

Volunteering is the Business

Employers' and employees'
attitudes to workplace
based volunteering

December 2010

Anne Gammon
& Gavin Ellison

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 Foreword | 1 |
| Miles Templeman: Director General of the Institute of Directors | |
| 2 Executive summary | 2 |
| 3 Background and method | 5 |
| 4 Current levels of volunteering | 8 |
| 4.1 Comparisons between employees and managers | 8 |
| 4.2 Frequency of volunteering | 10 |
| 4.3 Managing volunteers | 11 |
| 5 Benefits of volunteering for the workplace | 12 |
| 5.1 Benefits to employees – workplace skills | 12 |
| 5.2 Benefits to employees – recruitment and career development | 14 |
| 5.3 Benefits to employees – happiness and well-being | 15 |
| 5.4 Community benefits | 15 |
| 5.5 Benefits to employers | 16 |
| 6 Employer support for volunteering | 18 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 18 |
| 6.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) | 18 |
| 6.3 Allowances for volunteers | 20 |
| 6.4 How do managers perceive the support their organisation provides for volunteering? | 22 |
| 7 Barriers and support | 23 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 23 |
| 7.2 Barriers to volunteering | 23 |
| 7.3 Support for employees | 25 |
| 7.4 Information about volunteering | 27 |
| 8 Interest in workplace volunteering | 28 |
| 8.1 Introduction | 28 |
| 8.2 Employee demand | 28 |
| 8.3 The influence of others on likelihood of volunteering | 29 |
| 8.4 Employer demand | 30 |
| 9 Conclusions and recommendations | 31 |
| Annex A – Survey sample profile for managers and employees | 33 |
| Annex B – References | 35 |

Foreword from Miles Templeman

Over the last decade we've seen significant growth in ethical and sustainable business practices which are transforming the ways in which companies do business. Effective corporate responsibility strategies are gradually being mainstreamed, as companies large and small recognise their role in making a positive contribution to the communities and societies where they operate. Employee volunteering is now a major part of the corporate responsibility mix, enabling companies to leverage their most valuable assets – their employees – to address some of the most significant problems facing our society today while, at the same time, meeting their business objectives.

It's clear that in the current climate many businesses are less able to afford large-scale financial investment programmes to help communities – so allowing staff time off from work to do good is the ideal solution. Many companies are already delivering innovative employee volunteering programmes which are helping to protect our planet, raise educational standards, address poverty and exclusion and promote safer, stronger communities. We know that businesses want to do more. And so do their staff. And according to the findings of this research report – a comprehensive survey of over 1000 employees and 500 managers – there's never been a better time to engage your employees in making a difference.

Employee volunteering plays a critical role in enabling businesses to take action on community or environmental issues which align to their CSR objectives. Encouragingly, a strong consensus is also emerging about the critical role of employee volunteering in building the skills and capabilities of your workforce. Ninety-six per cent of managers agree that volunteering can support staff to improve their self-confidence as well as developing communication and team working skills and a greater understanding of social and cultural issues. It's also clear that volunteering plays an important role in improving staff satisfaction, with 71 per cent of employees citing volunteering programmes as key to improving personal well-being.

In a fast-paced and apparently 'time-poor' society, it's also inspiring to learn that there is a growing demand for employee volunteering programmes, with the majority of employees stating that they would consider doing some form of volunteering if they were supported by their employer. Employee volunteering has enormous potential to reap rewards for society and for business. I sincerely hope that this report will inspire you to consider new ways to engage your staff in making a difference.



Miles Templeman:
Director General of
the Institute of Directors





2 Executive Summary

Background and method

v, The National Young Volunteers' Service, commissioned YouGov to conduct a research project to better understand attitudes of employees and employers towards employee volunteering schemes¹. This report presents the findings from two surveys, carried out in the first half of November 2010, which compared and contrasted the perspectives of over 500 managers and over 1,000 other employees. Participants were drawn from a representative cross-section of private, public and charity sectors and size of organisation.

Who currently volunteers?

On an individual employee basis (both inside or outside of work) those most likely to volunteer include women (54 per cent having done so formally in the past 12 months compared with 42 per cent of men), part-time workers (63 per cent compared with 42 per cent of full-time workers) and those with caring responsibilities (59 per cent compared with 41 per cent of employees without).

Organisations with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies are much more likely to undertake voluntary activities around specific causes – 61 per cent having done so compared with 11 per cent of those without a CSR policy.

Just 39 per cent of managers rated their organisation as good or very good in terms of the support offered for staff to volunteer. Those that did explained that flexible policies which allowed staff to take time off were important, as was a positive culture of volunteering within their organisation, having positive role models at the top and the active promotion of volunteering schemes to staff members.

¹ Employee volunteering refers to volunteer activities that employees perform in the community with some form of support or encouragement from their employer.



What are the benefits to the workplace as a result of volunteering?

Almost all (96 per cent) managers believe that workplace skills can be gained from volunteering – including self-confidence (50 per cent), an understanding of social and cultural issues (48 per cent) and team work (43 per cent). As many as 73 per cent of managers believe that volunteering can increase the well-being of staff and 68 per cent agree that it makes for a happier workforce.

Aside from the softer benefits, 57 per cent of managers feel that skills gained from volunteering can help fill gaps in the workplace and 53 per cent agree that volunteers can add to the general success of the organisation.

Those managing employees who volunteer were more likely to rate the skills that can be gained from volunteering – especially leadership skills.

According to employees, communication skills were the most important skill type that could be learnt from volunteering (44 per cent). Only five per cent thought that there would be no skills benefit at all. Those currently volunteering were especially likely to highlight their ‘use of initiative’ and problem solving abilities as important skills gained from volunteering. For both managers and employees, first-hand experience has had a positive impact on their perspectives of volunteering.

What are the barriers to volunteering in the workplace?

Around half of managers (53 per cent) are concerned about the cost of allowing their employees to volunteer, both in terms of time and money. This concern, however, is significantly lower amongst those who manage volunteers, implying that these costs may be overestimated by managers who do not have the first-hand experience.

Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of managers state barriers that can be overcome with the help of specialist advice. These barriers include knowing how to organise volunteering and how to measure the impacts for the organisation.

Employees were also concerned about their time, 56 per cent stating they do not have enough to volunteer and 48 per cent stating they would be encouraged to volunteer given paid leave in order to do so.



How to encourage more employees to volunteer

Managers are already aware of the benefits of volunteering but need help in the organisation of projects, as well as some persuasion that the time taken to do so is a healthy investment in their employees' skills. The importance of having an ethos within a workplace of volunteering is also important and employers need to promote this.

There is also a gap in knowledge between managers and employees in policies that may already exist in allowing employees to volunteer. Those organisations with policies may need help promoting these amongst their employees.

Who would take up volunteering opportunities?

A majority of employees (58 per cent) state that they would be very or fairly likely to volunteer if their employer offered them help to do so – particularly women (66 per cent likely compared with 52 per cent of men) and those who currently undertake voluntary work through their company (83 per cent compared with 57 per cent of those who do not).

A similar proportion (57 per cent) would be interested if their company allowed them to volunteer during work hours.

Managers in the public and voluntary sectors are keener on the idea of volunteering generally, as are those in large organisations in general. 66 per cent of managers in the public sector agreed that employee volunteering added to the general success of their organisation, compared to 47 per cent of private sector managers.

A minority of employees (and employers) do not want to volunteer – 19 per cent of employees say that nothing can encourage them. This breaks down as 24 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women.

Managers in large organisations are more likely to perceive a benefit in receiving external support to develop volunteering - 80 per cent with more than 250 employees feel this way, compared to 51 per cent of those with fewer than 50 employees.

3 Background and method

Introduction

v, The National Young Volunteers' Service², commissioned YouGov to conduct a research project to better understand attitudes of employees and employers towards employee volunteering schemes³. The research aims to develop a better understanding of how employees react to volunteering opportunities in the workplace and the benefits that ensue for both employers and employees.

Method

This report is based on two online surveys, one of 1,010 employees and another of 502 managers. Employees and managers were included from across the UK and the results weighted to represent the workforce in terms of sector (public, private, voluntary etc) and size (based on number of employees). In addition, the employee sample was representative in terms of gender and working status (i.e. whether employees worked full or part-time). The sample was drawn from YouGov's research panel of 300,000 individuals aged 18 and over. For more details on the sample details see Annex A.

Fieldwork took place between 1st and 15th November 2010.

Background


v is committed to exploring the link between volunteering and employability through our research strategy⁴. Since 2004 there has been relatively little research into the attitudes of employers towards volunteering (Hill, Russell, and Brewis 2009⁵).

² v, The National Young Volunteers' Service aims to inspire a new generation of young volunteers (aged 16-25 years) in England. It was set up to take forward the Russell Commission recommendations in 2006. For more information on v see www.vinspired.com/about-us.

³ Employee volunteering refers to volunteer activities that employees perform in the community with some form of support or encouragement from their employer.

⁴ For more information about v's research programme see www.vinspired.com/research.

⁵ Hill, Russell & Brewis (2009) Young people, volunteering, and youth projects: a rapid review of evidence v/Institute for Volunteering Research



This research builds upon a previous survey of employers conducted by **v** and YouGov in January 2009⁶. The survey focused on employers' attitudes to volunteering. We found that three quarters (72 per cent) of employers agree or strongly agree that volunteering can have a positive effect on an individual's career progression, with nearly half (48 per cent) of employers saying that job candidates with volunteering experience are more motivated than other candidates. The three most important skills to be gained through volunteering were perceived as team work (56 per cent), building confidence (50 per cent) and communication skills (39 per cent).

v is also undertaking research with the Institute of Employment Studies to explore the value of volunteering to young people and the communities they work with. Early evidence suggests that volunteers gain both 'hard' work skills and 'soft' skills like communication, team work, planning and management, confirming that the volunteering is providing the opportunity to develop skills that employers view as important⁷.

The context

Forty per cent of adults have participated in some volunteering activity over the last 12 months (Citizenship Survey 2009-2010)⁸. To achieve the government's vision of a Big Society will require more people participating in civic engagement and voluntary activities.

