to 40 hours of paid time to volunteer on projects that extend across 19 countries, and frequently include Timberland vendors, distributors, suppliers, consumers, and other stakeholders.

As these service activities support Timberland's "Earthkeepers" commitment by building homes, gardens, and nature trails, and educating kids on how to protect the environment – the company recognizes supporting the business case for service is crucial for the program's own sustainability.

And it's worked: VF Corporation, which acquired Timberland last year, has kept the Path of Service™ program intact.

Promoting Employee Engagement

By traditional measures, Timberland's volunteer program is highly successful: 79% of Timberland employees volunteered (2011) compared to the average rate of 45% for finalists in that year's Points of Light Institute Corporate Engagement Awards of Excellence – a 75% performance advantage.

"Reporting the total number of hours we served doesn't tell much of a story," explains Atlanta McIlwraith, Timberland's Senior Manager of Community Engagement. Rather,

Timberland reports the percentage of hours employees use out of their 40-hour allotment. (42% in 2011)

Timberland's ROI Tracker results illustrate one of the primary reasons:

- 78% of employees surveyed reported volunteerism was a core component of their overall job satisfaction.

Supporting Sales

Relationship development is key to educating and building trust with business partners – and service can be a powerful alternative to the golf course.

"We had two buyers from one of our largest accounts attend. They were thrilled to be included," recorded one volunteer. "[It] was authentic, truthful... They felt closer to the Brand and our people."

Developing Leadership Skills

Many of Timberland's volunteer activities are run by "Global Stewards," employees that volunteer to champion and manage CSR activities through the company. These leaders receive additional training, benefitting both their volunteer and professional roles.

But even among rank-and-file volunteers, the gains can be significant:

- 23% of ROI Tracker respondents logged significant, job-related skill gains.

Enhancing Teams

Service also provides employees the opportunity to strengthen relationships:

- 56% logged new colleague relationships
- 46% reported strengthening existing relationships

"I met HQ staff whose names I recognized only on email," logged one volunteer. "It was terrific to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in an effort to complete the project. I had the opportunity to relate to them in a different way than as we do at work."

"Too often we work with those we know," reported another. "Today I met many new faces and completed service with them. It was refreshing and inspiring."

This has proved particularly valuable during the integration of VF and Timberland.

Next Steps: Increasing ROI

Even when things are going well, systematically tracking impact data can yield powerful insights for increasing ROI. For example, Timberland's Earth Day activities earned a high-satisfaction rating of 76%, while Serv-a-palooza earned 87% – 14% better.

In reviewing the drivers of participants' satisfaction – including the causes supported, activities performed, skills developed, and more – two potential reasons for Serv-a-palooza's superior score emerged:

- An 8% score advantage for networking and camaraderie gains
- A 31% score advantage for convenience

Copying elements of Serv-a-palooza's design in those areas may help improve Earth Day's already strong satisfaction scores.