

The Comparative Benefits of Skills-Based Volunteerism and Traditional Volunteerism Insights from the Volunteerism ROI Trackersm

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Summary

Employee volunteer programs are a popular way for organizations to help improve their communities while also promoting their business interests. While traditional volunteerism (i.e., where volunteers provide non-specialized services, acting as an “extra set of hands”) typically represents the most common type of volunteerism, the social sector is increasingly looking towards skills-based volunteerism (i.e., where volunteers apply specialized, professional-level skills) as a way to better leverage volunteer time to achieve desired impacts.

To help understand the relative benefits between these two types of volunteerism, we analyzed over 30,000 individual volunteer activities across 36 organizations to isolate the influence of volunteer type (i.e., skills-based volunteerism vs. traditional volunteerism) on reported social and business benefits.

We found that skills-based volunteers were more likely than traditional volunteers to report gains in recruiting, skill development, stakeholder relationships, sales, social value, and satisfaction, by 7-125%. Traditional volunteerism outperformed skills-based volunteerism in one area – team relationship gains – by 15%.

These findings provide a strong argument in favor of using skills-based volunteerism as a strategy for increasing the overall social and business impact of corporate community investment portfolios.

Dataset

This analysis is based on data collected through web-based surveys from 30,875 volunteers across 36 organizations (listed below) from 2010 to 2012. Volunteers reported the impacts of their volunteer activities on the beneficiary nonprofit organizations, their personal and professional development, and their employers’ business interests. Of the total respondents, 5,223 volunteers reported engaging in skills-based volunteerism and 25,652 volunteers reported engaging in traditional volunteerism.

Organizations represented include: Altria, Apollo Group, AT&T, Beach Cities Health District, Boeing, Cape Fear Volunteer Center, Capital One, Cbeyond, CIGNA, Coca-Cola, Deloitte, Delta Airlines, Disney, Eli Lilly, Estée Lauder Companies, Fidelity, Franklin Templeton, Freddie Mac, General Electric, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Hasbro, Intel, Junior Achievement Worldwide, Kaiser Permanente, Kilpatrick Stockton, KPMG, Microsoft, Nationwide, Npower, Pfizer, PNC Bank, Salesforce.com, Standard Chartered, Starbucks, Timberland, and UPS.

Analysis

We analyzed our dataset to determine whether the type of volunteer activity (i.e., traditional or skills-based) has an impact on a range of individual social and business outcome categories, and if so, the magnitude of that impact.

As summarized below (Table 1), each of the benefit categories we analyzed showed a difference between skills-based and traditional volunteerism, with skills-based outperforming traditional in every case except team relationships. For example, 4% of traditional volunteers reported recruiting-related leads or relationship gains, while 9% of skills-based volunteers reported such gains. Skills-based volunteerism therefore outperformed traditional volunteerism in terms of generating recruiting benefits by 125%.

To determine whether these differences were statistically significant (i.e., not due to chance), we applied a Pearson's chi-squared test and a t-test to the results. In all cases, the results were statistically significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$).

**Table 1: The Benefits of Volunteerism:
A Mean Comparison and Bivariate Analysis of Traditional and Skills-Based Volunteer Activities**

Volunteerism Benefit Categories	Avg. Rates of Reported Benefits		Pearson chi ²	Skills Based vs. Traditional
	Traditional Volunteerism	Skills-Based Volunteerism		
Recruiting gains: new or strengthened relationships/leads	4%	9%	228.02*	+125%
Skill gains: new job-relevant skills	19%	37%	829.16*	+95%
Stakeholder gains: new or strengthened relationships	9%	17%	238.03*	+89%
Sales gains: new or strengthened relationships/leads	5%	7%	37.30*	+40%
Social value – reach: increased nonprofit capacity to serve beneficiaries	26%	35%	204.79*	+35%
Social value – efficiency and effectiveness: increased nonprofit success rates or reduced operational resource demands	25%	32%	125.10*	+28%
Satisfaction – job: reported volunteerism is a core component of job satisfaction	63%	68%	48.39*	+8%
Satisfaction – event: high satisfaction with reported volunteer activity	84%	90%	108.95*	+7%
Team gains: new or strengthened colleague relationships	52%	44%	114.09*	-15%
Hours spent volunteering	11.5	25.2	t = -20.45*	+119%

* p < 0.01, indicates statistical significance

For additional findings from the Volunteerism ROI Tracker, visit www.trueimpact.com/blog.

About the Volunteerism ROI Tracker

The Volunteerism ROI Tracker, sponsored by the Points of Light Institute and delivered by True Impact, is a simple yet comprehensive volunteerism measurement service for organizations of any size, on any volunteer-management platform. The ROI Tracker gathers impact data directly from your volunteers through a custom-branded, web-based survey tool, and then automatically calculates the social and business value – and your (anonymous) benchmark rankings – for your any aspect of your volunteerism portfolio (results are accessible in real-time through a private, online portal). For more information, visit www.trueimpact.com/measuring-volunteerism.

About Us

True Impact, LLC (www.trueimpact.com) is a leading provider of web-based measurement tools and support services to help organizations measure the social, financial, and environmental return on investment (ROI) of their programs and activities. Typically applied to volunteerism, philanthropy, sustainability, and other corporate citizenship initiatives, True Impact's web-based tools and "triple bottom line" evaluations have been adopted by a broad range of companies of all sizes and their nonprofit partners.