Increasingly, many people are being encouraged to volunteer by their employers. In 2005, 24 per cent of employees worked for an employer with a volunteering scheme (Ockenden, 2007⁹).

Some organisations and businesses have a well-established and sizeable employee volunteering scheme, for example, The Co-operative had 10,240 employees taking part in community activities in 2009¹⁰. They contributed the equivalent of 136,834 hours or 18,244 days, which equates to a donation of time worth £1.66million. The Co-operative Volunteering Programme allows staff to support their local communities through opportunities which align to their CSR objectives of inspiring young people; tackling global poverty and combatting climate change.

⁶ Employer Survey: attitudes to volunteering and impact on career progression; **v**/YouGov 2009.

⁷ Newton, Fearn, Oakley, Sumption, Williams (2010) The **v** in volunteering: Articulating the perceived additional value of volunteering – Interim report . Institute of Employment Studies (unpublished – final report due 2011)

⁸ Formal volunteering rates from the Citizenship Survey 2009 – 10.

⁹ Volunteering Works (2007) Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England.

¹⁰ The Co-operative Sustainability Report 2009, The Co-operative Group.



v's employer volunteering scheme Volunteering Works

This research will build upon these resources and help us to create an evidence base to drive the debate surrounding workplace volunteering and to support v's new Volunteering Works programme, www.volunteeringworks.org

Volunteering Works is a simple, web-based way to manage and monitor your employee volunteering, and is v's response to the growing demand from UK businesses to improve CSR, support employee development, engagement and retention and enable organisations and businesses to contribute to communities. It will seek to connect staff to charities and causes they care about, as well as allowing businesses to monitor and measure the impact of employee engagement as part of their wider corporate social responsibility goals.

As the government encourages everyone to embrace 'a society with much higher levels of personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility'¹¹, and to engage in 'neighbourhood groups and social action projects'¹², employee volunteering offers businesses the opportunity to improve their own outcomes whilst giving back to communities.

¹¹ Building the Big Society (2010), Cabinet Office

¹² Building the Big Society (2010), Cabinet Office



4 Current levels of volunteering

This chapter aims to understand the current levels of employee and managerial voluntary activity, whether within or outside of their working lives. This sets the context in which this report later explores the benefits of volunteering and the barriers that exist within the workplace, the schemes and support that are currently available and the level of interest in volunteering.

Volunteering includes any activity which is unpaid, undertaken freely and benefits others or the environment (beyond close family and friends) (The Compact, 2009: 7)¹³. Volunteering activity is categorised as formal and informal volunteering. Formal volunteering is defined as unpaid help given as part of groups, clubs or organisations and informal volunteering is defined as unpaid help given as an individual to someone who is not a relative, to benefit others or the environment. (Citizenship Survey, 2005).

It will first look at the characteristics of employees and managers who volunteer.

4.1 Comparisons between employees and managers

Seventy per cent of employees and 82 per cent of managers had volunteered either formally or informally in the last year¹⁴ (Figure 1). These rates are considerably higher than the average volunteering rates cited in other surveys including the Citizenship Survey: 2009-10 (Communities and Local Government)¹⁵ and Helping Out survey (2007)¹⁶. The differences in methodology and respondent profile in these surveys make it difficult to make any direct comparisons between them. It would be interesting to explore through further research whether employees are more inclined towards volunteering, or are better placed to do so.

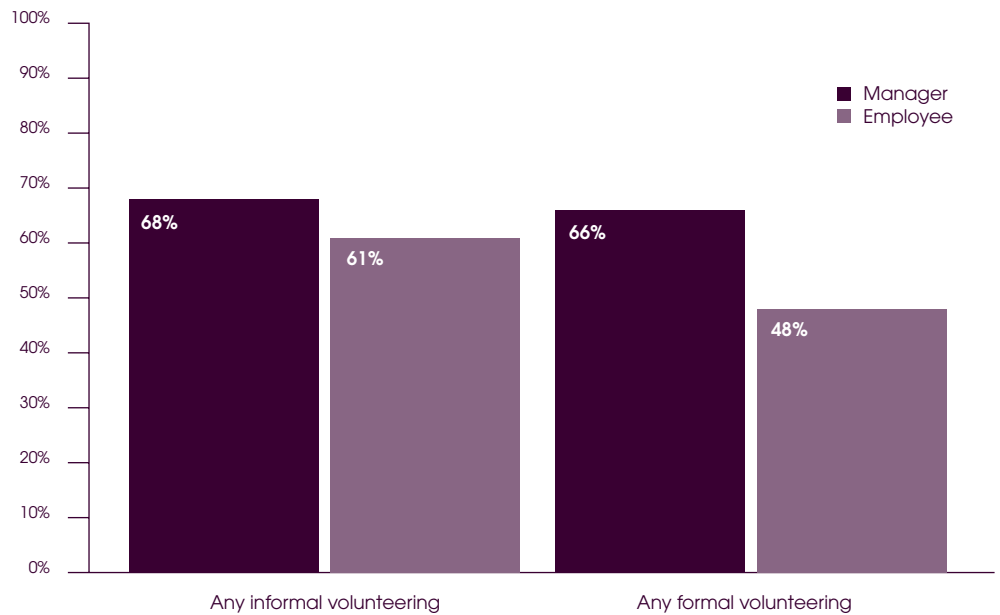
¹³ The Compact (2009) The Compact on relations between Government and the Third Sector in England, London: The Compact.

¹⁴ According to the definitions and questions applied in the Citizenship Survey.

¹⁵ Citizenship Survey: 2009-2010 (2010), Communities and Local Government.

¹⁶ Low et al (2007), Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving, Cabinet Office.

Figure 1: Levels of volunteering amongst UK managers and employees.



Base: All employees (1,010) and all managers (502).

There are many significant differences when looking at who volunteers:

- Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of part-time staff¹⁷ volunteer formally compared with 42 per cent of full-time staff. This difference is also significant when looking at informal volunteering (75 per cent of part-time employees having volunteered in the past year compared with 57 per cent of full-time workers);
- Employees working for voluntary and charity sector organisations are significantly more likely to have volunteered formally over the past year (81 per cent) compared with those in the public sector (52 per cent) who in turn are significantly more likely to have volunteered formally than their private sector peers (43 per cent). This also holds true for informal volunteering (81 per cent in the third sector, 67 per cent public sector and 58 per cent private);
- Over half (54 per cent) of female employees indicated they have volunteered formally over the past 12 months compared with 42 per cent of their male colleagues; and
- Three-fifths (59 per cent) of those employees with caring responsibilities volunteered formally compared with 41 per cent of their colleagues without¹⁸.

¹⁷ Part-time staff defined as those working less than 30 hours a week.

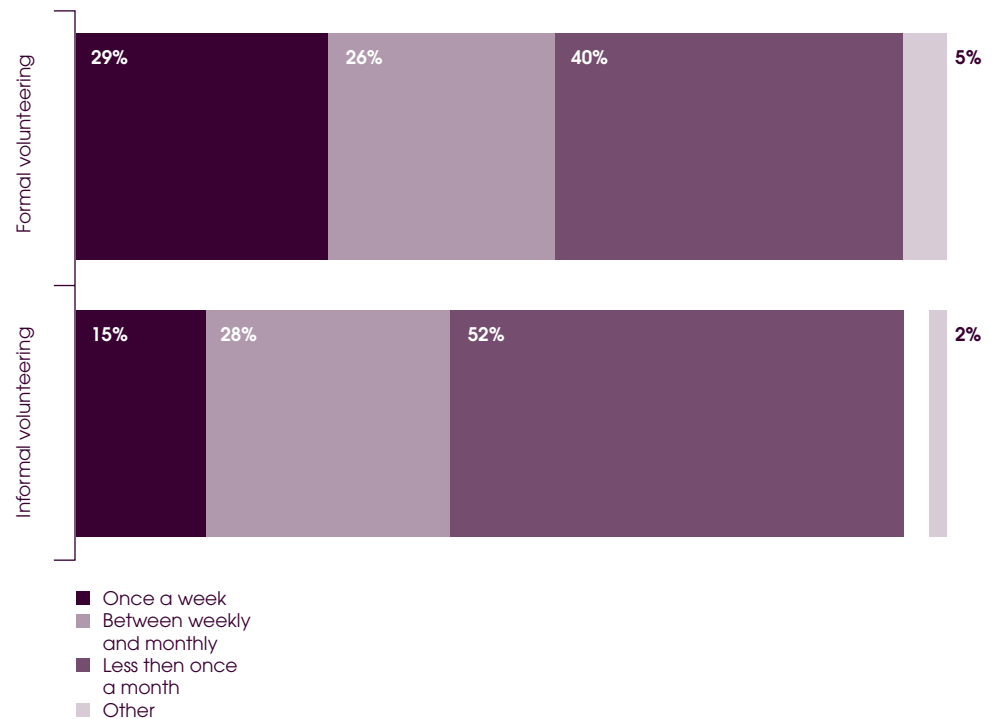
¹⁸ Those with caring responsibilities defined as those who look after, or give support to, family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either long term mental ill health or disability, or problems related to old age.

4.2 Frequency of volunteering

Figure 2 shows the frequency of volunteering among employees. For those that do it, formal volunteering is a more frequent activity than it is for informal volunteers. Twenty-nine per cent of formal volunteers give up their time weekly and a further 26 per cent between weekly and monthly. Informal volunteering (which is more of an ad hoc activity by nature) is undertaken by 15 per cent of those who volunteer informally on a weekly basis and 28 per cent monthly. Less than once a month is undertaken by 52 per cent of those who volunteer informally on a weekly basis and 28 per cent monthly. Informal volunteering is undertaken by 15 per cent of those who volunteer informally on a weekly basis and 28 per cent monthly.

These figures demonstrate the demand for a diverse range of volunteering opportunities to meet the different needs of employees to suit their availability and time commitments.

Figure 2: Frequency of volunteering amongst employees.



