

ChangeMakers @ Work

A Corporate Citizenship Webinar Series

Pro Bono Today: What's New, What's Working

Date: 18 September 2018

Presenter: Linda B. Gornitsky, President, LBG Associates and LBG Research Institute

Panelists: Kim Kerry-Tyerman, Senior Manager of Sustainability & Social Impact, Adobe; Linda Milton Perreault, Executive Director, iSisters Technology Mentoring and Jane Hext, Customer Insights Manager, Adobe

Summary notes:

Linda Gornitsky of LBG Associates shared some of the innovative ways companies are moving the practice of pro bono forward, updating their 2015 Pro Bono study to see what had changed, what was new or innovative. Several key trends and practices address barriers to pro bono for nonprofits, and benefits are tracked for the nonprofit, the employee and the company. LBG defines pro bono volunteerism as the donation of professional services that utilize the professional and technical skills of the volunteer and for which the recipient nonprofit would otherwise have to pay.

The research found that many businesses have expanded the **types of pro bono opportunities** they offer to engage more employees. Some of the **key trends** noted include increased number and types of opportunities for engagement; more flexible arrangements in terms of skills and time commitments needed; stronger connection with HR departments; deepening strategic partnerships, more involvement with organizations already supported in other ways; more grant support for organizations that do pro bono, sometimes to implement deliverables from pro bono initiatives; and more focus on impact and measurement of pro bono initiatives.

Aligning the needs and interests of the nonprofit, the company and their employees, companies are now setting development goals for employee volunteers and increasing their commitment to evaluation, including longer term follow up, sometimes up to three years after the pro bono project. This recognizes that impact is most often not measurable during the timeframe of the project.

All presenters noted some **key elements of success** in pro bono initiatives: the importance of senior management support; developing a strong partnership with HR; and ensuring volunteers are well prepared for their pro bono engagement.

Kim Kerry-Tyerman from Adobe shared how the pro bono program has developed at Adobe since its introduction in 2012, reinforcing many of the trends and elements of success seen in the LBG research. Four pro bono models at Adobe today offer a broad range of opportunities for employees to participate: 6-month part-time consulting engagements; 2-week service learning volunteer trips with a nonprofit; Done-in-a-day design thinking events; and short-term individual pro bono projects.

She noted that more employees are looking for pro bono opportunities, feeling they are the most valuable contributions they can make. As the program has developed, their nonprofit partner organizations have also

become better at identifying their strategic needs, leading to more successful outcomes. Adobe has developed resources to support pro bono employees including a Best Practices guide and matching site for employees and nonprofits to find pro bono projects.

The expanded program has improved the Learning and Development component for employees and nonprofit impact. The partnership with HR is stronger, and they now reach out to more teams across the company. There is more focus on evaluation, including tracking business benefits of the initiatives. Their nonprofit clients are better equipped to deliver on their mission and the company has enhanced their reputation for social impact leadership.

Linda Milton Perreault from iSisters Technology Mentoring and Jane Hext from Adobe shared learnings their pro bono experience. Their project aimed to track student progress and success after completing the iSisters program. A measurement framework developed to assess how the program had impacted students over time. As a pro bono volunteer, Jane leveraged her work skills but also expanded her leadership and communication skills. Pro bono volunteers often develop a relationship with the nonprofit and remain involved after the project is over.

It is clear that taking the time needed to consider and develop key elements of pro bono initiatives can lead to successful outcomes for all: the employee volunteer, the nonprofit, the company and the community overall.

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Q & A

What are the qualities or characteristics of a NFP that best prepare them for pro bono opportunity?

- Involvement of the Board of Directors, executive support
- Ability to articulate the strategic needs and priorities of the NFP
- Capacity to manage the project/dedicated person from the NFP for the pro bono initiative
- Good understanding of the commitment involved
- Ability to implement the deliverable
- Process for feedback/good communication

What are some examples of skills that employees develop during their pro bono volunteering?

- Employees often enhance skills in a new environment vs learning new skills
- Professional skills are leveraged to match the employee to the pro bono initiative but more soft skills are enhanced
- Communication, emotional intelligence
- Ability to lead a project team

How do companies feel about providing pro-bono skills in advance of launching a partnership? It would be helpful to have someone embedded at a NFP a few months before to scope the project.

- At Adobe, some of the projects are six months long in order to have time for a discovery process and to help pro bono volunteers to understand the culture, mission and needs of the NFP.
- A longer pro bono initiative allows volunteers to see the impact of their involvement at the NFP.