



Employee volunteering and CSR: job seeker perspectives

See also: Staff recruitment, retention, satisfaction and productivity: the effects of employee volunteering programs

Employee volunteering (EV) programs, as part of the broader concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), have been linked to a number of benefits to companies and employers and not for profit organisations.¹ But how are these programs perceived by the employees who are involved in EV programs? How do EV programs and CSR generally rate as factors when they are choosing between employers to work for? There are indications employee commitment to employers is reflected in their productivity, and that their commitment is influenced in some part by the company's community involvement.² The implications of linking productivity and community engagement warrant further examination. What CSR and EV programs mean for employees is the subject of new research Volunteering Australia has conducted with the support of Seek.

Many respondents actively consider both corporate social responsibility and employee volunteering programs when searching for work

During October 2006 an online survey was distributed through the Seek website.³ The survey was designed to capture the views of people searching or browsing for job vacancies, and was mostly quantitative in design. The objectives of the survey to job seekers were:

- To measure their attitudes to CSR activities;
- To investigate the degree to which CSR and EV programs influence their job-seeking decision-making;
- To determine their propensity to participate in EV programs if they are given the opportunity; and
- To determine how they see the value of their own volunteering.

On a general level, most of the job seekers surveyed view CSR activities favourably. Further, many respondents actively consider both CSR and EV programs when searching for work.

The survey was run alongside another survey for employers and recruiters. The findings from this survey are revealed in a separate research bulletin.

¹ VOLUNTEERING AUSTRALIA 2004 *TWO WAY STREET: CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING IN THE NOT FOR PROFIT SECTOR*, VOLUNTEERING AUSTRALIA 2006 *CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING SURVEY*

² THE CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP COMPANY, *GOOD GOOD COMPANIES, BETTER EMPLOYEES*, UNITED KINGDOM 2003

³ WWW.SEEK.COM.AU

About the survey participants

224 respondents completed the survey. It was not necessary for respondents to have worked for an employer which has a CSR or EV program to participate in the survey.

A total of 68% were currently employed either full or part time, 6% were studying and 26% were neither studying nor working. Forty-eight per cent were actively looking for a new job, and 44% were 'just browsing' the site. The length of time in the workforce ranged evenly between less than five years to 25 years. New graduates represented 8%.

Two out of three possessed either a bachelor degree or post-secondary vocational qualification. Of those who were currently or previously employed, 46% described their work as white collar professional, 18% entry level, 17% managerial, 10% unskilled and 8% trades. There was diverse industry representation and respondents were predominantly female. The age range reflected the length of years in the paid workforce.

How do job seekers see the benefits of corporate social responsibility?

Respondents were asked to indicate which statements best reflect their attitudes to companies that promote CSR. The responses revealed high levels of approval for CSR initiatives, with the majority (53%) believing it 'demonstrates real commitment to the community and that they would like to work for such a company'. A further 30% believed it was 'worthy although not a factor when considering which company to work for'. Ten per cent had no opinion and only 7% thought it was 'simply a PR exercise'.

Impacts of corporate social responsibility on role selection

One quarter of all respondents indicated that they actively select jobs with companies that have CSR programs, and 47% per cent investigate a company's approach to CSR when applying for a role, either before applying for a position with the company (15%), before being interviewed for the role (19%) or during the interview (13%).

All respondents were asked a question exploring their attitudes specifically in regard to EV programs. Sixty-eight per cent indicated that it was either a moderately important (50%) or very important (18%) factor when deciding between two similar roles. Twenty-nine per cent even nominated that they were prepared to take a lower salary if the company could offer an EV program.

Volunteering was the CSR activity that people were most likely to participate in (55%), followed by workplace giving (27%) and pro bono work (19%). Over 91% of all respondents indicated that they would be likely to participate in an EV program if they were to move to a company which offered one (62% were likely but it depended on the program, 29% were highly likely to).

Over 91% of all respondents indicated they would be likely to participate in and employee volunteering program if they were to move to a company which offered one

Those who currently or have previously worked for an employer which had an EV program represented 21% of respondents. Forty-three per cent of this group had participated in the program and a further 39% would consider it in the future.

When asked the question about their motivations for working with a company with an EV program, a range of benefits were cited. One quarter saw the benefits in terms of having the opportunity to develop skills, one fifth were motivated to work for a company which has values consistent with their own, and 16% liked the opportunity to experience different work environments. Thirteen per cent said that it is an indicator of the company's employee morale.

Almost half of respondents (47%) reported that they were active volunteers in their own time, and 63% of all respondents said they include information about their volunteering in their resume, mainly because it reflects their broad range of experiences, and when they believe the skills are relevant to the position.

Conclusion

Job seeker respondents showed a high rate of approval, and apparently low levels of cynicism, towards the CSR activities of companies.

Overall, the job seeker survey exposed some positive attitudes to volunteering, with 90% of job seeker respondents indicating some interest in EV, and EV programs the preferred CSR activity for many job seekers. Respondents see the link between their volunteering activities and career development, as they include their volunteering experiences in their resumes and see it as an opportunity to develop skills.

The research indicated a high rate of participation and interest in EV programs by those who had worked for an employer with such a program. For many survey respondents, having an EV program available is a factor when choosing between similar job roles, and for some people it is a stronger factor than salary.

Percentage figures have been rounded to the closest decimal point.

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