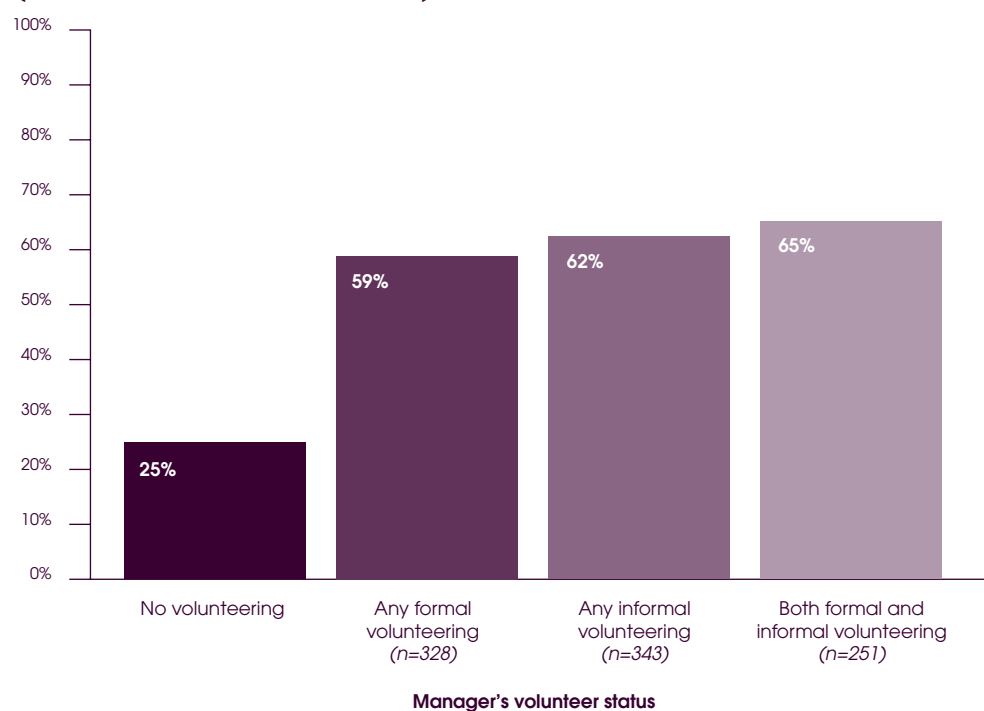
Base: All employees volunteering formally (482) and all volunteering informally (626) in the last 12 months.

4.3 Managing volunteers

Just over half (51 per cent) of the managers interviewed have employees who undertake voluntary work. Again, this is particularly true of certain sectors (with 62 per cent of managers within the public sector managing an employee who volunteers compared with 46 per cent of the private sector), but their volunteer status themselves also has a significant effect on whether they manage volunteers, as shown in Figure 3.

This raises interesting questions about the culture, management style, and interests of managers in relations to their role in promoting volunteering. Firstly, a manager who themselves volunteers may create an atmosphere amongst their staff where volunteering is encouraged, employees may undertake activities through the influence of their manager, or there may be an ethos of volunteering within the workplace. This could be linked to the significant number of public sector workers volunteering; where policies and flexibility exists that allows them to do so. The a explanation could be that managers who volunteer themselves take more of an interest in the extra-curricular activities of their employees. A third could be that managers who volunteer themselves may be predisposed to hire employees who undertake voluntary work as they recognise the skills this brings to the workforce.

Figure 3: Whether employers manage employees who volunteer. (By employer volunteer status)



Base sizes reported in brackets

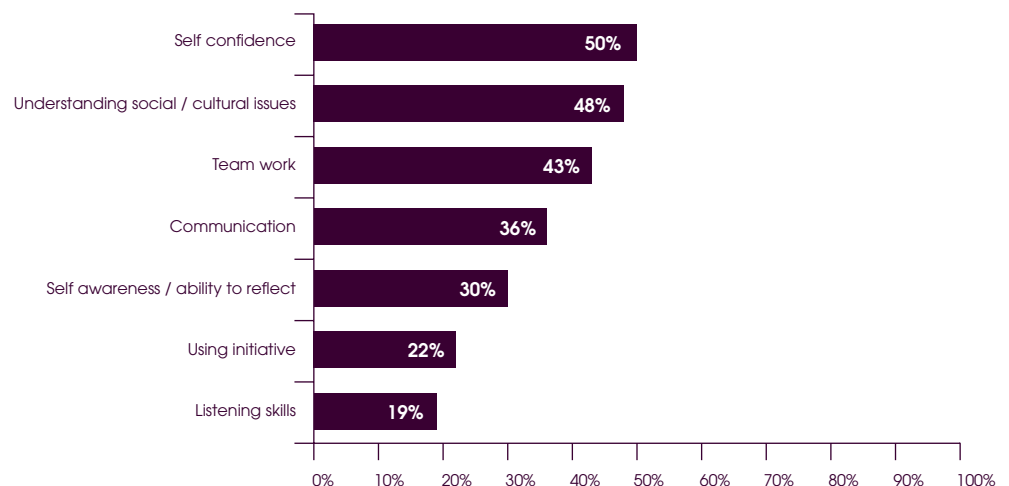
5 Benefits of volunteering for the workplace

This chapter looks at these different aspects, firstly focussing on the perception of skills employees gain from volunteering, then at how that might help them find employment and in the development of their careers. Finally it looks at the wider picture for employers – the gains they might make from having employees who volunteer within their workforce. Throughout this chapter comparisons will be made of gaps in expectations between employers and employees.

5.1 Benefits to employees – workplace skills

Figure 4 displays the skills managers believe can be gained from volunteering. Self-confidence is rated the highest of these, with half of managers seeing it as one of the three most important skills that can be gained. This is a skill particularly noted by those working within the public sector, with 59 per cent of managers choosing it compared with 46 per cent of those within the private sector. An understanding of social and cultural issues is also highly rated (48 per cent overall), as is team work (43 per cent).

Figure 4: Which, if any, of the following do you believe are the THREE most important skills someone could gain through volunteering?



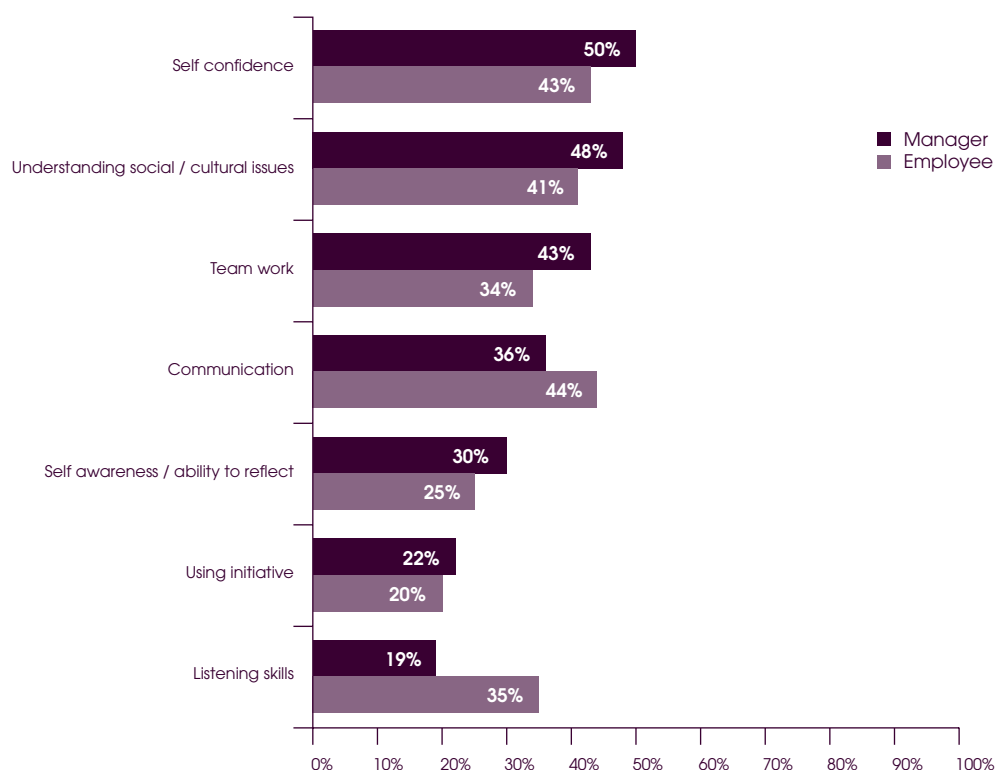
Base: All managers (502).

According to employees, the most important skill to be learnt from volunteering is that of communication (44 per cent). This is particularly resonant with part-time employees (52 per cent compared with 41 per cent of full-time employees) who, as discussed previously, are more likely to be volunteers themselves. Communication skills are also one of the biggest gaps between employee and employer perceptions, with a difference of eight percentage points between the two groups. Listening skills are also highly rated by employees (35 per cent), compared with just 19 per cent of managers.

Figure 5 shows that there are some differences between the two groups – employees are less likely to rate the top three skills mentioned by managers as highly, although self-confidence is still high (43 per cent), it is seven percentage points lower than amongst managers. The same is true of the understanding of social and cultural issues, whilst team work is nine percentage points lower amongst employees.

The gaps between the skills found to be useful from the point of view of managers and employees are interesting. There could be a case here for the wider promotion of skills that managers value from volunteering to employees, and more communication of the advantages employees feel they gain.

Figure 5: Which, if any, of the following do you believe are the THREE most important skills someone could gain through volunteering? (Manager / employee comparison)



Base: All employees (1,010) and all managers (502).

For most of the skills in question, the opinions of those employees who volunteered and those that did not were similar. However it was interesting to note that those with experience of volunteering were particularly likely to identify 'using your initiative' and problem solving as skills that an employee could gain. Problem solving was picked out by 13 per cent of those that do not currently volunteer, but was selected by 22 per cent of formal volunteers.

Managers who volunteered and had employees that volunteered were especially likely to pick out leadership skills as an aspect of development that volunteering would provide. Those that did not volunteer or have employees that did so, failed to recognise that leadership skills might be a likely outcome of getting employees involved – just nine per cent recognised it, compared to 19 per cent of informal volunteers.

