



SET UP AN EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME

This is one of a series of +points on The Journey – a route map designed to help you build a business that people value. Check out other +points on www.smallbusinessjourney.com

WHAT'S THE POINT?

You CAN develop employee skills, increase morale and build successful teams if you encourage staff to play an active role in the local community.

WHY?

- Staff like to volunteer for causes they care about.
- They can use existing business skills to help local community groups and charities.
- As volunteers they pick up new insights and experience.
- Individuals are the best link for your company with your communities.

EXTRA BENEFIT TO YOUR COMPANY

- Employees value the company more if they enjoy your interest and support.
- More people and organisations will know about your company.
- You will attract and keep staff who are committed and enthusiastic.
- Staff development will be low cost to you and integrated with community benefits.

LIVING PROOF

STORMHOUSE

Stormhouse is a small marketing and advertising agency of 9 people. It has achieved market differentiation by developing a reputation throughout the North West of England as a company that gets involved in its community from a business perspective and at a personal level too.

Stormhouse believes it is important that all members of its team work on both commercial and community projects. Community involvement is seen as a necessary part of the company's business activity. Agency staff have volunteered on some inspirational social projects spanning training and professional help initiatives such as MAD4IT and Headstart and youth programmes such as Adopt a Class and Young Enterprise initiatives.

THE RESULTS

By actively engaging with the local community Stormhouse has been able to demonstrate to stakeholders its commitment to some core values. This has also helped Stormhouse to:

- attract and keep good staff
- provide effective training
- market the company positively

WHO ELSE IS MAKING A POINT?

Many companies throughout the UK understand the real business benefits that can be gained from giving employees opportunities to volunteer in the community. Here are just two:

- **Happy Computers** is an IT training company in London with 46 employees. The company aims to donate the equivalent of 20% of profits (in cash, gifts-in-kind and volunteering) to the community each year. It sustains this by focusing on the concept of 'mutual benefit': the investment should benefit both the community and the Company. It is currently partnering the Pan African Development, Education and Advocacy Programme, an organisation dedicated to assisting disadvantaged people across Africa. The aim is to use the Company's business skills and resources to help a computer training community group in Africa.

The results: Staff from Happy Computers have been able to access a series of challenging and valuable learning opportunities while volunteering at a

community IT centre in Kampala, Uganda. There have also been marketing benefits resulting both from the press coverage and from winning a Special Commendation Award at the prestigious Institute of IT Training Awards in 2003.

- **Stamco Timber** is an independent privately owned timber and builders merchants company with 105 employees, based in St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex. Its diverse community programme aims to promote the business and develop the staff by providing support for local charities, community groups and projects. This involves employee volunteering, sponsorship, donation of produce to schools, and work placements. Over 35% of their staff are actively involved in the Stamco's community activity and on annual open days up to 60% of the workforce have been involved.

The results: By encouraging employees to get involved in the local community, Stamco has been better able to retain and motivate staff. Individuals have improved their confidence through talking to community groups which has helped to boost confidence when talking to customers. Awareness of the business has increased in the community, and this has helped to attract new customers and retain both existing customers and suppliers.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Employee volunteers are significantly more likely to feel pride about their workplace. There is an impact on motivation, skills development, team working and likelihood of staying with the company. Source: Employees of nine companies, Corporate Citizenship Company/MORI, 2001
- A survey of staff whose volunteering had been supported by their employers showed that 70% reported that, as well as personal or professional development, they had an improved perception of their company. Source: FI Group (now Xansa UK), 2001
- 62% of businesses expect to increase the scope of their employee engagement in the community over the next two years. Source: ENGAGE research among managers worldwide, International Business Leaders Forum, October 2002

HOW TO GET STARTED IN A SMALL WAY

- Find out who are enthusiastic volunteers among your staff and how they think the company can support them.
- Discuss possible structures for your company programme (maybe match funding, time allowed, awards)
- Identify relevant community partners wanting volunteer support - a local broker or volunteer centre may help.
- Monitor the programme – and review after six months.

WHO CAN HELP YOU TO GO FURTHER?

Strengthening the performance of your business in this way is really just a matter of common sense. But if you are committed to achieving major business benefits, then it often helps to get help.

National help

Cares is a business-led employee volunteering programme, Business in the Community (BITC) initiative. It provides a fun and simple way to get engaged with your community. Some 35,000 employees have volunteered through Cares. www.bitc.org.uk/cares

Arts and Business involves employees in creative partnerships between companies and the arts and a Board bank. www.aandb.org.uk

Local help

Check with your Chamber of Commerce or Council for Voluntary Service or Volunteer Bureau for information on existing schemes designed to support employee volunteering in your area.

Online Help

Volunteering England is England's volunteer development agency. It works to support and increase the quality, quantity, impact and accessibility of volunteering throughout England. www.volunteering.org.uk/smes

www.csv.org.uk Community Service Volunteers is a UK charity providing volunteering opportunities, training, information and employee volunteering brokerage.

www.timebank.org.uk Timebank is a national volunteering campaign.

www.do-it.org.uk The Do It online database describes itself as the home of UK volunteering on the web.

www.vds.org.uk Volunteer Development Scotland is the Scottish national centre for volunteering with a programme for employee volunteers.

IT'S COMMON SENSE

This briefing paper is one in a series of +points that make up The Journey – a route map designed to help you build a business that people value. You need only do one if you like. It's your journey. It doesn't have to be time consuming or complicated. It's basically common sense.

SMALL BUSINESS CONSORTIUM MEMBERS:

The Small Business Consortium is a group of organisations who share a common goal:

