CORPORATE
VOLUNTEERING
SURVEY

Acknowledgement – Esanda

"Esanda is proud to support this research into corporate volunteering in Australia. We hope that the learnings from this report will help both companies and NGOs to further enhance corporate volunteering programs or, if they don't have one at present, to set up new programs."

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Volunteering Australia, in partnership with Australia Cares, and with the generous support of Esanda, commissioned Orima Research to undertake a survey of Australian companies which operate volunteering programs for their employees.

As the peak national body representing the interests of volunteers, Volunteering Australia is supportive of the concept of corporate volunteering. Volunteering Australia, with the support of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership, has forged a unique partnership with Australia Cares to collaborate on furthering the extent and quality of employee volunteering in Australia. Australia Cares aims to be the pre-eminent organisation focused on connecting businesses with community. This newly constituted organisation is initially operating as Melbourne Cares in Victoria.

Companies can make a sustainable and productive contribution to their community through forming ongoing relationships with not-for-profit organisations. Corporate volunteering programs encourage employees to participate in community activities. "Our corporate volunteering program continues and will continue to be a key component of our overall community engagement strategy. Community involvement is part of our business culture and our DNA," wrote one survey respondent.

Volunteering Australia acknowledges the positive impact that corporate volunteering has on promoting diversity in volunteering, as it exposes not-for-profit organisations to larger numbers of volunteers for diverse roles and generates new opportunities for recruitment. Volunteering Australia identified a need for further exploration into this trend within the Australian context. The idea for a survey investigating the different models of corporate volunteering evolved out of the Forum of Corporate Volunteering Practitioners, convened by Volunteering Australia, who meet regularly to discuss their programs. It is apparent from the forum that companies are seeking guidance on the best ways to operate their program.

> Companies can make a sustainable and productive contribution to their community through forming ongoing relationships with not-for-profit organisations.

Overall the survey findings reveal that corporate volunteering is regarded as a positive and worthwhile endeavour for the company and its staff. "It takes a lot of work to establish, maintain and communicate. However, staff love it..." wrote one respondent. Importantly, 80% of companies also reported receiving positive feedback from not-for-profit organisations with which they had worked.

Corporate volunteering programs are predominantly run through a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) division. In fact 54% of respondents ranked CSR considerations as the main reason why their company engaged in volunteering programs, closely followed by the reason that it allows employees to make a contribution to the community (52%).

Figure 1: Please rank the relative importance of each of the following factors as to why your company has chosen to run a corporate volunteering program? (Q31)

RESPONSES	1 OR 2 RANKING HIGH IMPORTANCE %
We believe it is part of our corporate social responsibility	54
Allows employees to make a contribution to the community	52
It increases the work satisfaction of employees	22
It fosters higher levels of team spirit and cohesion amongst employees	20
Offering a corporate volunteering program to employees reflects well on the company from an internal perspective	17
It helps to attract and/or retain employees	17
Offering a corporate volunteering program to staff reflects well on the company from an external perspective	13
Employees can learn new skills	4
It gives employees social contact	2
Rewards employees by giving them a 'break' from working, something different to do	2

Executive Summary

Corporate volunteering programs are also a way for staff to participate in the expression of the CSR values espoused by their employer giving them the opportunity to connect in a more meaningful way with these values. Striving towards these objectives then becomes a collaborative effort between the company and its employees.

While it is hoped that these survey findings will provide a resource to companies, it is not the intention to prescribe a 'one-size fits all' model of corporate volunteering. "It is not possible, nor preferable to take a 'cookie cutter' approach to corporate volunteering programs. Both parties need to be flexible and open to change" wrote another respondent. The different models adopted by companies can reflect the specific objectives of a company's program. For example, if staff development objectives are paramount then the program will allow for ongoing staff time to be allocated to volunteering, but if building awareness about the company's CSR activities is the main objective then one-off, well-branded community days may be preferred.

However it is possible to identify some underlying principles which lay the foundation of sound corporate volunteering programs:

Internal Support
Genuine internal support is given to the program, both formally through adequate investment and the development of policies, and informally through staff acting as 'motivators' or 'champions'.