5.2 Benefits to employees – recruitment and career development

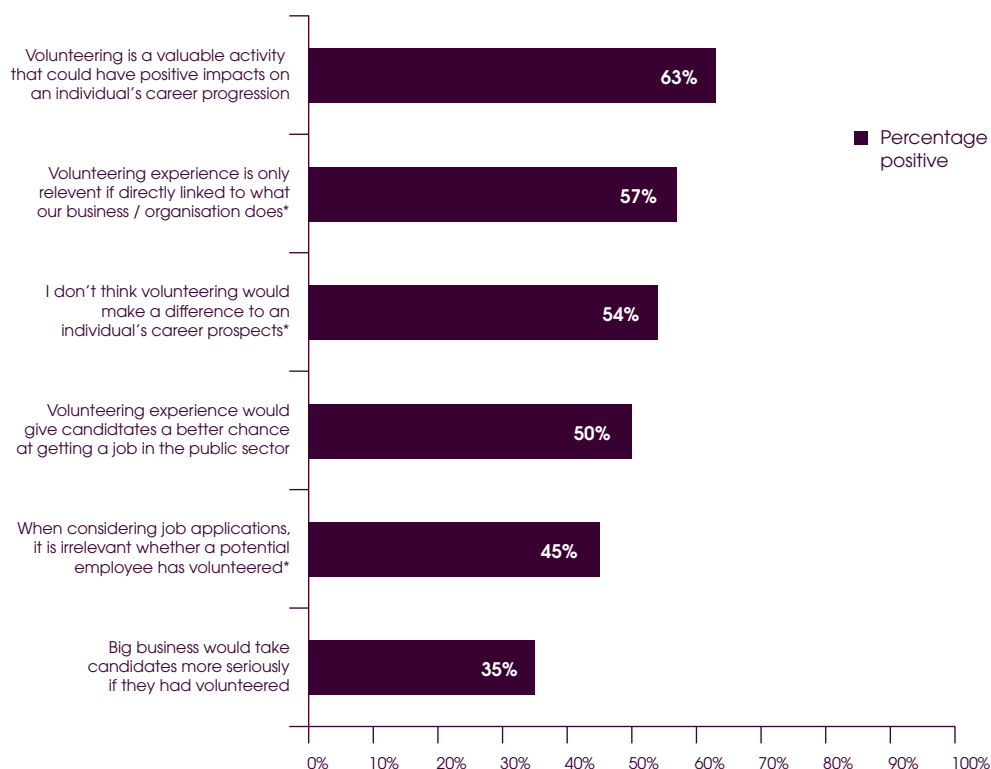
Managers were asked about the effects of volunteering on an employee's prospects of both being employed by an organisation and for their further career development.

Two thirds (63 per cent) of employers believe that volunteering is a valuable activity to support employees' career progression and over half feel that volunteering would make a positive difference to an individual's career progression (Figure 6).

There are clear differences in perception between the public and private sectors. Half of all managers, but 61 per cent in the public sector, specifically believe that volunteering experience would give public sector candidates a better chance of securing the position. This belief would dovetail with the proposed changes to the civil service appraisal process in which volunteering would be considered an important part of demonstrating public service and be essential for career progression. In contrast just over a third (35 per cent) felt that big businesses would consider a candidate more seriously because of volunteering.

Managers are more likely than their employees to agree that volunteering is a valuable activity that could have a positive impact on an individual's career progression, with 63 per cent of managers agreeing compared with 56 per cent of employees. There is a large difference here, however, with the gender of employees – 63 per cent of women agreeing with this statement compared with just 49 per cent of their male colleagues.

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements on volunteering and employees / candidates? (* indicates a negative statement with the % disagreeing shown)



Base: All managers (502).

5.3 Benefits to employees – happiness and well-being

The last employee specific benefits looked at in this section are those of happiness and well-being, important factors linked to levels of motivation and engagement of employees within the workplace. Figure 7 shows the differences between employees and managers when asked whether volunteering can help.

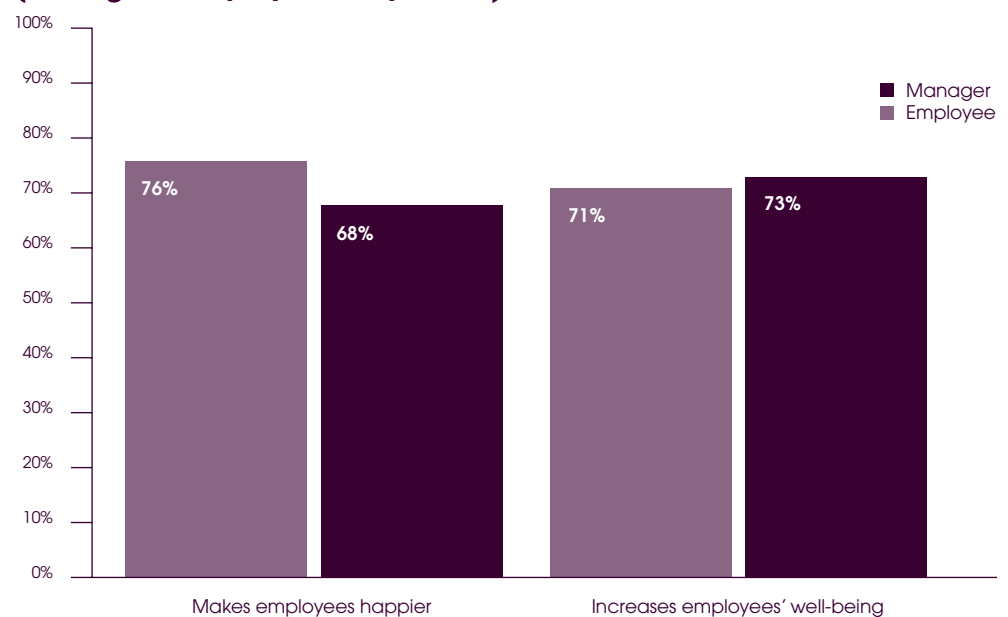
Whilst there seems to be a consensus between the groups that volunteering increases an employee's well-being, a larger proportion of employees (76 per cent) are likely to report that volunteering makes employees happier than managers (68 per cent).

As is a recurring theme, those groups of employees who are more likely to volunteer are also more likely to agree on the positive impacts of volunteering – 77 per cent of women agreed that volunteering adds to an employee's well-being (compared with 66 per cent of men), and 79 per cent of those who work part-time agree compared with 69 per cent of those working on a full-time basis. The same groups are also significantly more likely to agree that volunteering makes employees happier.

5.4 Community benefits

The vast majority of managers believe that volunteering can help employees connect to the local community. Eighty-eight per cent feel that this is the case, a figure that was higher among those with experience of volunteering themselves and those working in large organisations especially. Employees shared this positive outlook with an identical proportion (88 per cent) believing that volunteers benefit by 'giving something back to their community.'

Figure 7: Agreement with statements around employees' happiness and well-being as a result of volunteering. (Manager / employee comparison)



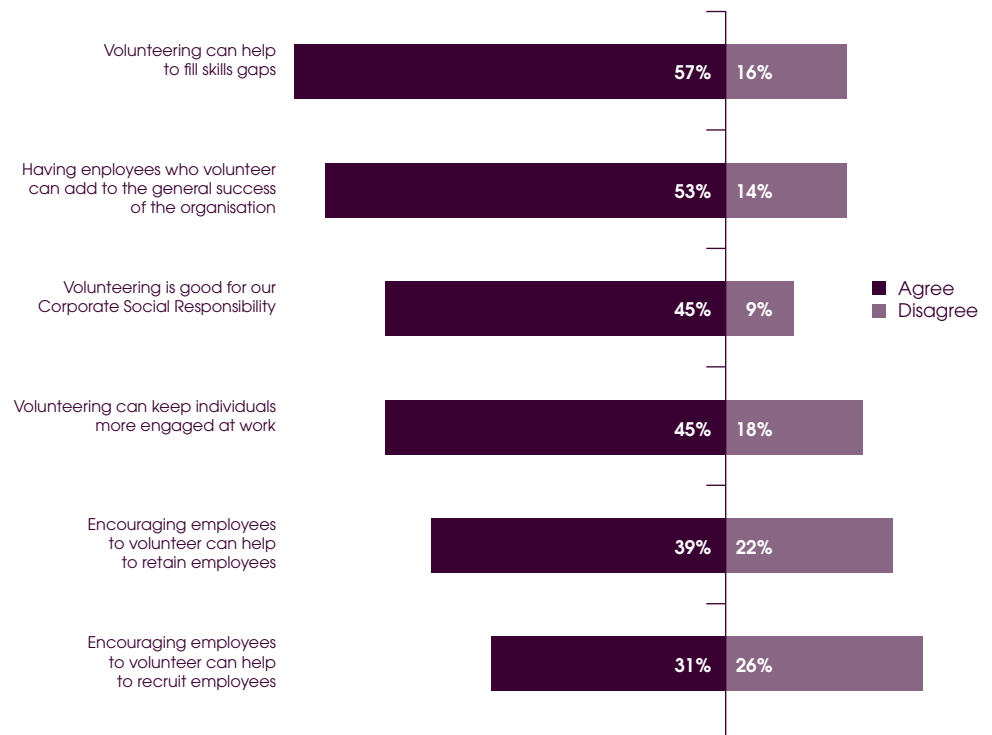
Base: All employees (1,010) and all managers (502).

5.5 Benefits to employers

It can be taken as a given that employers will automatically benefit from the skills and motivation gained through volunteering, but there are additional areas of benefit solely for employers around having their employees volunteer. Figure 8 shows the proportion of managers who agree and disagree with statements on the benefits of volunteering.

Over half of managers agree that volunteering helps to fill their skills gaps (57 per cent) and 53 per cent felt likewise that having volunteers within the organisation can add to its general success. Interestingly, managers are less convinced that having measures in place to encourage employees to volunteer will help with their recruitment.

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about volunteering and your organisation?



Base: All managers (502).

There are some interesting differences in the perceived benefits to employers by the size of organisation the manager works for – generally speaking, the larger the organisation, the more benefit managers see to having some of their employees volunteer. The most drastic of these differences appears when looking at the statement: “*Volunteering is good for our Corporate Social Responsibility*”. This rises from 19 per cent of managers in companies with one to 49 employees agreeing, to 62 per cent of those within companies with more than 250 employees.

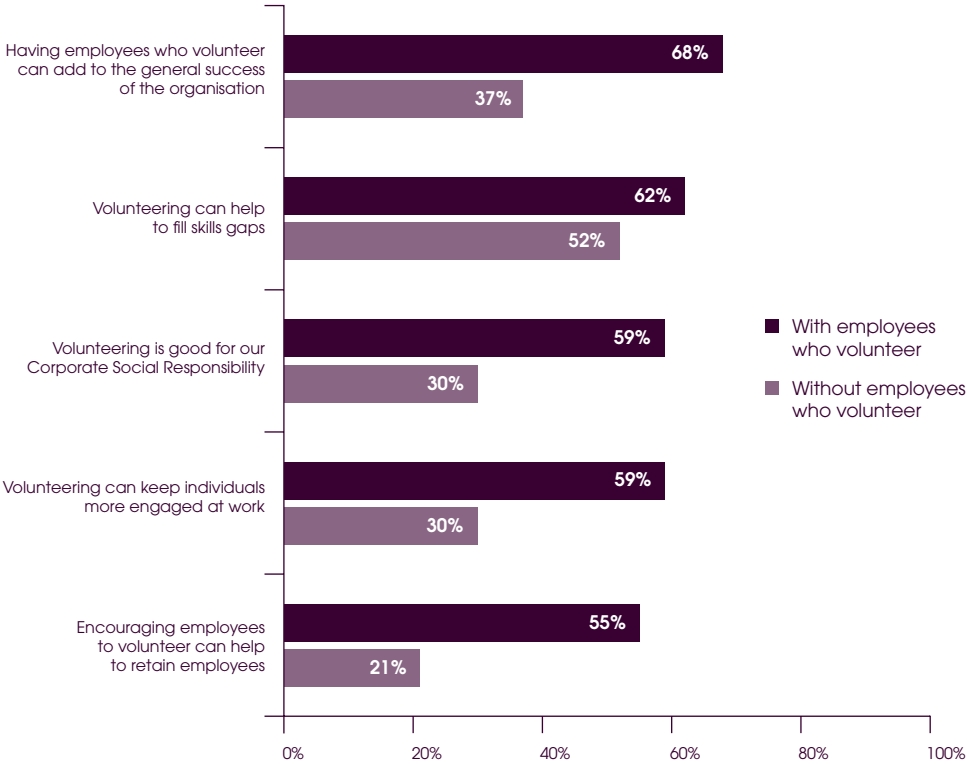
Managers of larger organisations are also more likely to agree that volunteering keeps employees more engaged at work - 59 per cent of those within large organisations agreeing compared with 29 per cent of those within organisations with fewer than 50 employees.

The differences in perceptions by size of organisation are unsurprising. Smaller organisations are less likely to have dedicated resources to support CSR or employee volunteering initiatives. This suggests it is vital to offer a range of volunteering opportunities to be able to meet different organisations needs and resources so employee volunteering does not add additional burden to their business commitments.

The most notable difference between managers, however, is seen when comparing the responses of those who manage volunteers with those who do not.

Figure 9 shows that managers of employees who volunteer are particularly more likely to see that they can add to the general success of the organisation (68 per cent) contribute to Corporate Social Responsibility (59 per cent) and help with their retention of employees (55 per cent). Although we do not know if the employees they manage who volunteer do so through the company or of their own volition, it is important to note that those with first-hand experience of managing staff who volunteer highly rate the benefits they can bring to the organisation for which they work.

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about volunteering and your organisation? (Comparison between those who manage volunteering employees and those who do not)



Base: All managers with employees who volunteer (255) and all those without (247).

6 Employer support for volunteering

6.1 Introduction

In between investigating the benefits employers can gain from volunteering and the support managers would need to encourage more of it, it is important to examine what support employers already offer.

This chapter begins by looking at the links between an organisation's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and volunteering. It then moves on to look at the measures that are in place for employees to volunteer before ending with managers' ratings of their own companies on the help offered to volunteer.

6.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

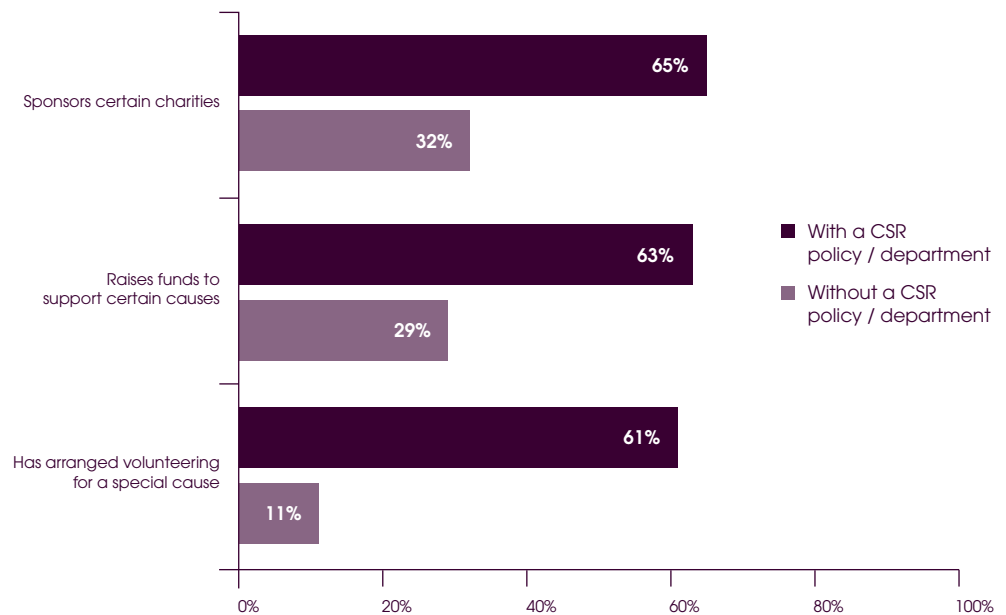
Corporate Social Responsibility is a growing priority for many companies as consumers and service users start to become more ethically minded. CSR is a broad policy area and covers all manner of company ethics – from resourcing through to the monitoring of the environmental impacts of an organisation's work and can mean different things to different areas of business. Generally speaking, however, CSR is about a company acting in ethical ways and as far as possible making sure that companies have a positive effect on communities – be that local, national or global. As this report focuses on a company's relationship with volunteering, this look at CSR also focuses on the role of volunteering within a company.

Of the managers interviewed, 30 per cent had either a dedicated CSR department (14 per cent) or at least a policy (28 per cent) within their organisation. As is probably not surprising, this increased with company size – from just four per cent of managers within organisations with fewer than 50 employees mentioning any CSR coverage to 46 per cent of those within organisations of more than 250 employees.

CSR is more prevalent in larger organisations and whilst 62 per cent of managers from those with over 250 employees feel that volunteering makes an important contribution to CSR, far fewer of those working in small (19 per cent) and medium sized organisations (26 per cent) agree.

Figure 10 clearly shows that there is a direct link between organisations having a CSR department / policy and encouraging employees to volunteer with 61 per cent of those with a CSR policy or department encouraging charitable activity compared with just 11 per cent of organisations without. Overall, just over one-quarter (26 per cent) of organisations have arranged employee volunteering for special causes.

Figure 10: Which of the following statements are applicable to your organisation? (Comparison of employers with / without a CSR department or policy)



Base: All managers within an organisation with a CSR department / policy (153) and all those without (349).

In addition to the above, seven per cent of employees currently undertake some voluntary work through their organisation. This is significantly higher within the voluntary and charity sector, where 16 per cent of employees do so, (compared with six per cent in both the public and private sectors).

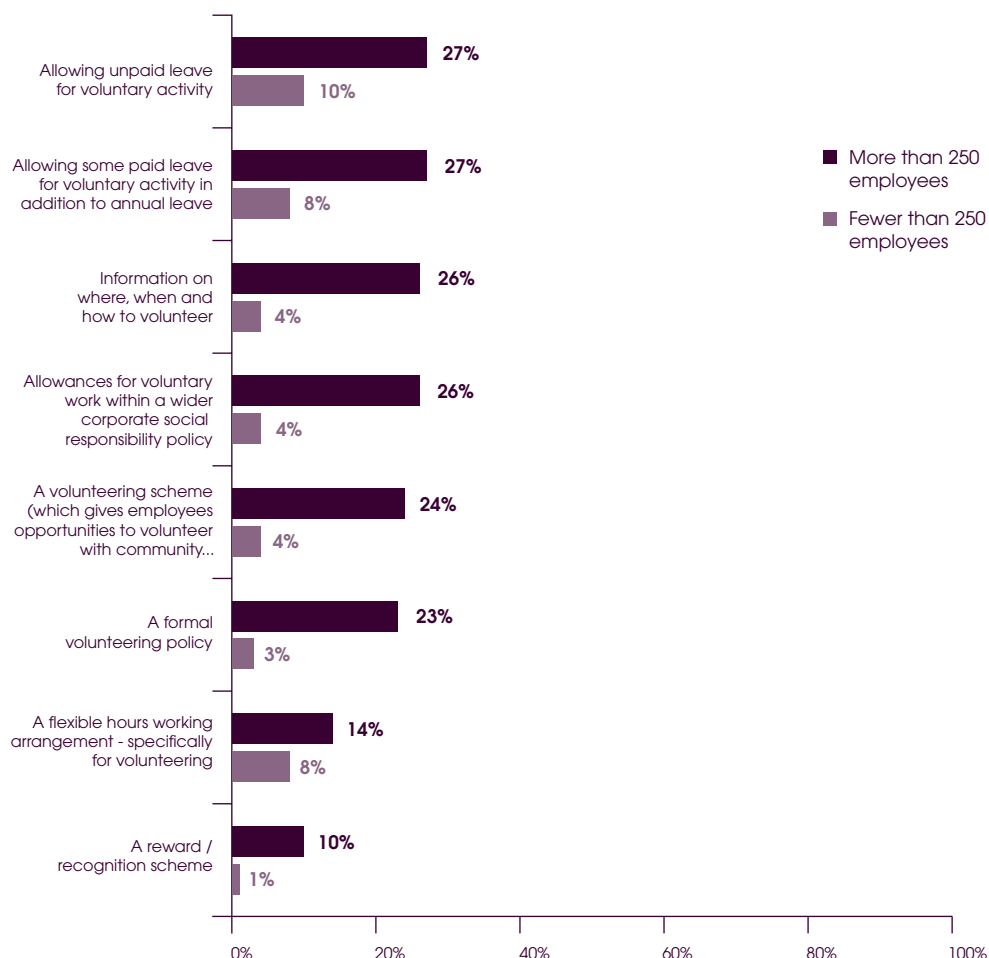
CSR activity and company ethics are also important for some employees when they consider companies to work for, as it can be for the retention of employees. Overall, 54 per cent of employees said a solid CSR policy or good company ethics were important to them when considering a new job with a new employer. In addition to this, just under half (46 per cent) stated they are more likely to stay with an employer matching that description. It is important, however, to put these figures into context – the type of work one would be doing is motivation for 91 per cent of employees when looking for a new job, a good salary 88 per cent and amount of annual leave for 72 per cent of employees.

