Employee Engagement

5 Trends Shaping Employee
Social Impact Programs

by Kate Olsen

Network for **Good** ®

The Opportunity

An engaged, motivated workforce is one of – if not the – most important success factors for your business. Motivation can take many forms: perks, awards, bonuses, more vacation time and other benefits. The best employee engagement programs nurture professional development and promote physical, emotional and social well-being.

The Towers Watson 2012 Global Workforce Study[i] surveyed employees at 50 global companies on how their employers motivate, incent, reward and otherwise engage them in the workplace. Not surprisingly, the companies with sustainable, holistic employee engagement programs scored highest and achieved better bottom line results compared to their peers with lower engagement.

According to Towers Watson, sustainable engagement is defined as the intensity of employees' connection to their organization, based on three core elements: commitment to achieving work goals (being engaged), an environment that supports productivity in multiple ways (being enabled), a work experience that promotes well-being (feeling energized).

Investing in holistic employee engagement = tangible impact on the bottom line

COMPANIES WITH THE HIGHEST SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT SCORES HAD AN AVERAGE ONE-YEAR OPERATING MARGIN OF 27%

High Sustainable Engagement	Traditional Engagement	Low Engagement
27%	14%	10%
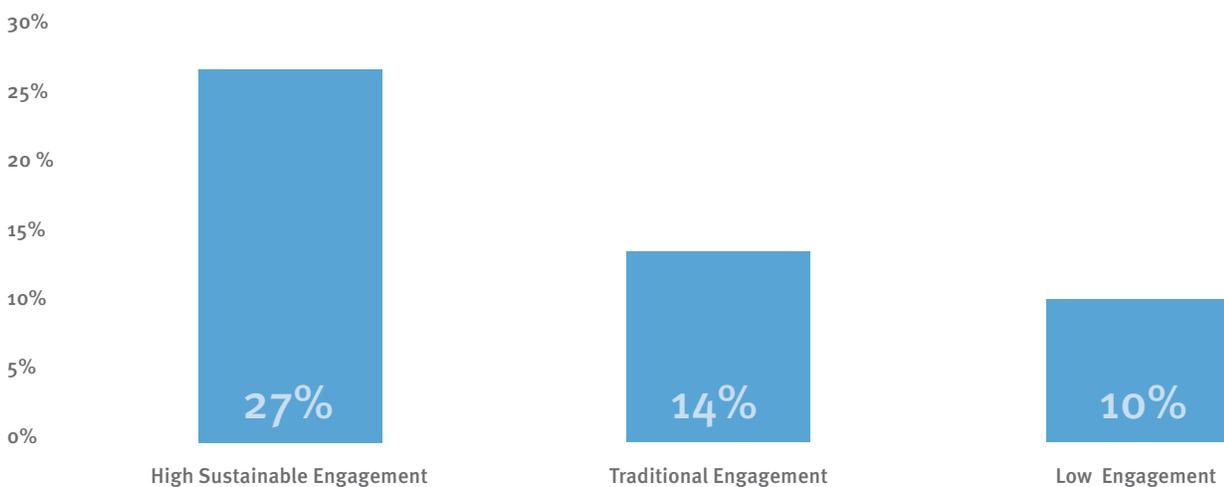
Source: Towers Watson 2012 Global Workforce Study[i]