Staff Choice & Involvement
Staff are given choice and consistent encouragement to participate in the program.

Risk Management
Safety conditions and risk management issues are taken into consideration.

Not-for-profit Relationships
A genuine commitment is made to developing meaningful relationships with the not-for-profit organisations.

"It is not possible, nor preferable to take a 'cookie cutter' approach to corporate volunteering programs. Both parties need to be flexible and open to change."

Methodology

Volunteering Australia, in partnership with Australia Cares, mailed out a self-completion survey to 164 companies which have a corporate volunteering program. The survey comprised a series of closed and open-ended questions. The two month collection period closed in November 2005. Fifty responses were received, representing a 30% response rate.

A full report of the survey findings including the survey instrument and frequency distributions for each question is available on Volunteering Australia's website (www.volunteeringaustralia.org).

Objectives

The main objectives of the survey were to:

- Understand why companies are involved in corporate volunteering.
- Identify different types of corporate volunteering programs operating within companies.
- Determine how these corporate volunteering programs are facilitated and organised within the company.
- Identify key learnings companies have experienced.
- Ascertain any feedback received from not-for-profit organisations regarding the impact of corporate volunteering programs.

Percentages presented are based on the total number of valid questionnaire responses made to the particular issue being reported on. This occasionally differs from the total number of completed surveys because of omissions in the completed questionnaires. Percentage results may not add up to 100% due to rounding and because respondents could choose more than one response for some questions.

About the Companies

The research revealed that the majority (71%) of programs were established between 2003 and 2005 and that most companies surveyed were from the finance/banking/insurance sector. Company size was spread evenly between less than 500 employees to up to 4000.

Lloyd Morgan actively promotes the fact that the company offers this program to its staff when they are interviewing for new recruits. Feedback received from staff shortly after recruitment is that this has been a key reason why they chose to accept the job offer. Lloyd Morgan believes that this program is conducive with their 'life/balance' messages.

Internal Support

Despite the majority of programs being recently initiated, nearly half (48%) were at the stage of being fully implemented with staff actively involved and a further 20% had been running for some time and were now being reviewed. Only a small percentage was at the early stages of development.

Program Structure and Investment

The majority have also formalised their volunteering programs through the documentation of procedures and by having management approval (57%), and are investing between $20,000 and $30,000 annually into their program. One third of companies have someone dedicated to the program on a full-time basis. This compares to 28% who have a staff member dedicated for less than 20 hours per week and one third with no-one formally engaged other than a staff member managing the program above and beyond their daily duties. 53% offer their staff insurance coverage while they are volunteering, 41% give recognition through staff development plans, 27% supply safety equipment and 25% reimburse costs.
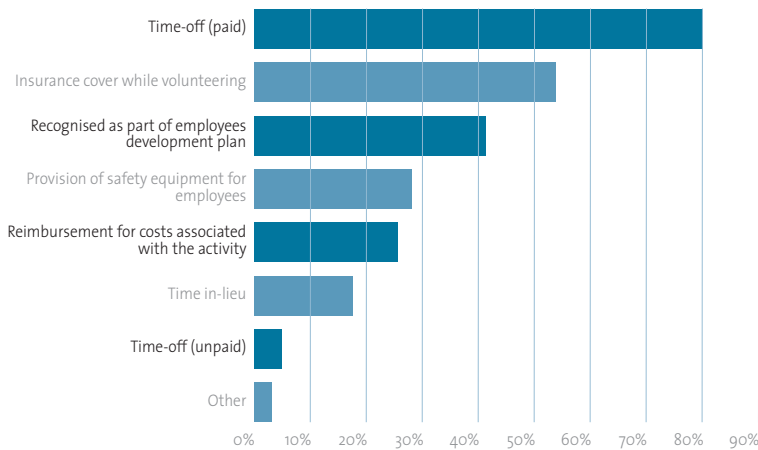
A large percentage of companies (43%) had a specific corporate social responsibility division that was responsible for the running of the program. Other companies utilized departments such as human resources, public affairs or marketing to manage their programs. One respondent recommended that the volunteering program does not "operate within a vacuum". Running an effective program is a collaborative effort which cuts across multiple departments within a company such as CSR, HR and Sponsorship.