Those managers whose organisation has a CSR policy were asked how this helps their business. Over two-thirds (68 per cent) answer that it helps their brand image – a factor that can also be important when recruiting new employees. Approaching two-thirds (65 per cent) also mentioned support to align the business objectives with community or environmental issues, something that volunteering can actively help with.

6.3 Allowances for volunteers

Both managers and employees were asked what allowances or policies their company currently has in place for volunteers. Although it may be unsurprising that as organisations grow in size, the proportion having policies or allowances increases, the extent to which this is true is worth noting – especially the larger differences in information and having schemes to help. Figure 11 shows these differences as reported by managers.

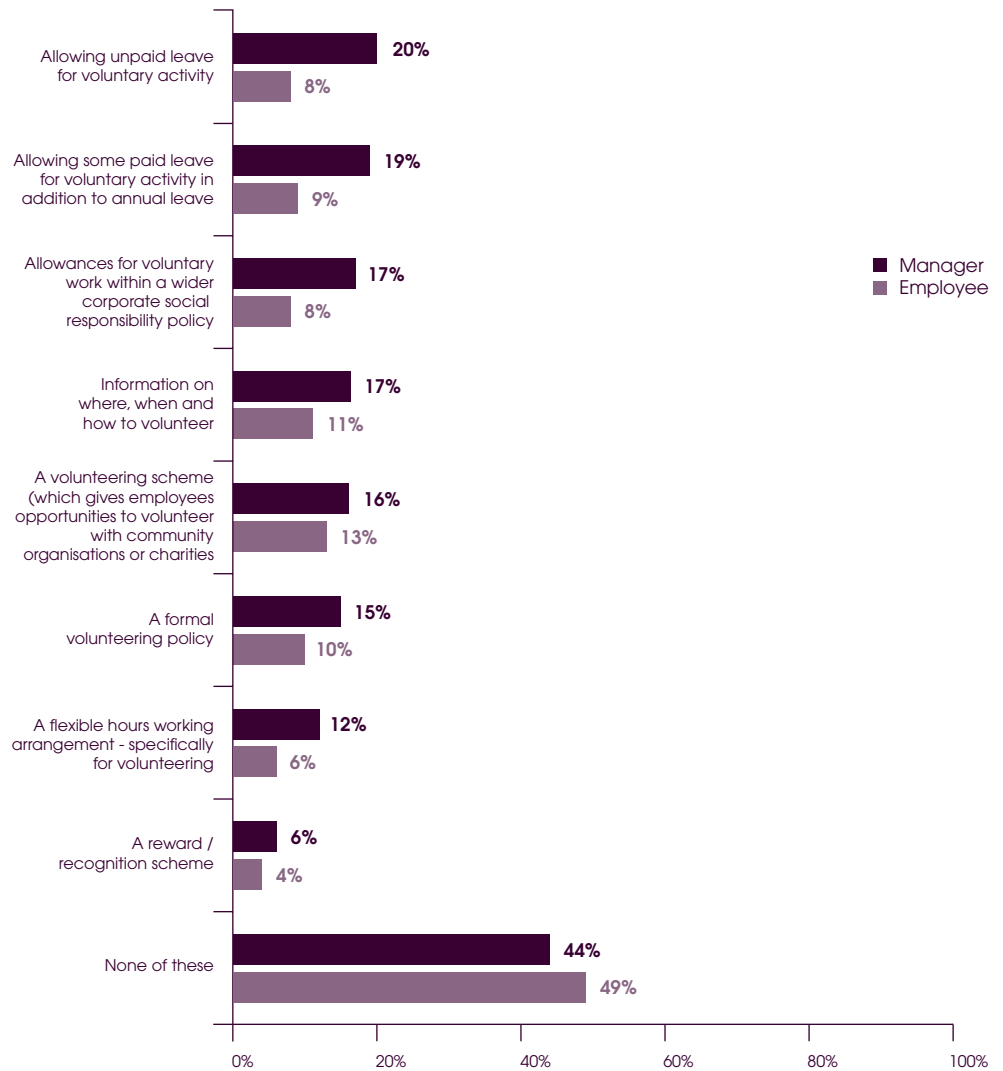
Figure 11: Which, if any, of the following does your company have in place for volunteering that you know of? (Comparison between managers in organisations with fewer than 250 employees and those with more than 250 employees.)



Base: All managers within an organisation with fewer than 250 employees (234) and all those within organisations with more employees (268).

Looking at the overall picture, as shown in Figure 12, only 56 per cent of managers and 51 per cent of employees reported having any policies or practices put in place by their organisation in order to support employees who want to volunteer. The differences in recognition of each policy by employers and employees perhaps implies that some policies are in place within companies but are only known about by management and are not promoted well enough to members of staff.

Figure 12: Which, if any, of the following does your company have in place for volunteering that you know of? Comparison between managers and employees.



Base: All employees (1,010) and all managers (502).

Those employees who do volunteer back up the levels of perceived help reported by all employees, rather than those reported by managers. Just 11 per cent state they are allowed unpaid time off, although a slightly higher proportion report being allowed paid time off – 11 per cent being allowed up to a certain maximum and three per cent without a maximum amount. Three-fifths (59 per cent) report having to volunteer in their own time and 17 per cent were not sure of any allowances made by their employer for volunteering.

Reasons for rating their company as being very / fairly good in its support of volunteers included explanations of allowances given (paid or unpaid leave, flexibility etc) and also some more practical means of support such as allocating employees a few hours monthly in which to volunteer. Interestingly, there is discussion of the promotion of volunteering within responses, several talking about their organisation having a culture of volunteering, that management act as role models in this field and that communication of voluntary work is made both within and outside of the organisation.

Figure 13 shows a wordcloud of responses given to this question. The bigger a word appears within the figure, the more times it was mentioned.

7 Barriers and support

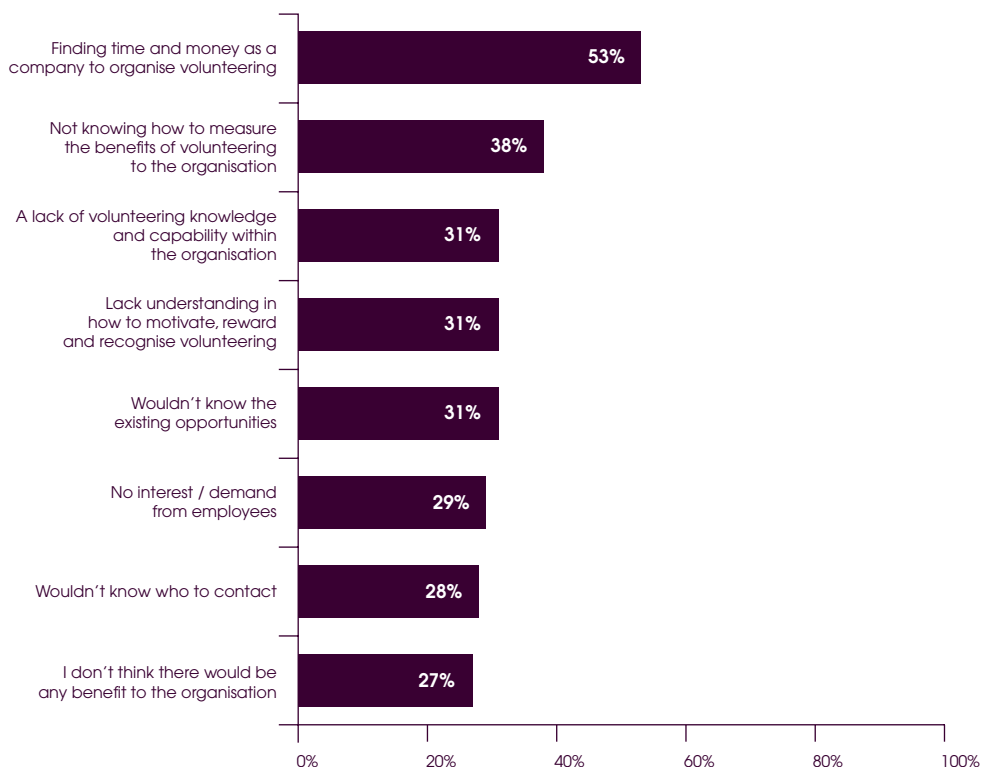
7.1 Introduction

The previous section showed that whilst employers support for employees volunteering of their own volition is relatively low, there is an appetite for the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda – with workplace volunteering playing its part. This section of the report looks at the barriers employees and employers face that might prevent or limit volunteering and the support employees who want to become involved feel that they need to overcome these barriers.


7.2 Barriers to volunteering

As the figure below shows, there are a multitude of reasons why employers may not be able to help employees to volunteer. Whilst money and time are large issues that would be difficult to overcome for any employer, there are ways in which employers could be assisted. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of managers raised issues such as knowing who to contact, what opportunities exist, understanding how to motivate employees, having the knowledge within the organisation and know-how to measure the impact of employees volunteering.

Figure 14: To what extent do you feel the following are barriers in encouraging employees to volunteer? All answering 4 or 5 on a scale where 1 meant to no extent and 5 a great extent.



Base: All managers (502).



