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### **The Sum of Our Parts: Corporations and Volunteerism**

This edition of the Journal is about synergy. When corporations and volunteer organizations discover opportunities to intersect, the whole can be greater than the sum of their parts. By tapping in to shared goals and values, great things can be accomplished.

*Shifting Conversations* (Winterle), gets us thinking about how social issues are no longer the exclusive burden of nonprofits as corporations are now also engaging in the discussion. Companies too can be a strong force for social change, as demonstrated in *Collaboration with Business* (Wong). Fred Conner's story is a practical and inspiring example of how a small business can make a big difference.

In our quest to create sustainable partnerships with corporations, obstacles can arise. Viva and Johnston explore some potential problems and offer some concrete solutions. Sometimes however, a corporation just might not be a good fit. *When to Say No to Corporations* (Saleh) helps us identify companies that are a good match and those that might be better off with a different volunteer partner.

We look at ways to create win-win situations for corporations and nonprofits with examples from the Calgary Youth Justice Society (Blair) and Community Support Connections (Horne). We explore how to create a corporate volunteer program (Baines and Laycraft) and engage volunteers with some practical examples from the national organization Let's Talk Science (Barnable). The United Way's Day of Caring in Halifax (Bailey) gives us a final example of the synergies between corporations and the volunteer community.

Working together allows corporations to benefit from engaged and skilled employees while nonprofits benefit by leveraging networks and corporate expertise. By harnessing unexpected synergies,



corporations and volunteer communities can together affect social change and create a whole that is much greater than its parts.

Inika Anderson

Editorial Team

### **United Way Halifax's Day of Caring**

by Campbell Bailey, Halifax NS

United Way is a Canadian nonprofit organization focused on strengthening local communities and fighting poverty. All United Ways fund organizations led by dedicated staff members delivering programs for participants. At times, there are never enough hands for the program work that needs to be done, let alone ongoing maintenance of the spaces where services are provided.

A unique initiative helps fill the gap for nonprofit agencies and provides a community building experience for teams of workplace employees. United Way's Day of Caring was first offered in communities across the country more than 20 years ago.

Day of Caring is an opportunity for corporations and the volunteer community to intersect. Five to 20 volunteers from a workplace are paired with a community organization and spend a day working together on a project. Day of Caring projects can involve minor repairs, landscaping, gardening, helping prepare for a special event, renovations to accommodate persons with disabilities or indoor and outdoor painting. Everyone is welcome to participate as the skill level needed for volunteers is minimal.

Participating workplaces have viewed Day of Caring as a team-building opportunity to increase morale with a day outside the office. It also creates positive exposure in the community and provides a deeper understanding of challenges faced by participants in programs at the agency. Most workplaces involved are also contributors to United Way's workplace charitable giving campaign.

Day of Caring provides an opportunity for employees to see the impact of their payroll deductions and annual pledge to community. "United Way is a huge part of our community. Day of Caring is a way to give back, it gets people outside the office, it's a chance for our staff and professors to work together, and you can see the results right here in our city," said Marianne Hagen, Alumni Relations Officer, Day of Caring organizer and volunteer for Dalhousie University's Faculty of Management. "It's a great event, a great day."

Each United Way in the country selects the day or days for Day of Caring. In 2014, United Way Halifax organized a fall Day of Caring and matched 325 volunteers from 25 workplaces to 26 nonprofit organizations. Each year the number of volunteers grows.

With so many participants, the work that is done makes an impact on communities and volunteers. *"All of us have been "given to" each time we volunteer, not by having a building named after us or a tax deduction, but because we've resisted the clamour of self interest and have learned that the greatest gift*



*of all, the greatest honour of all, is to be able to give to someone else," said Darrell Pink, United Way Halifax volunteer and past board chair. Pink made this comment when he accepted the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.*

Day of Caring can be held any time during the spring or fall. Some United Ways include it as part of the fall workplace campaign commitment, while others see it as a wonderful opportunity in the spring to clean up a community garden or freshen up with a new coat of paint. Each United Way recruits workplace volunteers and canvasses community agencies for projects. In Halifax, a generous sponsor supplies paint, brushes, rollers and other items required for projects that are easy to complete. Volunteers are encouraged to bring any of their own items from home if appropriate. Extra rakes and shovels are always welcome. Community agencies have the opportunity to tell volunteers about their work and are also asked to provide lunch. United Way staff visit each site to drop off t-shirts, extra supplies and coffee and muffins that are provided by a sponsor.

For more information, check with your local United Way website or call the office so you can have an understanding of how Day of Caring impacts volunteers and community agencies.

Campbell Bailey is the Resource Development and Communications Officer for United Way Halifax.

### **Creating Connections with Corporations**

by Rosalind Horne, Kitchener Waterloo, Ontario

When Ted Scharf moved to Waterloo Region to play for the Kitchener Rangers hockey club, he stayed with a local Mennonite family. The mother was an amazing cook, feeding the growing hockey player pig tails and Dutch apple pies during his time with them.

Fast forward 20 years to when Meals on Wheels of Kitchener Waterloo was looking for a new office and turned to Ted, now a successful realtor, to help them find their home. His real estate team became enchanted by the small charity, saw a need for volunteers first hand and starting taking turns delivering Meals on Wheels once a week.

During his career, Ted was delighted to give back to his adopted Mennonite family when it came time to sell their family home to downsize. Later, Ted started delivering meals to a client in their new building and was able to stop in to say hello. One day, Ted arrived to pick up his Meals on Wheels route and saw the family who fed and took care of him years ago, were now clients. Decades later, he could return the favour and deliver hot, nutritious meals to the couple who gave him so much in his youth.

Now part of a much larger charity Community Support Connections –*Meals on Wheels and More*, (CSC), Scharf Realty could very well be the longest-standing corporate volunteer the agency may ever see. The success of the continuing relationship has much to do with the business first realizing the need of the organization and then witnessing their impact first hand.