Support to employees

It was also revealed that 40% of respondents allow their staff one day of work time to contribute to volunteering and a further 21% allow two to three days per year. 6.3% of respondents allowed up to one week, and 2% more than one week. However 31% of companies do not allow staff any work time to contribute to the program. 77% offer volunteering opportunities to staff in all office locations and the majority of companies (76%) allow all staff to participate in the program with 39% also encouraging partners, family or friends of employees to participate.

> 40% of respondents allow their staff one day of work time to contribute to volunteering and a further 21% allow two to three days per year.

Figure 2: What kind of support is provided by your company to employees who participate in the corporate volunteering program? (Q18 – Multiple Response)

The majority of respondents identified that having a well-organised, resourced and managed program was a key learning into how to run a successful program. Effective implementation of a program depends on having the structures in place which allow for frequent communication to staff to encourage participation and regular reviews to develop the program. Streamlined administrative procedures can assist with data capture and also make it easy for staff to participate.

Upper management support is integral to a well-structured and resourced program. Ideally, support from management would extend beyond the investment of resources into genuine validation of the worthiness of volunteering through their own participation in, and promotion of the program. The collection of data can assist management in measuring the benefits of the company's investment into the program.

Data Collection

In order to ensure the corporate volunteering program is meeting objectives, 72% of companies have mechanisms in place to report on the outcomes or performance of the program. The most common factor measured is the percentage of employees participating in the program (80%), feedback from employees and employee hours. The companies mainly use the information in reviews to provide feedback to management (92%), to refine and improve the program (86%) and for corporate social responsibility reporting (83%).

Internal Support

Figure 3: What factors are measured? (Q9 – Multiple Response)
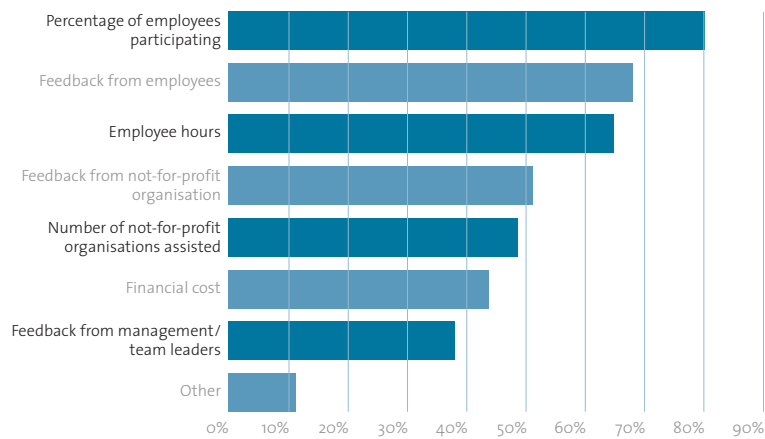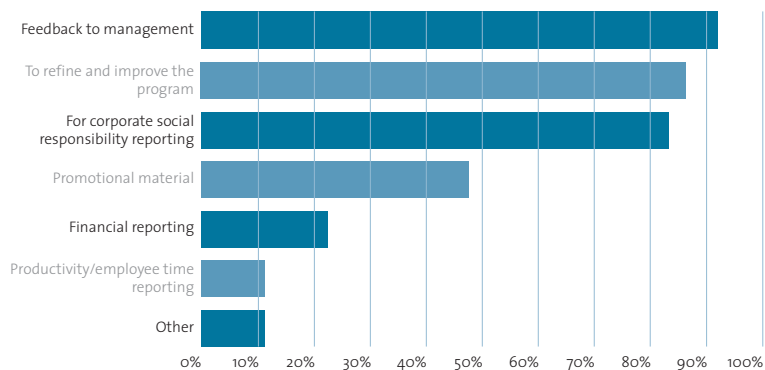

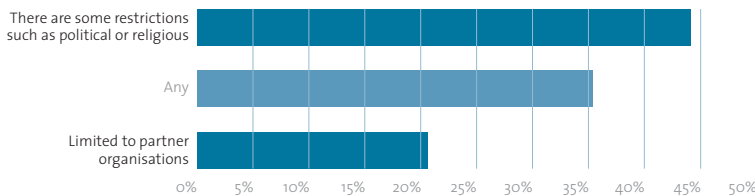Figure 4: How is this information used? (Q10 – Multiple Response)

It is evident from the research that companies are offering staff a variety of options in the type of work they can participate in.

Identifying Opportunities

It is evident from the research that companies are offering staff a variety of options in the type of work they can participate in. These options relate to whether the work is individual or team work, if it is working on a one-off project or ongoing and whether the skills needed are related to employees' professional skills or if the work is unrelated.

Figure 5: What types of organisations are employees able to volunteer in? (Q13)

In 2005 NAB featured photos of their staff participating in volunteering activities on their company's Christmas cards.

While most companies (70%) rely on their not-for-profits partners to identify opportunities, 20% employed the services of a broker to assist them with the running of the program.

The National Australia Bank's corporate volunteering program was established in 1998. Since management of the program moved into their CSR department participation rates have increased annually by over 20% each year. The program is managed from Melbourne by the Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator (Esther Makris), but is available to all of their 22,000 staff located across the country. Over 100 volunteer opportunities are uploaded monthly onto a database that was especially designed by their IT department. Once a staff member has selected an opportunity from the intranet, they receive an automatic response and confirmation email. Feedback mechanisms are also automatic. This centralised and automatic management of the program has simplified procedures for NAB's staff. In the days following the 2004 tsunami for example, 900 NAB staff were mobilized in three days to volunteer in a call centre to raise relief funds.

Esther finds that there is no shortage of opportunities to promote to staff and, because NAB is located in many different sites around the country, opportunities can be sourced locally with smaller organisations.
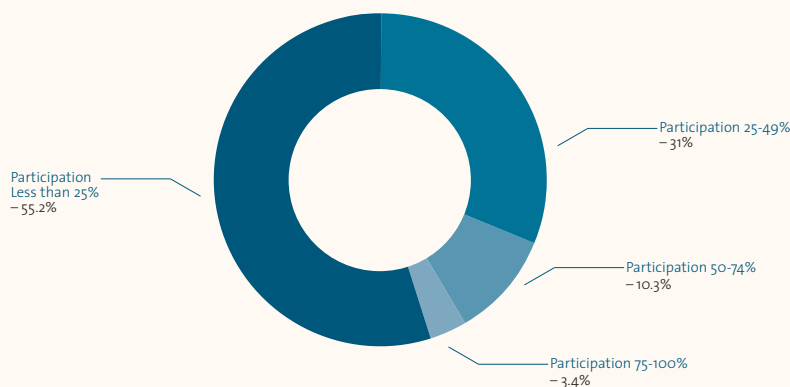
Staff Choice and Involvement

Participation Rates

The research showed that the impact of the program on employees was an important reason as to why the company chose to have the program. Allowing staff to make a contribution to the community, increasing their work satisfaction and fostering a higher level of team spirit and cohesion were ranked highly as reasons why the company has chosen to run a volunteering program. Therefore, the level of staff participation in the program is fundamental to the program's reason for being. However participation rates can be a challenge especially in the early stages of a program (55% respondents indicated participation rates as being less than 25%).

Figure 6: What percentage of employees participate in the corporate volunteering program at your company?

Participation 25-49% — 31%

Participation Less than 25% — 55.2%

Participation 50-74% — 10.3%

Participation 75-100% — 3.4%

"Our volunteering program allows staff to make their own choices about which not-for-profits they would like to volunteer for."

