

November 2021 Council Conversation

Employee holiday giving/service in a pandemic – The holiday season is often a corner stone in employee community participation and a beloved tradition for many employees. Yet we know many community organizations have less space for company volunteering right now, and often (even before the pandemic) don't need an influx in the holiday season. We invite you to share your thoughts on managing employee (and SLT) expectations and making sure community organizations are getting only what they truly need.

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Discussion points between the two breakout groups fell between several topic areas:

1. Giving Tuesday

- One member is focusing on Giving Tuesday vs. the holidays and supporting volunteer ambassadors to create engagement opportunities for colleagues.
- Another is having a Volunteer-a-thon on Giving Tuesday with virtual volunteer learning opportunities (including learning activities on various topics that align with the mission of non-profit partners).

2. Leaning into giving platforms, communications

- A pilot for Giving Tuesday promotion which puts rewards dollars into Benevity accounts (random amounts \$10-500 to random people) to increase engagement and add an element of surprise.
- Sending curated e-mails in anticipation of Giving Tuesday to employees who have never logged in before to activate up to \$5000 in their account. Resulted in 800 new logins, new awareness, and more money to charitable partners.
- As holidays approach, there have been more reminders and communications around incentives, tracking hours, and giving back in safe ways
- Various "surprise and delights" on giving platforms to get people engaged online.
- External contests with rewards being gift cards with external charities/partner.
- A lot of intentional communications on gratitude – to community partners, to employees.

3. Educating colleagues

- Many companies are educating SLT and other employees on the importance of an employee focus on giving vs. team volunteering to community organizations. Giving back together (in-person) is not always possible as the way we did in the past, however huge impact can still be made (maybe more than pre-covid?)
- Some education/messaging going out now on the need to give back 365.
- A number of 'lunch and learns' are being planned, with a closing call out to give back to the cause in ways they need help right now.

4. Innovation

- Some companies are trying to do treasured team activities in new, safe ways e.g. supporting a youth housing organization by assigning employees the personalized shopping lists of beneficiaries, assigning roles like logistics coordinator, and organizing a time for team members to drop off and wave to each other.
- Two companies shared a renewed focus on Planned Giving, including gifts of securities.

5. Individuals vs. teams

- For some companies, there is not group volunteering being organized/promoted but individuals are still encouraged to volunteer on their own.
- For others, there is a focus on restoring team connections, even in a virtual space- to rally around a cause in their community.

6. Specific opportunities for giving back

- Getting lists from charities of needed items for organizations/families/youth in need and finding teams who wish to procure these for the organization.
- Other opportunities: Snowsuit fund (Ottawa), Jacket Racket (Calgary), Toy Mountain, Dress for Success, Fill a Purse, Centre 55 in Toronto “Adopt a Family”, Cards of Kindness (Sending Sunshine- they are now on Benevity), Zooniverse, Shoebox, craft kits, mentoring, Working Gear in Vancouver