The reality is, many nonprofits receive requests from generous, well-meaning organizations that want their staff to come in for a half day or full day to volunteer in a manner that provides a meaningful, team-building experience for their group. For organizations like CSC who primarily offer individual opportunities, this can be a challenge.

There is not a one-size-fits-all-solution. Each nonprofit and each corporate partner have their own interests in mind, but planning ahead can help avoid making a custom volunteer opportunity into a make-work project for already stretched staff.

It is important for the nonprofit to determine what are the goals and objectives of a corporate volunteer opportunity, so they can successfully tailor standard volunteer-driven programming to accommodate the unique needs and availability of corporate partners.

When one employer approached CSC for a one-time volunteer activity, the goal was to introduce the group to an individual volunteer opportunity they may be interested in pursuing in their own time.

In one of their 11 different programs, CSC has a list of isolated seniors and adults with disabilities who are waiting to be matched with a friendly visiting volunteer. To accommodate the group, they organized an event in which volunteers could host clients at a local farm for a tour, lunch and a trial of one of the agency's free, gentle exercise programs.

The event not only introduced potential volunteers to the friendly visiting program, but, in an unexpected result, connected clients with each other. Some exchanged phone numbers and the next day carpoled to one of the group exercise classes offered by the agency, which reduced their isolation in the same way as a friendly visiting match, but with the added benefits of physical activity.

Having a wish list on hand of special projects your organization would love to do if only time allowed can help prevent scrambling to come up with something on short notice. This is so you do not have to close the door on what could potentially be the start of a beneficial, long-term relationship. This could include organizing a garage sale by cleaning out a storage area, cleaning and relocating items, pricing and even running the garage sale themselves. It may be to tackle a design project, to review your website or other skill-based projects for which you are short on funding.

It may also be worthwhile to invest staff time to plan brochure delivery routes to pharmacies, doctors' offices and community centres, broken down into two-hour trips. With very little notice, the nonprofit can accommodate a group split into teams or even fill half a day with delivery to add to a different half-day project for those wanting a full-day experience.

Set expectations early on by posting guidelines on your website that help corporate groups think through what they are looking for and what is reasonable to expect from your end. Include suggested timelines for how far ahead they should connect with you before their volunteer date. Provide days of the week on which you may need more help or that are easier for your staff to accommodate larger groups based on programs. Let them know ahead of time if you require a company to provide a budget to support their project or if they are responsible for providing a meal as required.



Managers of volunteers interested in filling volunteer needs may be quick to accommodate, but it is important to find ways of working with corporate partners that are not overly labour-intensive and highly customized yet still fit your organizational mission.

Rosalind Horne is the Resource Development Lead at Community Support Connections – *Meals on Wheels and More (CSC)*. CSC is a charitable organization that provides a range of supports and services that enable seniors and adults with disabilities to live at home with independence and dignity.

### **Employee Volunteer Programs: Process & Product**

by Brendan Baines and Hailey Laycraft

If you Google “how to create an employee volunteering program (EVP),” you are met with over 14 million results, many of which are three-, six-, or eight-step guides to creating your own EVP. These tips may help, but creating an EVP is not as simple as it seems. Every company has its own cultural quirks that must be taken into consideration. For example in London Benchmarking Group Canada (LBG), a network of 36 companies seeking to achieve the highest standard in community investment in Canada, some challenges have emerged that likely affect other companies. It is important to note that “best practice” is both an end goal and a journey. By understanding hurdles and how they were overcome, companies can more effectively talk about how to achieve an ideal EVP.

#### **Design and implementation**

Solid EVP design is integral for success, but some of the best companies do not have a well-defined direction. 12 out of 36 LBG Canada companies have a strategy that is unclear, which can result in slower uptake. As a relatively new company, Cenovus had the opportunity to build a program from scratch. In 2011, Cenovus began launching an extensive community involvement program that included six distinct programs for employee participation.

“For many companies, narrowing the focus of their volunteer program is a key factor in program design. However, at Cenovus, we want to have something for everyone. To do that we have to know the needs of our staff and their individual motivations”, says Megan Marshall, Senior Community Programs Advisor.

Despite this advantageous starting point, Cenovus encountered challenges in implementation that many companies can relate to:

#### **Nonprofit capacity**

Many nonprofits lack the physical space and resources to engage large team-based volunteering opportunities. Rather than accepting this limitation, Cenovus seeks out alternatives like mobilizing more than 300 volunteers at an airport hangar to make 20,000 sandwiches for the Drop-In Centre and Alpha House, setting a Guinness World Record in the process. Recognizing that team volunteering could align



with existing team-building opportunities, Cenovus engaged business units to participate. This invites new types of collaboration and contributes to healthy work relationships.

### **Viable volunteering opportunities**

Many employees of resource-based companies work in remote locations which mean they have little time to give and lack access to community partners. This can negatively impact volunteering opportunities for staff. To counter this, Cenovus decided to extend its Dollars-4-Doers program (volunteer grants) to spouses and family members, which has created a new level of ambassadors for the company and its employee volunteering program.

### **Lack of management support**

Many EVPs suffer from a lack of management support, who often see a conflict with work priorities rather than the benefits of an engaged workforce. Cenovus preempted this issue by intentionally not including paid time off for personal volunteering in its program design, unless that volunteering was geared towards professional development or team building. The skills-based volunteer program provides unique opportunities for employees to develop new skills and leverage their current skills through volunteering. It is more easily supported by managers as it aligns with the company's employee development initiatives.

### **Communication**

Once an EVP is underway, it is essential to openly and regularly communicate about the program. Even amongst LBG Canada companies, 11 of 36 have "no clear internal understanding of the value of employee volunteering" For employees to contribute to an EVP, they will need to understand why the program exists. LBG Canada participant TELUS spells this out clearly for its stakeholders: "TELUS believes that in order to do well in business, it must first do well in the communities where they operate". Once a company's rationale is clear, there are a few things that can be done to help communicate the success of its employee volunteering program. TELUS successfully addressed the following two areas in which many companies falter:

#### **Different strokes for different folks**

Employee volunteering is an indicator of an engaged workplace, and is relevant to a number of stakeholders who interact with information in different ways. TELUS has found that the best way to tell its story is to include EVP in its Corporate Sustainability Report, annual report, website, social media and regional ambassador newsletters. By using different mediums such as text, imagery and video, TELUS is better able to reach various audience

#### **Demonstrating change**

Some data can most easily be measured in numbers, others in anecdotal stories. TELUS' Days of Giving provides volunteer totals, as well as targets and measurable improvements in relation to the year before. This highlights the long-term contributions employees are making within communities, enforces



transparency, and creates an indicator that can contribute to an EVP's story over time. Stories can be anecdotal, but are a significant way to showcase how an EVP is creating change.

"I feel blessed to work for a company that not only encourages but provides opportunities for the team to contribute to social change in communities across Canada. It matters and I think it makes us better people and employees" says Sarah, TELUS team member.

### **Evaluation**

As with any new endeavour, it is important to fail forward: fail small, fast and learn from it. This is why evaluation is so crucial and should be considered throughout the EVP's life cycle.

### **Do not expect immediate success**

Many companies view themselves as unique, which unfortunately means challenges will be unique to their experience. With this in mind, Cenovus used a phased approach to the rollout of its EVP. By evaluating how each program phase is received, it has been able to make continuous improvements to ensure more effective implementation. This principle can be adapted on a smaller scale when introducing a new aspect of an EVP or when testing a pilot program with a subsection of your staff.

### **Evaluation is not an afterthought**

When Cenovus partnered with the Calgary Youth Justice Society for its *In the Lead* program, a co-created leadership development program that links Cenovus employees with at-risk youth, outcomes for both organizations were made clear. The program has had a tremendous impact on employee engagement. Ninety four per cent of participating employees said they "were more satisfied with their role at work while participating in the *In the Lead Program*". Thirteen out of 36 LBG Canada companies state that they suffer from a "lack of staffing resources to manage the program effectively." An EVP can positively impact employee engagement in the workplace, so asking the right questions will provide the necessary ammunition to show an executive audience its value.

There is no one-way or step-by-step guide to create a successful employee volunteering program, so understanding the unique challenges and opportunities you face is imperative to success. It is important for participating companies to assess the needs of employees to reflect their desires in an employee volunteering program and to take into consideration the limitations of resources, funding, and time that affect the organization.

Brendan Baines works as Manager, Community Investment for SiMPACT Strategy Group. As the facilitator for LBG Canada, a network of companies advancing best practice in community investment, SiMPACT works with companies in Canada to understand, value, maximize, and communicate how they create positive social change in community.

With international and domestic experience in the for profit, private, and public sectors, Brendan is passionate about facilitating the collision of these worlds for the advancement of a more equitable and resilient society.





Hailey Laycraft worked as the Manager of Special Projects with both LBG Canada and SROI to communicate impact. A graduate of Mount Royal University's Public Relations program, Hailey has experience working for both private and non-profit organizations and specializes in writing executive summaries, reports, and communications plans. She is currently pursuing the study of Law in 2015.

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## When to Say “No” to Corporations

by Nefertiti Saleh

Over the past several years, the role of the private sector in supporting the work of the charitable sector, particularly how corporations can address social challenges, has gathered increasing attention. As a result, many nonprofits are considering how to engage the private sector more fully in their work. In particular, the value of corporate volunteering programs has become widely demonstrated and the corporate sector is being taken much more seriously in nonprofit circles. The benefits to nonprofits and corporations working together on corporate volunteering programs have affected everything from employee recruitment, retention and leadership development for companies releasing their employees, to nonprofits being able to address skills gaps, diversify resources and increase the visibility of their programming. With the Shared Value movement, a management principle that highlights the role of business in solving social problems, benefits must now be directly linked to the bottom line, for both the corporation and the nonprofit organization. The desire to increase the involvement of the private sector also raises questions about when one might need to limit or even refuse that involvement.

Cuso International has recognized the significant and unique role that the private sector can play in supporting their development objectives through corporate volunteers. For years they have relied on the talents and skills of individuals from the corporate world to deliver on their mission to reduce poverty and inequality. To get the most out of the skills the corporate sector can provide, Cuso International provides a number of flexible yet focused volunteering opportunities, to deliver a range of benefits to their overseas partner organizations, the corporate volunteers and the companies involved. These benefits are sometimes immediate and easy to identify, however more often they are





multifaceted and long term, as the corporations and nonprofits share and expand their networks, open doors for each other and support each other's core business.

Balancing the needs of all who are involved while still prioritizing the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries requires great care and attention; otherwise, it simply will not work. As a starting point with any type of partnership, corporate or not, it is important to ensure that both the nonprofit organization and the company understand and agree that the risks and benefits are shared. Each partner should be equally involved in co-creating the partnership's activities, bringing contributions to the partnership and committing to mutual accountability. In addition to the usual partnership development frameworks, more nonprofits are starting to look at additional tools and approaches including screening criteria when it comes to engaging with corporations. These tools can guide ethical decision-making and help manage risks, expectations and responsibilities.

Many organizations are using a range of due diligence tools and resources to steer their engagement with the corporate sector in a direction that works best for their programming and their mission. Some create tools to be used generally across all sectors and others employ tools that can be tailored to engaging specific industries such as extractives. The screening process may be conducted by an individual volunteer researcher, an in-house team or a hired consultant. For many, the first step is to identify companies that would be off-limits for partnerships. It might not be in the form of a blacklist, but many development organizations have identified a set of industries with which they will not partner. The three most cited as being automatically dismissed in partnership consideration are the arms, tobacco and pornography industries, which many organizations see as harmful to their beneficiaries and counter to their missions.

Cuso International sees great potential in uniting development organizations with corporations but also recognizes the need to proceed with care and caution to make sure the fit is right for all. It takes a proactive and responsible approach to engagement with the private sector connecting only with carefully selected partners from North America or one of the program countries. The organization follows a corporate engagement policy that clearly outlines the parameters of working with the private sector. The policy includes explicit guidelines that must be followed before a partnership can move forward. Guidelines include a review of a potential partner's corporate social responsibility focus, as well as its human rights and ethics policies. In some instances, Cuso International will initiate an independent, third party screening process to evaluate potential partners and identify commonalities and risks, reputational and otherwise. In all cases, the decision to proceed must ultimately come from the top.

Cuso International believes that all forms of engagement with respect to corporate partnerships should have clear direction and purpose and should be reflected in written agreements specifying relevant terms and limitations, especially when volunteers are involved. Equally important is continual and consistent evaluation of corporate partnerships, the value of the volunteers involved and impact on programming. However, Cuso also recognizes the need to occasionally turn down a potential corporate partner when the fit is not right, as hard as this might be!



Nefertiti Saleh has been involved with numerous public private partnerships over the last 9 years in varied roles at Cuso International. In her current role as Manager of Outreach and Partnerships, she has focused much of her time on reviewing prospective corporate partnerships, their alignment with organizational mandate and whether a public private partnership is a suitable way forward to enhance global development efforts.

### **Engaging and Supporting Corporate Volunteers**

by Jennifer Barnable

In an age of increased corporate social responsibility, volunteerism in Canada and around the world has grown in leaps and bounds. Corporate relationship building and contributions to national charities and non-profits no longer stop at donation cheques; the focus has shifted to shared value. Businesses and their employees are becoming keener to be involved in meaningful volunteer initiatives that strengthen their communities.

At Let's Talk Science, we have seen the profound effect corporate volunteerism has on the progress we are making towards our vision of bringing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning to Canadian children and youth. Our supporters' encouragement of employee engagement and volunteerism adds significant value to the work we do, as well as providing appealing opportunities for employees to give back to their communities by supporting the goals of organizations like ours.

In this article, we will share some of our best practices and lessons learned to help volunteer managers navigate their approach to corporate volunteerism partnerships.

#### **Start with support, end with support**

To be successful at engaging employees from our supporter base, Let's Talk Science has learned that we need to support volunteerism from start to finish. As an organization focusing on youth development where engaging outreach volunteers is at the heart of what we do, we have modified our volunteer management of employee volunteers in a variety of ways. First, we seek to find the strengths of our supporters and match their strengths with our opportunities. We work to make it easy to show up and volunteer, knowing how very busy corporate volunteers are. We put in place a corporate liaison person to manage volunteer relationships, provide specific and relevant orientation and customize recognition or thanks to suit both the volunteer and the corporate partner. Offering employee engagement is a strategic element that can be included in any organization's application to a potential corporate funder which shares this objective.

#### **Options and suitability: volunteer matchmaking**



In our experience, it is important to be clear about the options a volunteer has available within your organization. Whether it is a one-off or long-term volunteer role, online or in-person, the first step is to let your partner's potential volunteers know the kind of commitment level a volunteer experience will require. Managing expectations on both sides is necessary, so that the organization is clear about what it needs in a volunteer and the corporate partner (or in individual cases, the volunteer) expresses what it is looking for and can offer.

Let's Talk Science, for example, can engage corporate volunteers in an online role by asking them to write timely scientific articles and STEM career profiles for its CurioCity youth program. These opportunities can be created with a flexible schedule in mind. Whereas, for in-person volunteer opportunities at Let's Talk Science special events, the volunteer would need to know in advance what kind of work is involved, the ages of the youth they will interact with, as well as the hours and other important logistics.

Matching the potential volunteer's interests and skills to the opportunity is also key to a more satisfying experience. While some volunteers may be quite comfortable with behind-the-scenes tasks like event preparation or assisting with a registration desk, others might be eager to interact with the public by leading activities or taking on a guest speaking role.

To gauge who fits best where, it is helpful to have tools like an initial volunteer application, survey or profile completed by each volunteer. This lays down the first logistics you will need to consider, including when they're most available, what they are looking for or interested in and any background they have that coincides with the organization's programs, events or initiatives. For Let's Talk Science, we like to find out what STEM field volunteers come from, to help make the best volunteer/role match possible.

### **Accessibility and flexibility**

Accessibility and flexibility will ultimately determine the final type of volunteer engagement. Some corporations will offer their employees a day off to volunteer with an organization. Let's Talk Science has found that we need to be flexible when working with groups of volunteers from our corporate relationships and that a back-up plan is always wise. In general, when volunteering at an event or school, an employee is paired with other Let's Talk Science volunteers and staff.

### **Liaison and orientation**

Let's Talk Science has allocated time and expertise to manage volunteer relationships, and to orchestrate recruitment and coordination of the volunteer base. The manager of volunteer resources also coordinates employee volunteer engagement and provides detailed and relevant training to prepare volunteers for their contributions to the specific program or event. We recommend volunteer orientation information tailored to the needs of enlisted volunteers to give them an overview of the opportunities available and examples of past volunteering initiatives and events they can start to get excited about. At this stage, 99% of the contact with employee volunteers from corporate partners is managed via e-mail communication.



**Their voice is your voice** Volunteers become an extension of your organization, and as a result, part of your voice. When a volunteer has an outstanding or meaningful experience, their words strengthen the organization's reputation and validate the efforts of its volunteers. For employee engagement, this is even stronger and positive volunteer experiences help to cement a relationship between a supporter and an organization. It also means that people within the company will know more about how your organization is making a difference. Employee engagement can also leverage positive attention from your funders who may be interested in communicating what you do through social media and other channels.

"Through Dow's partnership with Let's Talk Science, I had the opportunity to talk about my career in science, technology, math and engineering to a group of grade 6 to 8 students at the Let's Talk Science Challenge here in Edmonton," said Angela Ryan, Environmental Health and Safety Regulatory Manager at Dow Alberta Operations. "The kids were super excited after participating in a fun-filled day of events and were amazed to hear how Dow products impact their everyday lives. It was an incredibly rewarding, and fun, volunteering opportunity!"

As you can see, this can be a powerful tool for highlighting the benefits of your organization's programs or services and serve as a testimonial to be featured on corporate and organizational websites, newsletters, social media campaigns, volunteer recruitment and promotional materials.

### **Recognition**

Let's Talk Science has offered to send reference letters to employees' supervisors to recognize their efforts and contributions. Certificates of participation and thank you cards are always a nice touch, while sharing volunteers-in-action photos is also very well received by partners and employees alike. They can be used in corporate newsletters, on company intranets and on corporate social media channels. Let's Talk Science regularly thanks partners, supporters and volunteers through various promotional material, social media campaigns and customized gestures of recognition appropriate for the corporate partner.

### **Conclusion**

Myriad opportunities exist for organizations that have volunteers through corporate partnerships. With support, communication, recognition and an organized approach to engaging volunteers, before you know it you will be equipped with a well-matched, trained volunteer base that will add value to your organization. In return, volunteers and supporters will enjoy a meaningful volunteer experience giving back to their communities.

Jennifer Barnable is a Communications Officer at Let's Talk Science. To learn more about Let's Talk Science, which relies heavily on its large force of skilled professional volunteers across Canada, visit [www.letstalkscience.ca](http://www.letstalkscience.ca).



by Denise Blair

A partnership between the nonprofit and corporate sectors can be so much more than a charity simply providing a business with an opportunity to invest some of their profits in a good cause. Calgary Youth Justice Society (CYJS) and corporate Calgary came together in a new way to create an innovative and successful partnership, resulting in positive outcomes for CYJS and their youth clients, the corporation and their employees and the community.

It all started with an idea for a leadership and character development program for young people who were struggling to navigate their teen years. These young people, not typically seen as leaders in a traditional sense, often have unrealized strengths and incredible potential if they are given a chance. The strengths-based four-month long program, called “In the Lead”, incorporates a positive adult influence in the form of corporate volunteer coaches who are trained and supported to mentor the young people in the program.

CYJS was looking for a corporate partner who was willing to share their financial resources and their human resources. In exchange, the company would realize not only a social return on investment, but their employee’s experience in the program would also produce an internal return on investment.

Aside from aligning with the corporate investment priorities, it was evident early on that there was also a synergy between core values. An openness to innovation allowed for the exploration and development of promising practices and a chance for each partner to lead the way in their respective sectors. The use of a strengths-based approach and the role of mentoring proved to be not just beneficial for the nonprofit organization, it was important on the corporate side too. The skills that the employees developed in their volunteer experience transferred to the workplace and contributed to the development of a desired corporate culture. Employee volunteers and their colleagues from various levels and departments inside the company reported that their experience enhanced their relationships at home and at work.

With mutual interest in making a difference their partnership journey began. Understanding and respect for each other’s expertise, interests and needs ensured “What’s in it for me?” was pushed aside for “What’s in it for everyone?”. This level of trust and focus on each other opened the door to try new things and to successfully tackle challenges as a team.

It is hard to say how much of the success of this partnership could be attributed to timing, individual personalities or other nuances but there were some discoveries along the way that may help to inform other corporate and nonprofit partnerships. The game-changers for the respective parties are outlined below.

### **Corporate game-changers:**

#### **Invest in development**



Innovative pilot programs can be very impactful. Accepting that nonprofits will not necessarily have all of the answers up front, connecting at “What’s possible?”, valuing innovation and embracing the opportunity to co-create reaps great rewards.

### **Go deep with employee engagement**

Some charities struggle with recruiting corporate volunteers and balk at expecting them to engage at a high level. When volunteering is embraced by the corporation as a skills-based opportunity to support leadership development., expectations can be higher. Generous time for training during work hours and credit given for employee professional development pursuits are a few ways that a corporation can communicate the importance of the program to employees.

### **All-in investment**

Having secure multi-year funding, including time and resources to build the program and engage key stakeholders, allows for a focus on program goals and development over fund raising. It also gives room to focus on a unique co-creation experience to deliver desired results for the corporation.

### **Leverage corporate resources and networks**

Providing nonprofits access to corporate resources and expertise is invaluable. Investing time and resources in volunteer recruitment and providing space and catering for volunteer training and program events go a long way towards increasing nonprofit capacity. Valuable expertise, beyond the community investment team can be garnered from areas such as: recruiting, leadership development, human resources, community investment, media relations, events team, internal communications, government affairs and information technology. Opportunities created for nonprofit staff to expand their own professional networks can include inviting the nonprofit as co-presenters at professional associations and conferences and as guests at corporate sponsored events and functions.

### **Nonprofit game-changers:**

#### **Embrace corporate expertise**

Nonprofits should not only allow for corporate participation in their programs, they should be designed around their contribution. This means being committed to customizing the program to fit the corporation’s culture and interests.

#### **Leverage a strong track record**

Investing in a small organization can come with some perceived risk. This may be alleviated by a strong track record of building and sustaining programs and important relationships with key stakeholders.

#### **Focus on quality improvement**



The program must be adaptable, shifting to accommodate emerging needs of the corporation and their employees. This requires a feedback loop to identify where improvements can be made to ensure a positive experience for all involved.

### **Measure and share results**

A program evaluation that includes measurement of the nonprofit clients as well as the corporate volunteers helps to communicate a shared value. A report generated to celebrate outcomes for the corporation that appeals to a corporate audience helps to build awareness and support inside the company. There are also many ways to publicly recognize the corporation for their investment including published articles, news stories and nomination of the corporation and/or their employees for external awards and recognition.

Most definitions of a partnership describe it as a “relationship between owners”; a fitting description to reflect this rewarding mutual experience that can achieve results that dramatically outweigh the inputs.

Denise Blair is the founder and Executive Director of Calgary Youth Justice Society. Denise has an undergraduate degree in Criminology and an MBA. Her passion is helping others to reach their full potential by focusing on their strengths.

## **How to Create Meaningful and Sustainable Corporate Partnerships**

by Sabrina Viva and Christine Johnston

Have you ever received a call from a company that wants to bring in 100 employees to volunteer next Friday? How about nonprofits that seem to have several reasons why they cannot accommodate employee volunteers that just want to help their community?