The Case for Cause

An important, often underleveraged, form of motivation is involvement in social impact initiatives. A growing body of evidence points to the power of enabling employees – especially millennials – to give back to the community and support their favorite causes at work.
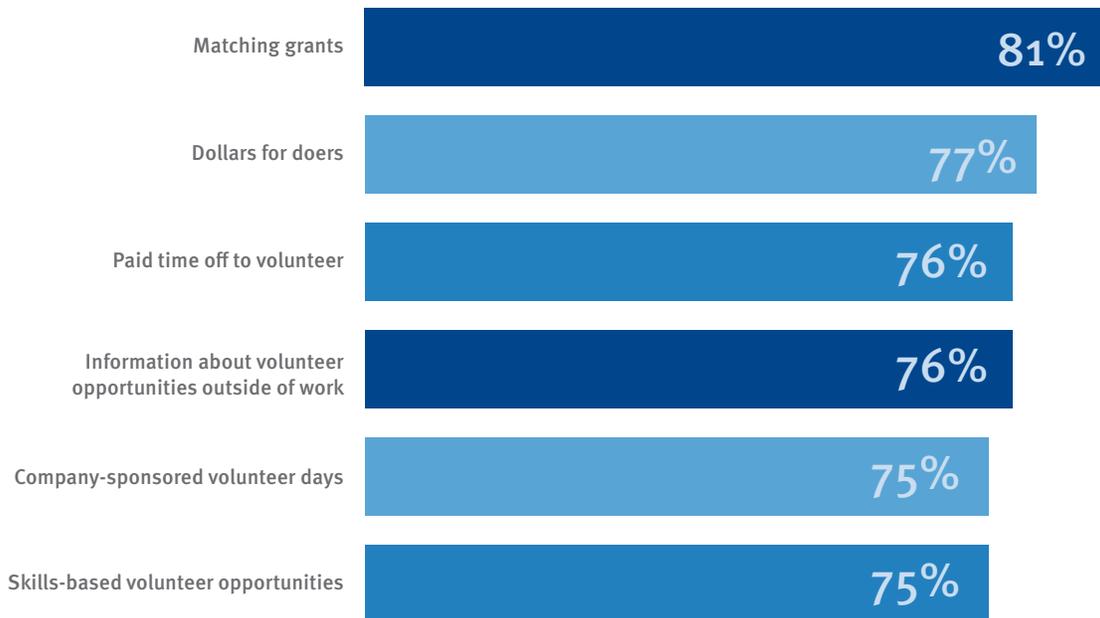
According to The 2011 Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey of employed adults ages 21 – 35, millennials who frequently participate in workplace volunteer activities are nearly **twice as likely to be very satisfied with the progression of their career**.[ii]

Employee engagement through cause is a vital means by which to strengthen employee relationships, enhance employee morale and even build critical skill sets and expertise. Plus, employees are hungry for ways to get involved in cause.

Not sure how to integrate cause into your company's employee engagement strategy? We're here to help.

75%+ OF EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THEIR COMPANY'S GIVING AND VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMS

% of American employees who want to get involved in their company's cause-related efforts through:

Matching grants	81%
Dollars for doers	77%
Paid time off to volunteer	76%
Information about volunteer opportunities outside of work	76%
Company-sponsored volunteer days	75%
Skills-based volunteer opportunities	75%

Source: Cone Communications[iii]

The Trends

Network for Good interviewed several thought leaders on employee engagement through giving back to capture insights and guidance to inform your company's portfolio of employee engagement opportunities. Whether your company is just getting started with cause initiatives or has a robust social impact strategy in place, the following takeaways and trends will help you deepen employee satisfaction and loyalty to ultimately enhance your employment brand overall.

When asked what one employee cause initiative every company must have, our panel of thought leaders all answered "it depends". A succinct response demonstrating that **there is no one-size- fits-all solution to corporate responsibility**. Rather, your company's cause initiative portfolio is part and parcel of your employee engagement goals, diverse workforce interests, needs and skills, and community investment commitment. As Laura Waters, Regional Solutions Consultant for MicroEdge, points out, the most effective employee cause programs leverage core business values and capabilities to drive the most social impact.

Here are five trends shaping employee social impact programs right now and what they mean for your employee engagement strategy.

1. Charity Rewards

Charity rewards include pre-paid donations in the form of charity gift cards, 'dollars for doers' volunteer incentives and matching grants to charities selected by employees. Research shows that the presence of incentives that benefit the community increases charitable activity overall and that when people can choose to support a cause important to them personally, they are even more motivated. As Donna Callejon, Chief Business Officer at GlobalGiving, observes, " Employees want to know that their employer cares about what they care about."

Showing your employees you care is just the first step. The bigger benefit for your employment brand is enabling the 'Helper's High' – a verified chemical reaction in the brain causing a feeling of euphoria after doing good. When your company enables that feeling in your employees, they associate their passion for a cause or doing good with your company.