Staff Input and Interests

Many respondents believed that the interests of staff should be a top consideration. "Our volunteering program allows staff to make their own choices about which not-for-profits they would like to volunteer for."
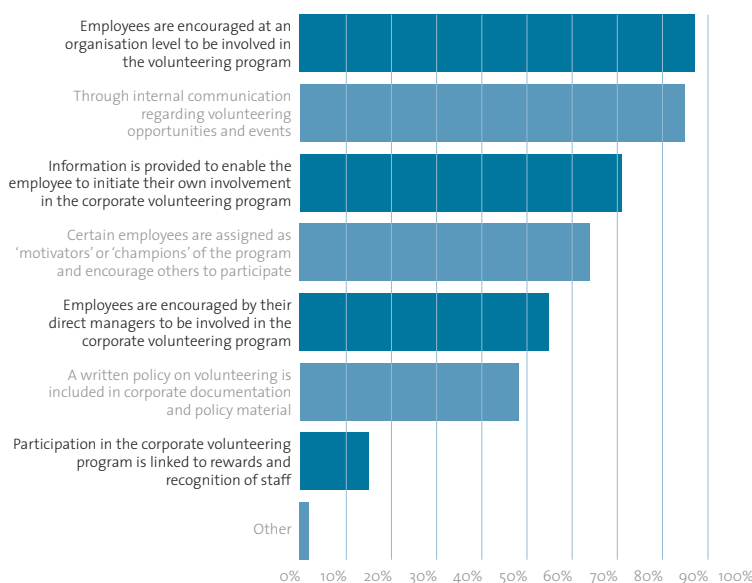
The survey also found that 62% of respondents allow their staff to select their own volunteering activities, compared to 56% using company personnel to identify opportunities. However, the benefits of maximising employee choice and flexibility can be counter-balanced by the impact it has on staff time. "Staff prefer to have the volunteering opportunities given to them rather than have to seek them out themselves." Within this model of maximizing staff initiative and choice, there is certainly an opportunity for 'champions' or 'motivators' to encourage participation.

Encouragement and promotion of the program

"It is important to promote both the program itself as well as the volunteering opportunities as some staff may not know where to start." The research reveals that most companies make a concerted effort to encourage staff participation in the program with 87% encouraging staff at an organisational level, 70% providing information to enable employees to initiate involvement and 64% assigning certain employees as 'motivators' or 'champions' to encourage others to participate.

Figure 7: How are employees encouraged to participate in the corporate volunteering program? (Q21 – Multiple Response)

Emma Norrish is Head of Community Partnerships at the recruitment company, Lloyd Morgan. Their volunteering program has a high participation rate and Emma's own experience in volunteering includes an annual trip to Somoa for two weeks, working as part of a medical team to look after children and run children's programs. She also raises funds back in the workplace to support the program. Lloyd Morgan are active participants in this program.

Almost 39% of respondents indicated that they encourage partners/family/friends of employees to participate in the corporate volunteering program.

Preferred roles

While open-ended comments also revealed a desire to find roles more closely associated with their employees' professional skills, others have found that these types of roles may not necessarily be of interest to staff, and possibly this preference reflects more about what management believes is a worthwhile volunteering activity. Surveying staff to discover their preferences will assist in determining the types of opportunities and causes which will appeal to them.

Staff Choice and Involvement

One respondent advised that "If in doubt ask the volunteers themselves! They can tell you why they volunteer, what support they require from us and how they would like to be recognised."

Risk Management

As previously discussed, 53% of companies surveyed extend their insurance coverage to staff while they are volunteering. Managing the risk of engaging staff in external volunteering activities was acknowledged by most respondents as a shared responsibility between the company and the not-for-profit organisation. Most companies (52%) ensure that the not-for-profit organisation has adequate public liability insurance and confirm that the not-for-profits will cover their staff while volunteering, and 50% ensure they provide training to undertake the activity, while 38% of companies undertake their own risk assessment of certain tasks.

Volunteering Australia has produced a booklet covering insurance issues regarding corporate volunteering. For more information regarding insurance issues as they relate to corporate volunteering and broader risk management issues, please refer to the two booklets produced by Volunteering Australia "Insurance & Risk Management for Corporate Volunteers" and "Running the Risk?".

ExxonMobil organises one 'Day of Caring' volunteering activity per year, which can involve up to 20 projects and 280 staff. ExxonMobil assures their not-for-profit partners that their staff will be covered by workers' compensation insurance during the volunteering activity. However they also conduct a Job Safety Analysis before the day to ascertain that the activity and the site they will be working on pose minimal risk, and that the organisation's policies and procedures are consistent with ExxonMobil's safety requirements. Team leaders are assigned to each project and they are responsible for conducting the safety analysis.