Today, more and more businesses and nonprofits are working together to create societal impact in their communities. Though they have similar goals, they often struggle to realize their potential. The key to having a sustainable relationship is to create strategic partnerships, which provide equality and accountability, amongst many other benefits to each party. This is not simple, as there are several challenges that occur all too often when trying to create strategic partnerships. While this can create frustration and the illusion that these partnerships are not worth your time and resources, they actually have significant benefits.

Below we address four common challenges and provide the solutions you can use to create a sustainable relationship that results in greater impact in your community.

### **Equitable collaboration**

A common challenge that is often encountered is the power dynamics potentially at play between the nonprofit and corporate sectors. For example, companies might not understand the complexities of their nonprofit partner and therefore undervalue what they can bring to the table. When one sector is





held in higher esteem than the other, instead of being seen through a collaborative lens, the relationship will remain transactional. This is not sustainable.

Solution: It is important to recognize that both partners bring tremendous and unique value to the relationship. Dialogue, and ultimately the partnership, must be approached as a two-way street rather than a one-way transaction.<sup>1</sup> This equal footing is essential for a sustainable relationship. To do this, partners must engage through intentional collaboration.

### **Sectoral language**

Different language between sectors means that sometimes miscommunication and partnership breakdown can happen, even when stakeholders have the same goals in mind. For example, ROI (return on investment) and SROI (social return on investment) are common acronyms and terms that are being used in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) space, but not in the nonprofit sector.

Solution: Avoid exclusionary, sector-oriented jargon when getting your point across. During your first few meetings with the organizations or companies you hope to collaborate with, discuss some of the common terms and language you wish to use together. This can inform all of your conversations going forward. As soon as you're speaking the same language, your common goals will become clear.<sup>2</sup>

### **Organizational culture**

Each organization and company has its own organizational culture that consists of customs, norms, and non-negotiables. A common barrier to successful cross-sector collaboration is the lack of cultural adaptation on both sides of the partnership.

Solution: It is only when the focus remains on a combination of strategy and culture, never sacrificing one for the other, where programs have the potential to achieve higher than ever impacts in the community.<sup>3</sup> At Realized Worth, we encourage new partners to have an initial meeting to scope out these non-negotiable cultural elements, along with objectives and existing parameters, which then provides a "sandbox" within which the partners can work together.

### **Resources management**

In most partnerships, the private sector has the resources and the nonprofit sector has local knowledge and the trust of the community. The capacity of each partner's resources must be considered. For example, many nonprofits simply do not have the human capital to absorb the inputs from all corporate partners. Equally so, companies may have accountability requirements towards their shareholders that restrict the authority they have to make certain donations to their nonprofit partners.



Solution: At Realized Worth, we encourage partners to conduct an inventory of available resources and their capacity. Discuss resources and time management upfront on both sides to ensure expectations are taken into account in the partnership design phase. This ensures that should a company need metrics for quarterly reporting, there is enough capacity within the nonprofit partner to provide this data on a quarterly basis. If not, then the company instead assigns an employee volunteer to collect and report this data. Also make sure to discuss what you will work on to provide together. The best partnerships result from collaborative products from pooled resources, such as the co-creation of a deliverable or co-management of a volunteer event.

The solutions we offer require time and energy from both partners. The lack of quick fix solutions can create frustration, but focusing on the long-term success of your partnership has significant benefits for you, your partner and the community.

Here are just a few of the many benefits within cross-sector partnerships:

#### **Nonprofit Benefits**

- Increase in resources with specialized skills tailored to ongoing services
- Predictable resources/capacity

#### **Company Benefits**

- Valuable employee skill and leadership development opportunities;
- Meaningful employee engagement<sup>4</sup>
- Consistent opportunities for employees

#### **Mutual Benefits**

- Long-term partnership development
- Long-term impact in your local community

Taking the time to create a strategic partnership allows the common challenges of cross-sector partnerships to be overcome. Moreover, when both parties sit down to develop their relationship, they are going beyond a meaningless transactional engagement. They are creating opportunities for their employees to have a meaningful experience. For nonprofits, they are leveraging resources and human capital beyond their scope<sup>5</sup>. The result is a sustainable relationship with the potential to impact the community in which they live and work.

Sabrina Viva is a Project Manager with Realized Worth in Toronto. In addition to seemingly endless fundraising initiatives, Sabrina has dedicated more than a decade to working with nonprofit based volunteers, in hospitals, and on international on-the-ground relief efforts.



Christine Johnston is a Project Manager at Realized Worth, working on client files implementing and managing global corporate volunteering programs, as well as on IMPACT 2030, the only private sector led initiative aiming to align corporate volunteering efforts with the post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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### **Small Business, Big Difference**

by Fred Connors

In 2013, when hurricane Juan ripped through downtown Halifax, I woke up to find the business I operated for 18 years had been destroyed. The roof had been taken off the building and the contents of my once beautiful salon and the space itself were not salvageable. This was hard to digest immediately, but I soon found that in this disaster lay a fantastic opportunity.



The opportunity came in the form of an abandoned Bank of Nova Scotia building in the city's north end, a community known for crime, drugs, sex-trade and many other issues. The building was covered in graffiti and occupied by rats on the inside and drug addicts in the back alley. It was on a once busy and prosperous corner, a short walk from the downtown and the cheapest piece of commercial real-estate in the city. After many funding challenges, it would become the home to my newly imagined brand, FRED., a combined hair salon, cafe and art gallery.

I had been told by many, possibly all, that no one would feel safe enough to venture to this part of town for the high-end experience we would offer. It was a neighborhood people that had lost faith in and it had been ignored. A hair salon would not change that. I was determined. So I sold my home to access the capital needed to build it and in a few busy months FRED. opened its doors I built it and people came. White, middle-class people ventured to a part of their city, many for the first time, to do business, get a haircut, have lunch and view art exhibits by local artists. It seemed we would be successful.