Charity rewards can take many forms and are a powerful addition to any cause initiative. Here are a few ideas to help your employees 'pay it forward' and engender their loyalty to your company.

- **Say Thank You:** Thank employees for all their hard work and accomplishments across the year. Instead of another fruit basket or tchotchke, why not show appreciation with a charity gift card that employees can spend as a donation to their favorite charities?

- **Incentivize Participation:** Trying to get more employees involved in your volunteer program? Looking to get employees to show up for a team-building activity? Instead of springing for t-shirts or other paraphernalia that will get limited use post-event, give employees a pre-paid donation to allocate to a cause close to their hearts. Employees will be motivated to 'pay back' their time to your initiative through the act of 'paying it forward' to benefit the community.

- **Mark a Milestone:** An award or certificate is nice to receive, but then sits on a shelf collecting dust. Why not celebrate service anniversaries and other employee milestones with the gift of charity instead? Help your employees mark the occasion through action by supporting something they care about. The milestone will feel twice as nice.

2. Mobile Access

Amy Chait, Head of Market Development for YourCause, asserts that employee engagement is going mobile. Employees are hungry for ways to opt-in to volunteer programs, make donations, and monitor personal impact via their smart phones. This is particularly true for companies with a large portion of the workforce consistently on the road. As Amy notes, "Our clients continually talk about how their employees are out in the field and not in front of a computer most of the time, therefore mobile access will help support participation for all types of workforce roles." Just as individuals can manage their social networks, calendars and email via phone, so too do they want to be able to manage everything else on the go.

Here are a few ways your company can move towards a mobile-friendly employee engagement portfolio.

- **Pick the Right Partner(s):** When you evaluate providers for employee giving, grants management, volunteer management and personal sustainability tracking, be sure to ask about their mobile strategy. Vendors that are truly responsive to market trends and client demands will have mobile-friendly platforms available (or in the works) and a plan to help your company make the most of the technology.

- **Equip Your Workforce:** Just like you have to train your workforce on new administrative and business systems, so too do you need to provide guidance on mobile cause applications. Webinars and in-person information sessions can be great ways to understand employee appetite for and adoption of mobile tools. Additionally, you must provide easy to find and use self-help information, as well as phone or email support via your IT department or the platform vendor's customer support.

- **Have a Policy:** Employees must have a clear understanding of what activities and applications are sanctioned on work mobile devices versus personal devices. Additionally, given the potentially sensitive personal information an employee may transmit to make a donation, your company must consider data security issues and have a plan for how to protect employee data on mobile devices.

Take Your Employee Cause Programs to New Heights

Chris Jarvis, Partner and Business Development lead for RealizedWorth, and Donna Callejon, Chief Business Officer for GlobalGiving, recommend taking an employee-centric approach to building your company's cause programs. As Donna asserts, it just makes sense to engage your employees and solicit their input for new programs, since their buy-in and participation will make or break the program. Here are Chris's recommendations to involve employees from the ground-up.

1 **Find the employees who are already engaged with a cause.** It doesn't have to be your company's cause. They just have to be volunteering or giving to something on a regular basis. You can find them through a simple survey or a handful of interviews with employees you know to be volunteering already.

2 **Collaborate with these key employees.** What do they need to be better volunteers at the organizations they are already committed to? Resource them in their goals. And then ask them to help lead the company's efforts. They've been waiting to be asked to do something for a long time.

3 **Design events that meet people at their highest level of contribution.** Provide a great experience for beginners. Offer leadership opportunities and support for intermediaries. And for the most experienced, ask them to take a leadership position and lead the program. We call these 3 stages - tourists, travelers and guides. If you do it right, the guides and travelers will engage the tourists and you'll only have to manage the process and not the people.

3. Social Sharing

Employee engagement and social sharing go together like peanut butter and jelly. It's easy to recruit employees that are already active in the community to join your company's cause programs. But how do you get the next wave of employees to sign up? And the next? That's when social proof and storytelling come into play.

