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Reaching the Hard-to-Reach
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I’ve been fortunate to gain experience across the corporate social responsibility (CSR) continuum, from running a community based organization to managing corporate volunteer programs to partnering with corporations to use technology to manage their CSR programs. Helping others make a positive impact on the world around them has been my personal mission.

As a veteran in the CSR space, I am often asked, “How do we reach and engage those hard-to-reach employees?”

These employees may be the second- or third-shift workers on the factory floor, the transportation drivers who deliver the products safely and on-time, or the retail employee busy providing great customer service and closing the sale. These employees often work in environments without desks or computers, and require complete focus on the task at hand to be successful in their position.

And then there are those employees on the opposite end of the spectrum. Those who are tied to a desk, a phone and a computer, like center support teams. These folks may be digitally connected, but they can’t easily sign out of their call queue to leave work to volunteer for three hours with a team of colleagues.
Why it’s so important to reach ALL of your employees

We know that effective CSR programs increase employee engagement, and that companies with highly engaged employees often outperform companies with low employee engagement rates by as much as 150% (Gallup State of the American Workplace 2012).

Recent studies also show that 79% of millennials are most likely to consider CSR when considering where to work (Cone, Millennial Report 2015).

It stands to reason that engaging the hard to reach employees through your CSR program can be an essential strategy for business growth and employee hiring and retention.

The Challenges

So when clients and prospects ask me how to engage their hard to reach employees, I point to two main challenges in engaging these employees. The first is making these employees aware that your programs exist, and the second is providing easy access to engage with your programs through both low-tech and high-tech strategies.

Get the Word Out

When folks aren’t in front of computers for their work, you need to utilize proven traditional methods of on-site employee communication. Studies show that participation in giving and volunteering programs is “contagious” (The Guardian, The Science Behind Why People Give Money to Charity, 2015). Simply put, employees are more likely to join in and participate when they see others volunteering and giving. So in your materials and your messages, highlight real stories of your superstar volunteers and the impact they make to inspire others to get engaged. Hearing from Senior Executives about their involvement and the company’s commitment to engagement and impact can be the right nudge for employees to participate in your programs.

Here are some effective ways to get the word out:

Shift Meetings

Many facilities - from manufacturers to hotels - have a daily stand-up meeting where supervisors share key information, motivational messages and invite employee input. Get CSR on the agenda! Have one of your superstar volunteers tell their impact story during these meetings.

Tool Kits

Create “tip sheets” and tool kits for folks who want to organize volunteer events or encourage participation in giving or pledge campaign programs. Make these kits readily available, both on paper and digitally.
Posters and Signage
Simple and functional signage in manufacturing areas, break rooms, and in locker areas can be effective for hard to reach or non-wired employees. Use clear, concise language and graphics that point to more information. Include messages and stories from Senior Executives, super star volunteers, and even from partner non-profits.

Scrolling News Ticker Messages
Get your message onto your company’s scrolling news feed. Many companies have large monitors/screens in breakrooms and common areas. Posting rotating slides with images of past volunteer events is also a great way to inform employees and inspire participation.

Flyers in Paycheck Envelopes
Collaborate with your payroll team and HR department to have a flyer about your CSR programs and upcoming events stuffed into paycheck envelopes. Your employees who may still receive paper checks will definitely open those envelopes!

"By creating easy pathways to learn about your program and get involved, you can increase your employee engagement."

Bring the Non-Profits to Your Employees
Invite local non-profits to your sites. Arranging lunch and learns, hosting a non-profit fair with a few local non-profits, or simply inviting one non-profit a month to set up information about their program in breakrooms are great ways to educate and engage your employees.

Make it Easy to Get Involved
When employees aren’t in front of computers throughout the day, or are tied to their work location, it can be difficult for them to participate in your engagement programs. By creating easy pathways to learn about your program and to get involved, you can increase your employee engagement.
Onsite Volunteer Events
Host onsite events where employees can volunteer to perform charitable tasks like packing backpacks with school supplies at back-to-school events, packing meals on wheels during the holidays, etc. Here employees can collaborate to help members of the local community in need and gain insights into the joy and satisfaction helping others brings. These onsite events are great ways to engage employees who can’t easily leave the workplace to volunteer (think call center teams and third-shift employees).

Technology Kiosks
Setting up onsite kiosks with clear instruction cards nearby can help engage people less familiar with technology or without easy access to the internet. At these sites, these employees can donate, request a company match, and register for volunteer events.

Promote Virtual Volunteering Opportunities
Virtual Volunteering can be done from the comfort of, well, anywhere. These opportunities may be a great fit for employees who don’t work standard business hours or are digitally connected. From “eMentoring” opportunities to helping non-profits with their social media strategy, virtual volunteering lets your employees use their skills and talents without having to be onsite at the non-profit. Many virtual events are considered “micro-volunteering” and only require a short time investment (some only a few minutes).

Use Mobile Technology to Engage Employees Anywhere
Our mobile responsive platform enables employees to give their support and log their service wherever and whenever inspiration and the desire to help strikes. A word of caution about mobile. Simply because a platform is accessible on any device does not mean your job is done. It’s still important to have a clear and effective communication strategy so your employees are aware of your platform’s mobile capabilities. It may seem counterintuitive, but low tech strategies are highly effective in the adoption of mobile technology for your employee base. Posters, demos during shifts and team meetings, and tapping your mobile evangelists to help spread the word to their colleagues are effective in spreading the word - and the use- of your mobile engagement platform.

It may seem daunting to reach and engage those “hard to reach” employees. But with a clear strategy and action plan, these employees can become your biggest CSR champions.

We’d love to help you create an effective engagement strategy and show you how our technology platform and partnership approach is helping over 3.3 millions of employees connect and engage with the causes they care about.