Time and cost are particular issues amongst managers of smaller organisations – 61 per cent of those within organisations with fewer than 50 employees mentioning this compared with 50 per cent of those with over 250 employees and 47 per cent of those with between 50 and 249 employees. This is also significantly more likely to be mentioned by those who do not currently manage employees who volunteer. This could imply that those managers who do not manage employees who volunteer either overestimate the amount it would cost or employee time it would take, or perhaps they do not have first-hand experience of the benefits of volunteering.

A lack of demand from employees is also a sticking point – with 29 per cent of organisations stating this would be a barrier. Again this is particularly mentioned by managers within small organisations (37 per cent of those with fewer than 50 employees stating this), although medium sized enterprises are also significantly more likely to state this as a problem than large ones (36 per cent of those with between 50 and 249 employees compared with just 23 per cent of those with 250 or more). Differences here may again indicate more of a perception issue for managers.

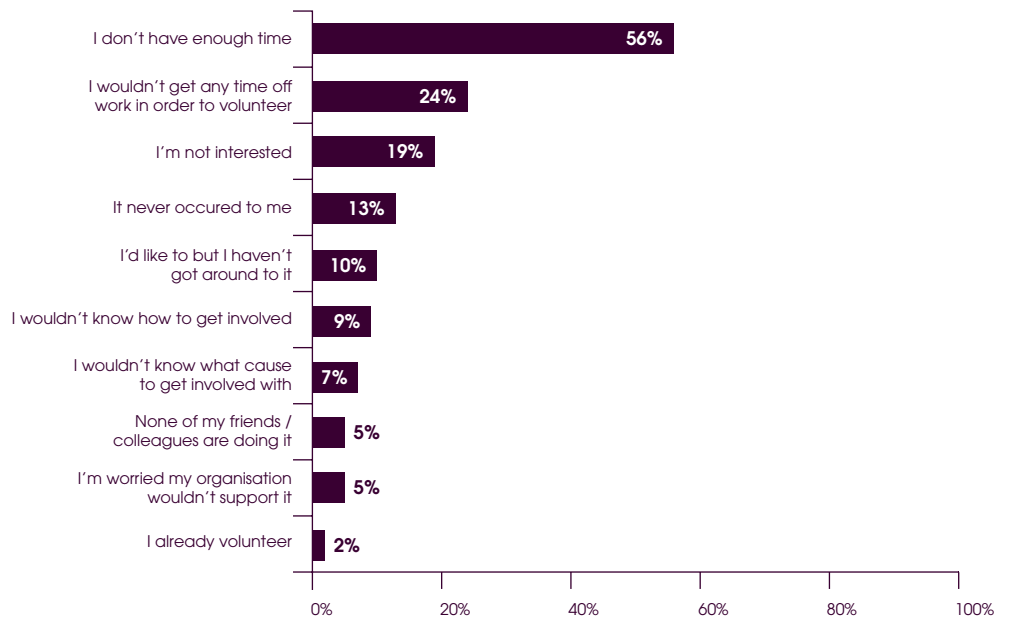
Employers who have staff that volunteer are significantly more likely to know the opportunities that exist and claim to have the expertise in place to help. Although this is not surprising seeing as they have staff members volunteering.

There are also some interesting differences here by sector of organisation. Managers within the public sector, for example, are significantly more likely to lack understanding in how to motivate employees to volunteers (44 per cent compared with 28 per cent of private sector managers), whereas the private sector are significantly more likely to lack the knowledge and capability to encourage volunteering (34 per cent compared with 21 per cent). Private sector managers are also significantly more likely to see no benefit in volunteering within their organisation (30 per cent compared with 16 per cent of public sector managers).

A lack of time is an issue repeated by employees themselves, with 56 per cent arguing that this stops them from volunteering or doing more voluntary work¹⁹. This is followed by a concern that they would not get time off work in order to participate (24 per cent). Nineteen per cent of respondents stated they were just not interested. Male employees are more than three times more likely than their female colleagues to state a lack of interest – 27 per cent doing so compared with just eight per cent of women.

¹⁹ Lack of time is also cited in the Helping Out survey (2007, Cabinet Office) as the key reason that people do not volunteer (66 per cent stating so).

Figure 15: What prevents you from volunteering / doing more voluntary work?

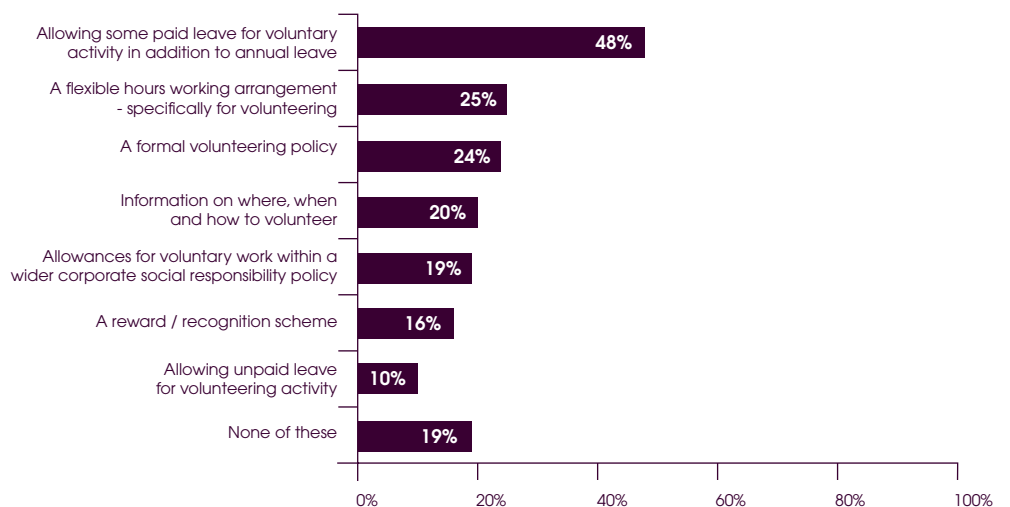


Base: All employees (1,010).

7.3 Support for employees

Asked what support from employers would help encourage employees to undertake more voluntary work, 72 per cent mentioned incentives and nine per cent did not know. Only 19 per cent stated that nothing would encourage them to volunteer; this was significantly higher amongst men, where 24 per cent said that nothing would help them volunteer compared with just 13 per cent of women. Figure 16 shows the levels of support for each option, with paid leave in addition to annual leave being the most popular motivator (mentioned by 42 per cent of respondents) – this compares with just nine per cent of employees claiming they already have such allowances.

Figure 16: What support from your employer would encourage you to volunteer / do more voluntary work?



Base: All employees (1,010).

When asked what the one most important thing their employer could do to encourage them to volunteer, many policies were discussed – particularly being given paid leave. Other answers included greater publicity of things that could be done. Figure 17 shows that time becomes a major factor here again. It is also worth noting that the word 'nothing' appears relatively large in this Figure, reflecting the feeling from some employees that nothing would encourage them to volunteer.

Figure 17: What do you think is the ONE most important thing your company could do to encourage you to volunteer?



Source: Wordle.net. Base: All employees (1,010).

7.4 Information about volunteering

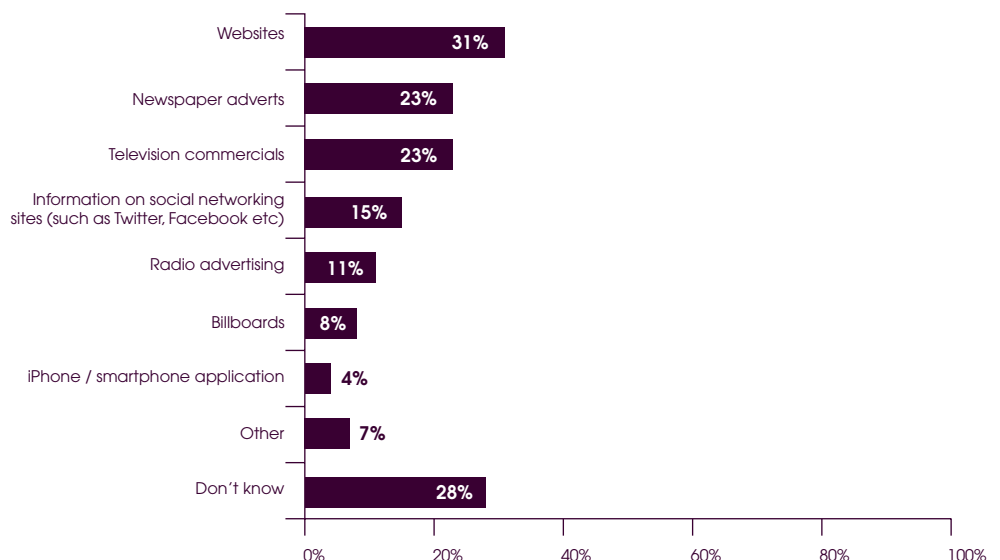
The above has shown that time and resources are clearly issues for both employees and managers when it comes to volunteering. However, there are also issues with a lack of knowledge and experience of the field amongst managers and employees. Figure 18 displays some channels of information employees would find encouraging with regards volunteering.

Websites are the most frequently mentioned resource for information encouraging employees to volunteer. These were mentioned by 31 per cent of all employees, perhaps unsurprisingly this was mentioned more by young employees than their older colleagues (37 per cent of those aged 25 to 34 compared with 22 per cent of those aged over 55) and those undertaking voluntary work through their company (49 per cent compared with 30 per cent of others).

In addition to this, a further 15 per cent highlighted information on social networking sites as a key resource, and four per cent mentioned iPhone/ smartphone applications as a useful source of information. These responses are indicative of the increasing role that digital technology is playing in communicating with people and energising them to take action.

It is worth noting here that a large proportion (28 per cent of employees), are not sure which channels would be most suitable – demonstrating their lack of familiarity with volunteering subjects.

Figure 18: Imagine opportunities to volunteer were publicised in an easy to access way in all of the forms listed below. Which, if any, would encourage you to think more about volunteering?



Base: All employees (1,010).



8 Interest in workplace volunteering

8.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the amount of interest and potential take up of a scheme in which employers could be helped to encourage their employees to volunteer. It also looks closely at which types of employees would be interested in volunteering through their company and what would make them more likely to do so.