ExxonMobil Day of Caring volunteer.

Not-for-profit Relationships

Contributions to Not-for-profit Organisations

Participation in volunteering activities is sometimes the first step towards forging longer term partnerships between companies and not-for-profit organisations. Many companies indicated that they also contribute in kind and/or financial support (74%) to enable volunteering projects to take place. The volunteering activity has also led to companies becoming more involved with the not-for-profit through workplace giving programs and the contribution of additional in kind and financial support. This suggests that not-for-profit organisations are benefiting in ways beyond receiving volunteering support.

The City of Melbourne is a foundation member of Melbourne Cares, a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates partnerships between business, communities and government to improve the quality of life for the people of Melbourne. Through a volunteering opportunity brokered by Melbourne Cares, the City of Melbourne worked in collaboration with the Friends of Westgate Park – a small organisation dedicated to regenerating the habitat of this unique urban nature park. A team of ten employees from the City of Melbourne's Continuous Improvement Branch volunteered to help the group in a tree-planting project. Prior to the day, the team leader visited the site and met with their community partner to determine what resources would be needed to undertake the project. A challenge was set for the team of volunteers to raise funds which would pay for the cost of the trees they would be planting. A number of fundraising activities were undertaken in their workplace in the lead up, and with the generous support of their colleagues, the team exceeded their budget target of $400.

As well as planting over 500 trees, the challenge raised awareness of this urban parkland and the work of The Friends of Westgate Park.

City of Melbourne employees helping out Friends of Westgate Park. As a result of the success of this day Friends of Westgate are keen to collaborate with more corporate teams.
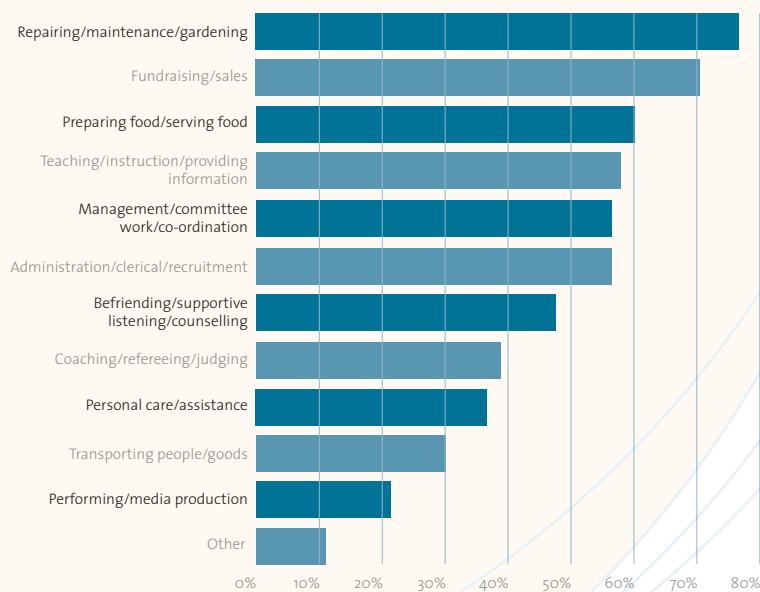
Not-for-profit Relationships

Participation in different sectors and activities

As the demand for corporate volunteering activities strengthens, the challenge is to create a confluence between the needs and expectations of the companies and those of the not-for-profit sector. Most opportunities are occurring within the community / welfare sector, followed by education / training / youth, and in a range of roles but predominantly repairs / maintenance and fundraising activities. This compares to ABS statistics, in which the category education / training / youth ranks third after sport / recreation.

According to ABS statistics most general volunteers are also engaging in fundraising activities, and certainly most not-for-profit organisations require increased numbers of volunteers to assist them with occasional fundraising events. General volunteering in the category of repairs ranks lower but high rates of participation in these roles by corporate volunteers may reflect that they are more suited to this type of volunteering. As not-for-profit groups have accommodated corporate volunteers into their programs, have their needs adapted to match corporate demand?

The challenge is to create a confluence between the needs and expectations of the companies and those of the not-for-profit sector.

Figure 8: What types of work are available to employees/have employees participated in through the corporate volunteering program? (Q15 – Multiple Response)

Feedback from Not-for-profit organisations

While most companies are measuring factors such as employee participation rates and using these figures to report on their corporate social responsibility activities, feedback from not-for-profits and the numbers of not-for-profits assisted are recorded to a lesser extent than those pertaining to employees.

The feedback they do receive from not-for-profits indicated that in general many viewed the corporate volunteering program as a positive, useful and worthwhile endeavour. Specifically, feedback has included:
• That it encourages networking between the organisations and the opportunity to build profile;
• There is a noted transfer of skills/practical assistance from employees;
• Recognition of their generous initiative.

Partnerships

Previous research indicates that not-for-profits are particularly concerned with volunteering opportunities transforming into longer term partnerships. This can be facilitated by the way the company program has been structured, such as having a designated manager who has the time and knowledge to give to the partnership (providing continuity in the relationship), or when there is an interconnection between other divisions such as public affairs and sponsorship so that not-for-profits can gain leverage from the volunteering partnership. "Having a centralised resource ensures management of community needs and staff expectations are merged effectively."

It is apparent that further investigation into partnership arrangements may be required. There could be a bias towards choosing the larger not-for-profit organisations that have higher profiles and a capacity to take on a large number of volunteers. Are smaller organisations missing out on the benefits of the corporate volunteering trend? As one respondent wrote, "We work with well developed and organised agencies that have the appropriate infrastructure to support corporate volunteering." However, another respondent wrote that their strategy is to build relationships with both large and small not-for-profit organisations. One objective of this strategy is to expand the profile of the smaller organisations which may arise as a result of their association with this corporate partner.

Not-for-profit Relationships

Shell has a team of staff (the Social Investment Network) responsible for running its social investment program including the volunteering program. The group makes recommendations for the board's endorsement, but is also responsible at the local level for communicating about the program.

The volunteering program is divided into short term and long term components. The long term projects can involve staff from five days up to four weeks per year although these opportunities are limited to between 20 and 30 staff annually. The volunteering activities are part of the company's broader social performance objectives and take place with Shell community partners. Planning the projects involves close collaboration with the not-for-profit organisation. Shorter term opportunities arise out of Shell's two national partners (The Smith Family and Conservation Volunteers Australia). Partnerships are also formed at the local level around Shell's key facilities which benefit smaller organisations.

Shell has also incorporated into its policy the possibility of granting another day's leave to staff who, in addition to taking one day's leave for volunteering, contribute another day in their own time to a partner organisation. This policy encourages ongoing volunteering involvement and goes some way to assisting not-for-profits with the challenge of retaining volunteers. Shell also builds the relationship further by providing the not-for-profits with the opportunity to promote payroll giving to its staff.
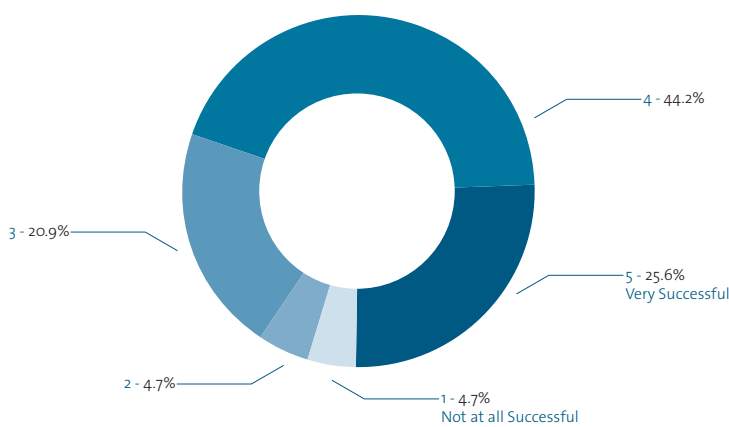

Shell employees Emma Gronvall and Scott Jenssen took the opportunity to apply for one of Shell's longer-term volunteering placements with the Shell Questacon Science Circus.