I saw immediately that the relationship to my success and the success of others in the community were linked. Small businesses were struggling; there were challenges faced by the homeless, sex workers, and addicts of all kinds, and limited opportunities for inner-city youth. My biggest challenge wasn't rebuilding my business in an abandoned bank, but the many small steps needed to help restore a neighborhood, so those around me could have the success they also deserved.

Within two months of opening, I founded The Commons North Business and Cultural Association. We were a volunteer group of local businesses collaborating on a vision for our district. We met monthly at my cafe to face the challenges of doing business in this marginalized neighborhood. My vision was one of vibrancy and prosperity and most others felt more policing and security were the only options for our neighborhood to grow. I did not. Solutions, not arrests were needed. A clean neighborhood, a sense of pride and opportunities for those who were struggling was what was needed.

With my partner Joel we launched a neighborhood cleanup, serving coffee and muffins to locals, including the homeless, and providing garbage bags and brooms to all. Dozens of bags were filled; the neighborhood looked cared for and people in the community worked together and felt great about the outcome.

Next, local nonprofits and outreach organizations came to us for help. FRED. hosted fundraisers for homeless women and their children with Adsum House, as well as street-engaged youth with Leave Out ViolencE(LOVE), outreach for sex workers with Stepping Stone, families in crisis with Family SOS, addiction programs, mental health initiatives and more.

A small initiative led to our largest success in the community. Recognizing the abundance of food in our cafe kitchen, Joel and I started a breakfast program for inner-city girls facing the challenge of poverty. Middle-school girls were invited to come to our cafe weekly for breakfast before they went to school. They ordered off the menu, like every other customer, experimented reluctantly with new tastes and flavours and slowly learned to be comfortable in these new surroundings. We used this opportunity to have discussions about leadership, kindness, generosity, respect and the need to demonstrate these



qualities in all that we do. Our time with these amazing young women may have helped them face some of the adversity in their lives with more confidence.

Our breakfast program led to an employability program, providing some of these girls with job skills and training by mentoring them in our business. For some, this led to full-time employment at FRED. and they have become valued members of our team.

The Commons North Business and Cultural Association became the North End Business District and is now funded by the city with the goal of celebrating the uniqueness of our community and fostering prosperity for everyone. I am proud to be a founding member.

Eleven years later, I look back on this community that people did not believe in. A community where I saw only opportunity when others saw obstacles, where people feared to go and everyone thought we would fail. It is now a very different picture. Street festivals and community celebrations are abundant, empty shops have been replaced with boutiques, cafes, bike shops, restaurants, bookstores, food stores and everything needed for a vibrant community. The people who struggled are still here but many just struggle less. Homes have been refurbished; mixed affordable housing is being built; moms and baby-strollers are on the sidewalks; kids fill the backyards and community gardens are planted.

This is the vision I had of this amazing place, The North End. It did not need police to solve our problems. It just needed people to care. It needed a succession of small steps, little triumphs, an engaged community and love.

I am not responsible for its growth; I just planted a few seeds.

Fred Connors, owner of FRED. Halifax, NS

### **Collaboration with Business: A Force for Social Change**

by Jocelyn Wong, Vancouver, British Columbia

The world as we know it is different than the one our parents grew up in and, in all likelihood, it will continue to evolve for generations to come. Change is inevitable: it happens whether we like it or not. But often, it is also necessary. Today, for instance, to solve increasingly complex social issues, we need to change the way we address them.

As funding for nonprofit organizations is reduced, they are being asked to be more and more creative with the funds they receive. It is apparent, however, that nonprofit organizations cannot confront social issues alone, which is why collaboration with the business sector offers such promise. In fact, this approach can be a powerful force for social change.

In 2012, Edelman conducted a study that looked at consumer attitudes on social purpose. Canadian highlights included:



- <89% of Canadian respondents believe that business should place at least equal weight on business and society (vs. 87% globally);
- only 21% of Canadian respondents believe business is performing well in addressing societal issues (vs. 28% globally); and
- on par with the global average, 80% of Canadian respondents believe it is critical for companies to make consumers aware of their efforts.

Nonprofits working with the business sector is not a new concept; what is new is businesses being involved in social change. The Edelman study highlights the expectation from the public that businesses have a role to play in addressing social issues. In fact, according to respondents, businesses should divide their time evenly between profit-making activities and those related to social good.

Collaboration can be defined as “work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something.” The Provision of monetary donations by businesses is not truly collaborative; this type of support is more transactional. While it is beneficial, and no doubt much appreciated, there is no creation of a shared value between the nonprofit and the business. Professor Michael Porter (2011), at Harvard School of Business, defines shared value as a principle “which involves creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges”. Shared value is seen as the intersection where achieving business goals also meets societal needs.

Porter and Kramer (2011) make a point to differentiate shared value from corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR focuses on how a company is or can be socially responsible. It is not part of the business plan. Instead, it is often a separate department. It is a way for the company to show how it is doing good in the world, even though creating social value is not part of its underlying mission. Shared value, on the other hand, places a business in a competitive position because the business is leveraging its resources and expertise to create both profit and social value.

This does not mean that CSR is irrelevant or unimportant, nor does it mean that corporate volunteering will cease. What it does mean is that collaboration between a business and a nonprofit sets the foundation for CSR and employer-supported volunteering (ESV).

Volunteer Canada published a list of ESV examples, from flexible work schedules to paid time off. These areas of support are valuable to discuss with a business in their collaboration with a nonprofit organization, but it is important that the social value resulting from the collaboration is at the centre of the partnership. We have seen recently how businesses are beginning to place social responsibility at the core of their mission. A good example is the shoe company, TOMS, whose business model is based on social responsibility: for every pair of shoes they sell, they donate another to someone in need.

Other models exist. Through sales of their products, Dove supports self-esteem programming for girls, and for over 10 years has run the Real Beauty campaign. In Canada, we have Bell and their successful Let’s Talk campaign, which seeks to end the stigma of mental illness. Campbell’s Company, meanwhile, is engaged in alleviating hunger.