The best ambassadors for your cause portfolio are the employees actively engaged in your programs. Equip those employees to tell their personal story about why they care, how they help and what it means to be able to do it alongside other employees. When others hear the passion and see the powerful impact results, they will be clamoring to be a part of your company's do-gooding efforts.

Storytelling can take many forms. Here are a few suggestions to help your employees share the call to action to get involved and make a difference:

- **Update Your Status:** If your company has an employee social network or community, seed a conversation dedicated to social impact, preferably visible to the larger community and not just to people opted-in to hear about cause programs. Then invite your employees to update their status every time they participate in a volunteer activity or hear about a cool nonprofit project. Employees can also congratulate peers on completing social good projects and generally spread the word about how to give back.

- **Write a Post:** If your company has a blog (employee-facing or for other audiences), ask volunteers and donors to write a guest post about their charitable efforts. The personal accounts will make your company's cause programs accessible and relatable to a larger audience, and demonstrate the good work your company promotes.

- **Make a Video:** Videos are the ultimate shareable medium. Nothing beats hearing and seeing an employee describe what it means to give back and how your company's cause program helps her or him make a personal impact on a cause close to the heart. You can dedicate an area on your Intranet or employee community to video content, and share the entries in newsletters, on your blog and other employee communications.

4. Micro Actions

When it comes to social actions, bigger isn't always better. While small digital actions for good are often brushed aside as 'slacktivist'[IV] slough, there is much to admire about micro do-gooding.

Some consider these small actions as gateway opportunities to engage employees in cause without overwhelming them by a big upfront commitment. Others think about them as complementary to other offline community commitments or habitual charitable giving.

No matter your point of view, research from the Georgetown University Center for Social Impact Communication and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide[V] proves that **people who engage in micro actions for good are twice as likely to volunteer their time and three times as likely to engage in peer-to-peer fundraising efforts for their cause**, among other noteworthy findings.

Here are three ways to add micro actions to your employee cause portfolio:

- **Add Microgiving:** Imagine if everyone gave $10 to help solve a social problem. Those small amounts have the potential to add up to tangible resources for charities working on the front lines of social change. Additionally, companies often struggle to get 100% participation in employee giving programs. Hosting mini giving challenges is one way to involve employees who may not be ready to commit to larger annual gifts and keep your entire employee base energized about your cause programs. Challenges can have themes that relate to topical issues (e.g. breast cancer awareness in October, food drives in November) or be open to allow employees to support whatever cause they care about.

- **Promote Microvolunteering:** Platforms such as RealizedWorth's microvolunteering solution powered by Sparked[vi] allow employees to volunteer their time in small increments (15 minutes, here an hour there). Microvolunteering activities include offering advice to nonprofits on marketing issues or website development, for example, or tagging images and other discrete digital actions that add up to real help for nonprofits. Microvolunteering tasks often draw on employee skills and expertise, and have the added benefit of enhancing professional development.

- **Try Crowdsourced Philanthropy:** Crowdsourced philanthropy voting contests such as Chase Community Giving[vii] aren't just for consumers. Allowing your employees to help your company decide how to allocate philanthropic dollars is a meaningful way to represent your employees' passions through your corporate commitment. Options range from allowing employees to nominate charities for grant consideration, to asking employees to vote on how to distribute funds across a set of charities.

Create an Employee Engagement Portfolio

A portfolio approach is a key differentiator between an employee social impact program that just checks the box and a truly dynamic program that speaks to the interests, skills and capacity of a diverse workforce. Here are five opportunities you can add to your company's portfolio to engage a wider swath of employees in your cause initiatives:

1 **Employee Giving Program** that allows employees to donate via credit card or payroll deduction to their charity of choice. Traditionally, employee giving programs run on an annual basis, but to increase engagement and enthusiasm companies can create time-bound, themed giving campaigns throughout the year.

2 **Organized Volunteer Days** that provide a gateway experience with a low time commitment (1 day a year or a few hours every couple months). Not every employee will want to take on big community investment projects, but many will want to feel a part of a corporate culture that values service.

3 **Microvolunteering opportunities** that allow employees to spend 15 minutes to 1 hour of time performing digital tasks to support nonprofit needs and leverage their professional skills at the same time.