Challenges

Overall, the majority of companies see their corporate volunteering programs as being successful, with 70% giving their program a rating in the top two scores for success.

Figure 9: Overall how would you rate the success of your company's corporate volunteering program? (Q35)

- 4 - 44.2%
- 5 - 25.6% Very Successful
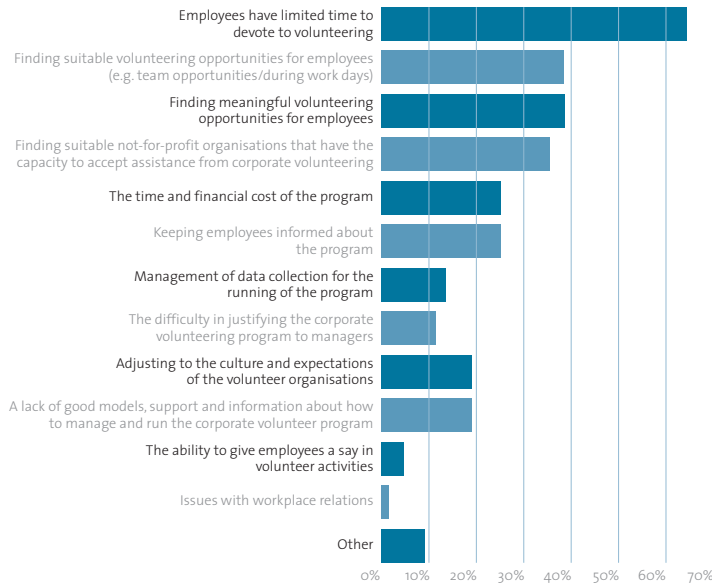- 1 - 4.7% Not at all Successful
- 2 - 4.7%
- 3 - 20.9%

However the survey also sought feedback from companies on the main challenges they had faced in the implementation and running of the program.

The key challenge facing companies with a corporate volunteering program is that employees have limited time to devote to volunteering – 64% of companies surveyed listed this as one of the three main difficulties they face. Other key challenges include finding suitable volunteering opportunities (38%), finding meaningful volunteering opportunities (38%) and finding suitable not-for-profits that have the capacity to accept assistance (36%). One respondent is aiming to address the issue of employees having limited time by creating opportunities that require two hours work such as helping out in call centres. "This is particularly important for senior managers as well as (other) staff, who find it difficult to take out a whole day".

"We are extremely happy with the progress we have made to date, so in future we will be concentrating on keeping the momentum going and building on our success."

Challenges

Figure 10: What are the THREE main difficulties that your company has been faced with in relation to your corporate volunteering program? (Q32 – Multiple Response)

Many companies reported they would be maintaining or expanding their program, creating more volunteering opportunities.

Conclusion

Given the high proportion of companies that view their corporate volunteering program as a success it is not surprising that when asked about plans for the future, many companies reported they would be maintaining or expanding their program, creating more volunteering opportunities, and aiming to attract more employees to the program and increase participation.

Volunteering Australia and Australia Cares both seek to encourage an ongoing discourse between not-for-profits and companies in assessing the impact of corporate volunteering programs. Companies have indicated a willingness to learn and to share knowledge, and a desire to continue to evolve and invest in their programs. Successful corporate volunteer programs require support and investment, and responsibility for the program's success is spread amongst those assigned to manage the program, employees, brokers and top level management.

Where to from here?

It is evident that there is still a need to build the capacity of the not-for-profit sector to produce more opportunities ("it is the business that needs to drive it otherwise the opportunities are not presented"), and create more volunteering roles linked to professional skills.

Other areas for investigation include:
- Staff attitudes to corporate volunteering. What influences their decision to participate?
- Which organisations are being selected for partnerships? Are smaller organisations missing out?
- The ways in which companies can evaluate the success of their volunteering program.
- The level of volunteering activity in small to medium sized companies.
- The degree to which corporate volunteering programs influence potential employees and staff retention levels.

Acknowledgements

Volunteering Australia and Australia Cares acknowledge the
generous assistance of the following:

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