All of the above companies have one thing in common: they have their social mission built right into the work they do and they work in partnership with nonprofit organizations to achieve their goals. They are leveraging their resources and expertise in their product areas resulting in profit, but at the same time they are creating social value. The question is how can nonprofits and businesses collaborate in a meaningful way?

Establishing a shared value is a way to build meaningful partnerships between businesses and nonprofit organizations. Collaboration means sharing in the successes as well as the risks. It is reciprocal. Some best practices to build strong partnerships between businesses and nonprofits include:

- creating an ongoing working relationship by having a partnership agreement;
- setting clear objectives and expectations and an understanding of roles and responsibilities;
- researching and understanding a business' social value and its priorities to determine good fit;
- researching and understanding a nonprofit's social impact and how it aligns with the business;
  - offering different opportunities to be involved;
  - being open and transparent;
  - being clear and discussing potential partners and why;
  - determining how and what each will contribute to the partnership;
  - clarifying mutual benefits; and
  - evaluating and measuring impact.

As indicated, there is a shift happening in the business sector and it is important that nonprofit organizations understand how to collaborate with businesses to achieve a greater impact. There are various resources available. Your local volunteer centre is a good place to start.

The focus of this article is to highlight the shift in the way businesses are engaging in social issues and the need for nonprofit organizations to recognize how they can work collaboratively with businesses to address social issues. Collaboration, in this sense, means moving beyond being responsible to taking on responsibility and developing a better managed and understood partnership process that leads to a mutually beneficial relationship.

Jocelyn Wong, (MEd) is the General Manager of Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives. She brings over 15 years of experience in the field of volunteer management with interest in community development, facilitation, and program and policy planning.

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### **Shifting Conversations Shape the Volunteer Movement**

by Melanie Winterle

Over the last decade or so, I have noticed that conversations about community have shifted. What used to be jargon of the nonprofit sector is now common language across all sectors. The concepts of social change and social innovation have been adopted by government, corporations and educational institutions. Along with this shift in language, is increased traffic of all sectors into community. Everyone wants to make a contribution and to drive change.

All this activity and heightened awareness of the potential for social change has created a tension between the nonprofit sector and those seeking to build community through corporate volunteerism. The trick is to use this tension as a tool for starting meaningful partnership conversations.

Here are some things to consider for those cross sector conversations. Some things will be quite obvious to you but your corporate friend may not have the same understanding. Your goal is to help them realize that while the act of volunteering does not intrinsically include a monetary value, the act of connecting and hosting such things like days of caring, have monetary and other resource costs. You are an experience broker and a community coach. You need to communicate your professional value loud and clear. The consequence of this will enhance the perceived value of your service and hopefully draw them back for a deeper experience.

Points to consider for cross-sector conversations:

- Volunteering is your contribution to your community, it is a partnership based on mutuality and it is not a simple transaction. The act of volunteering is a simultaneous process of giving and receiving.



- Check your assumptions and talk about the real value, limitations and expectations that each party brings to the table. Then use the same filters for co-designing a volunteer experience.
- Understand and or uncover power imbalances. Often the corporate partners are seen as the principle “giver” and nonprofit partners are seen as the principle “taker”. The truth is, the nonprofit partner is uniquely positioned to support the management of the partner’s talent, brand and resources.

As it seems that social change is no longer the strict prevue of the nonprofit sector you are in line for some interesting challenges and opportunities. You will need to have a handle on the big picture and the associated long-range implications. Here is a statement that I find completely intriguing:

“We currently have all the capacity, expertise, programs, leaders, regulations, and wealth required to end unnecessary suffering and create an alternative future.” Block, Peter. *Community The Structure of Belonging* p. 30, San Fransciso, California, Berret-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2008.

Bearing the above in mind, how then might this impact your goals for corporate partnerships/corporate volunteering program? Are there any shared strategic alignments that you can leverage to foster on-going, reciprocal, mutually beneficial interactions? Will you stay with the status quo? Or, will you pose wicked questions like, what if we, together, eliminated ...? Yes, essentially you are asking how to achieve the vision of your nonprofit and thus put it out of business. Now, that’s long-range corporate partnership building that leads to positive social change.

Along with establishing common goals and co-creating a preferred future, you will need to nurture good team norms for stamina and collective learning. What I am driving at is, change takes time and you don’t know what you don’t know. You will make mistakes and you will need to learn and recover from them.

One of my experiences includes working with a group of people who had \$500.00 to make a social change happen. So, I thought, change is organic and what does that cost? They could be successful, if they connected the dots to glean other unforeseen resources. I was invited to coach them after they started to receive push back from the community. Initially, I thought their challenges were related to lack of clear process or lack of key contacts. To my amazement, I learned that their challenges were due to a sense of superiority and meritocracy. They actually assumed community partners would climb all over themselves to receive their specialized attention. After all, they represented the brightest and the best and they had \$500.00!

All in all, it was an interesting experience for me. The group truly was amazing. They had immense potential and they really wanted to fix the social woes of the world. In order to help them understand their missteps, I spent time with them explaining the realities. I explained that nonprofit organizations have strategic plans that lay out initiatives that span 3-5 years. That highly skilled employees are allocated to programs and services, and that it was unreasonable to expect that they could or would accept another project. Most importantly, I explained that it was not their job to fix. It was their job to work with the community, not direct it. There was so much more to share with them but they ran out of time. The interesting thing here is, the group learned something about community but the organization



they represented, due to its sheer size and systemic barriers, did not learn anything from that experience. Such is life.

To wrap it all up - productive partnerships are built on trust, reciprocity and time. Corporate volunteering may start with a simple entry into a “one-off” volunteer activity but our job is to engage and to create opportunities for conversations about our shared plans for the future. We already have some shared language for these community conversations so let’s begin building cross-sector partnerships that yield change. What an amazing moment in time for the volunteer movement. Enjoy the journey!

Melanie Winterle has expertise in several areas within the volunteer community. She practises as a capacity and innovation coach, a nonprofit executive, facilitator, trainer, speaker, consultant and partnership broker.

### **Resources**

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