4 **Pro Bono/Skills-Based Service** options that allow employees to take on nonprofit projects alongside paid work that require the same skills set. Skills-based projects have double benefits in that they allow employees to build capacity in the social sector (and feel good about giving back) and enhance professional skills and perspectives that make them better at their day job.

5 **Personal Sustainability** Initiative that allows employees to manage their own environmental footprint at work and empowers them to suggest (and implement) programs that lessen the company's environmental footprint, too.

Remember, there are even more opportunities to coordinate your employee engagement portfolio with broader company efforts. As Robert Rosenthal, VP of Communications & Marketing at VolunteerMatch notes, companies that co-develop external consumer cause marketing efforts through the lens of employee engagement first often create more compelling and authentic programs. **Employees are your number one brand ambassadors.** According to Robert, "Employee knowledge and participation can go a long way to helping cause marketers ensure their programs pass the 'sniff' test for authenticity and transparency. If employees believe and get on board, consumers are more likely to as well."

5. Global Participation

Several employee engagement thought leaders pointed to global volunteerism as an invaluable component of any company's cause portfolio, even if the workforce isn't internationally-based. Global opportunities to give back are particularly important, though, for companies seeking to make an impact in all the communities in which they operate.

Amanda MacArthur, Vice President at CDC Development Solutions, shares compelling data about the value of international corporate volunteerism[viii] to a company's employment brand. According to recent IBM study, **88% of past volunteers said an international corporate volunteer experience increased their leadership skills and 76% are now more likely to complete their career with the company**. Similarly, according to a recent CDC Development Solutions' survey across several corporations, **97% of past volunteers are more motivated in their jobs, while 94% are more invested in their company's future**.

Here are a few suggestions to help take your employee cause programs global:

- **Give Internationally:** Adding international charities to your employee giving roster allows globally-based employees to support charities in their countries through annual giving campaigns. Global donation options also allow US-based employees to support causes they may care about doing work in other countries.

- **Do Pro Bono Overseas:** Global companies often struggle to develop a workforce that understands the unique complexities of operating in different countries and cultural contexts. Sending employees abroad to complete pro bono projects in those contexts will enhance their ability to conduct international business upon returning home. There is no substitute for on-the-job training and how better to get a crash course in 'Doing Business in X Country' than to actually do business there.

- **Invest in Emerging Markets:** According to CDC Development Solutions' 2012 International Corporate Volunteer Benchmark Survey[ix], dozens of companies are now sending employees to volunteer in emerging markets compared to just a small handful in 2006. The reasons are many, but two speak to core business needs. One, many global companies have interests in emerging markets and getting on-the-ground experience for non-native employees strengthens their ability to navigate. Two, companies operating in emerging markets have a vested interest in strengthening the infrastructure and social network in those countries so they can ensure long-term business opportunities.

The Call to Action

Companies that realize the power of motivating and engendering loyalty through a portfolio of cause activities will continue to attract and retain top talent – especially among the millennial generation. These companies will make strategic investments in social impact opportunities that link business goals, employee talents and community needs in compelling and transformative ways.

Are you one of these companies? If the answer is not yet, we're here to help.

Ready to transform your employee engagement?
Contact us to customize a solution for your company.

Network for **Good.** ®

Contact: partnerships@networkforgood.org

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About Network for Good

Network for Good is a social enterprise that empowers corporate partners and nonprofits to unleash generosity and advance good causes. **Network for Good works with companies to help refine a cause strategy perfectly suited to business and philanthropic goals and implement effective cause initiatives powered by our proven donation platform.** We also help nonprofits raise funds for their missions through simple, affordable and effective online fundraising services and offer free training through our online learning center, interactive online community, and Nonprofit911 webinar series.

Network for Good has processed more than $800 million in donations for more than 80,000 nonprofits since our 2001 founding by AOL, Cisco and Yahoo!.

www.networkforgood.org/partner

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VolunteerMatch Where volunteering begins. [xiv]

Robert Rosenthal, VP of Communications & Marketing

YouR Cause Developing Global Good. [xv]

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