8.2 Employee demand

There is a large amount of interest from employees in the idea of employer assisted volunteering. A total of 58 per cent of employees are likely to volunteer with their employers help. A further 25 per cent were neutral about the idea, meaning that only 17 per cent are unlikely to volunteer if their employer offered them any assistance. Public sector employees are significantly more likely to be interested in the idea, with 66 per cent answering that they are likely to volunteer with employer support, compared with 56 per cent of those in the private sector.

These findings suggest there is large scope to increase the number of employees that volunteer. Interestingly these results contrast with managers, 29 per cent of whom think that there is no demand or little interest from their employees

The research shows that a number of factors influence interest in volunteering, including:

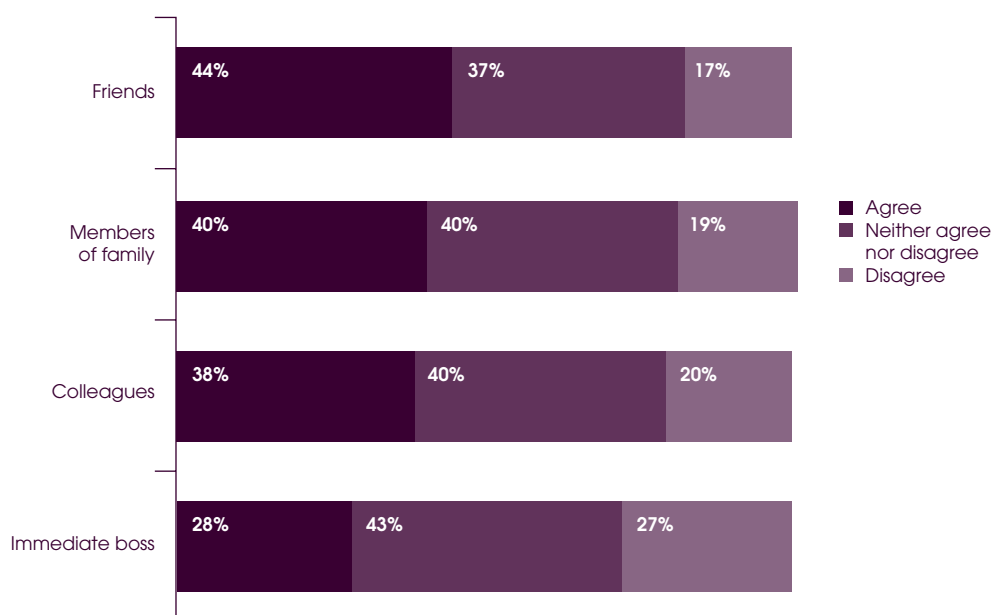
- Younger employees are more likely to volunteer – from 70 per cent of those aged 25 to 34, to 49 per cent of those aged 55 and over
- Women are significantly more likely to volunteer with support from their employer (66 per cent compared with 52 per cent of men)
- Those with a caring responsibility (64 per cent compared 55 per cent of those without).
- Current versus non-volunteers, with 37 per cent of those not volunteering at present being interested, compared to 67 per cent of those who do volunteer, either formally or informally.

This information is helpful to consider how to effectively communicate and encourage all employees to volunteer. It could help to identify particular target groups and approaches to ensure volunteering is accessible and attractive to all employees.

8.3 The influence of others on likelihood of volunteering

In many aspects of our lives, we can be influenced over our decisions to do things by those around us, but is this true with volunteering? Previous research has shown that word of mouth is indeed a common factor²⁰. Figure 19 shows the extent to which respondents agree or disagree that they would be more likely to undertake voluntary work if those around them did so.

Figure 19: To what extent do you agree or disagree that you would be more likely to undertake voluntary work yourself if the following volunteered themselves? (Don't know answers excluded).



Base: All employees (1,010).

Employees feel they would be more influenced in their decisions over whether to volunteer by their friends and family (44 per cent and 40 per cent respectively doing so), with influence from colleagues coming a close third (38 per cent agreeing). Influence from an immediate manager is not so strong, however, with 28 per cent agreeing and almost the same proportion (27 per cent) disagreeing.

There are some interesting differences when comparing colleagues in relation to the influence from their boss in volunteering. Age is a significant factor, for example, with 37 per cent of those aged 25 to 34 agreeing, falling to 23 per cent of those aged over 55. Employees in the private sector are also significantly more likely to agree that they would be influenced by their boss – 30 per cent doing so compared with 22 per cent of those in the public sector. Finally, those who currently volunteer through their company are significantly more likely to be influenced by their immediate manager (43 per cent compared with 26 per cent) implying possibly that they already have been influenced in this way.

²⁰ The Helping Out survey (2007, Cabinet Office, Office of the Third Sector) - 66 per cent of current formal volunteers had heard about their opportunity this way.

8.4 Employer demand

This survey demonstrated that although managers agree that there are many benefits of employee volunteering, they mentioned many barriers to implementing volunteering policies. In response, how would they consider receiving external help to develop volunteering in their organisation?

Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of managers feel that external support could help develop volunteering in their organisation. This is particularly true of public sector organisations, where 82 per cent feel they would benefit (compared with 64 per cent of private organisations), and those with more than 250 employees (where 80 per cent felt they would benefit compared with 51 per cent of those with fewer than 50 employees). There is also a demand from those managers who manage employees who volunteer – with 75 per cent feeling they would benefit compared with 62 per cent of those who do not.

Those who do not feel they would benefit were asked why this was. Although reasons varied quite widely, a couple of key themes came out of this such as:

- Companies being too small to benefit or to allow employees to volunteer (which came out previously with smallest companies being the least likely to want to volunteer);
- Managers feeling their organisation offers good volunteering schemes currently;
- A feeling that managers would support employees to volunteer in causes they feel are important individually rather than forcing them to do one thing or another; and
- A general disinterest in volunteering and a feeling that this should be done in an employee's own time.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This research demonstrates that volunteering provides cost effective, win-win solutions for employees, businesses and the wider community.

For employees, volunteering:

- provides opportunities to develop important skills such as communication and self-confidence;
- builds leadership and teamwork abilities and enhances use of initiative;
- creates a sense of happiness and well-being;
- supports career development and progression; and
- enhances social and cultural understanding.

For businesses, volunteering:

- is a cost effective and innovative way to build employees' skills sets;
- helps to recruit and retain employees;
- motivates employees;
- increases employees' happiness and well-being;
- enables businesses to take action on community or environmental issues which align to their CSR objectives;
- has a positive impact on reputation;
- builds community relationships; and
- aligns with the 'Big Society'.

For the wider community, volunteering:

- provides access to managers' skills and experience;
- supports charities;
- is a valuable resource of time and skills;
- engages the community with businesses; and
- builds community relations.

There are real opportunities to expand the number of employees engaged volunteering. A majority of employees would consider doing some form of volunteering if they were supported by their employer. In turn, businesses want help and support to help them overcome the barriers they face in promoting and operationalizing employee volunteering.



Recommendations for businesses

Over the past 4 years ▼ has worked with 200 corporate partners and created 1 million volunteering opportunities. On the basis of that extensive experience and this research ▼ makes the following recommendations:

Allow employees time to volunteer;

- Support managers by providing easy-to-use systems to administer employee volunteering;
- Utilise digital innovation to support employee volunteering: websites can match employees with relevant and suitable volunteering opportunities, promote volunteering and allow businesses to capture stories and data. Social media can support peer to peer communication and promotion of volunteering opportunities;
- Create opportunities for managers to volunteer. Managers with experience of volunteering are far more likely to recognise the benefits, encourage staff to volunteer and promote volunteering policies; and
- Integrate corporate social responsibility policies as this has been shown to have a huge impact on creating a culture of volunteering.

Annex A – Survey sample profile for managers and employees

Managers sample profile based on 502 responses

| | | Unweighted | Weighted |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|----------|
| Sector | Private sector | 377 | 366 |
| | Public sector | 96 | 101 |
| | Charity / voluntary sector | 29 | 34 |
| Company size (No of employees) | 1-49 | 160 | 144 |
| | 50-250 | 74 | 59 |
| | 250+ | 268 | 299 |
| Region | North | 75 | 74 |
| | Midlands | 78 | 77 |
| | East | 57 | 53 |
| | London | 72 | 76 |
| | South | 151 | 152 |
| | Wales | 23 | 23 |
| | Scotland | 40 | 43 |
| | Northern Ireland | 6 | 6 |

Employees sample profile based on 1,010 responses

| | | Unweighted | Weighted |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------|----------|
| Sector | Private sector | 537 | 737 |
| | Public sector | 394 | 202 |
| | Charity / voluntary sector | 79 | 71 |
| Company size (No of employees) | 1-50 | 259 | 293 |
| | 51-250 | 123 | 111 |
| | 250+ | 628 | 606 |
| Region | North | 240 | 240 |
| | Midlands | 139 | 126 |
| | East | 112 | 113 |
| | London | 84 | 82 |
| | South | 290 | 295 |
| | Wales | 44 | 48 |
| | Scotland | 92 | 96 |
| | Northern Ireland | 9 | 10 |
| Gender | Male | 582 | 535 |
| | Female | 428 | 475 |
| Working status | Full time (more than 30 hours per week) | 767 | 748 |
| | Part-time (less than 30 hours per week) | 243 | 262 |
| Caring responsibilities | Yes | 384 | 373 |
| | No | 626 | 637 |

Annex B – Reference

Building the Big Society (2010), Cabinet Office

Citizenship Survey : 2009-10 (2010), Communities and Local Government

The Compact (2009) *The Compact on relations between Government and the Third Sector in England*, London: The Compact

The Co-operative Sustainability Report 2009, The Co-operative Group.

Hill, Russell & Brewis (2009), *Young people, volunteering, and youth projects: a rapid review of evidence*, v/Institute of Volunteering Research.

Low, Butt, Paine, Davis Smith (2007), *Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving*, Cabinet Office

Newton, Fearn, Oakley, Sumption, Williams (2010) *The v in volunteering: Articulating the perceived additional value of volunteering – Interim report*. Institute of Employment Studies (unpublished – final report due 2011)

v/YouGov (2009), *Employer Survey: attitudes to volunteering and impact on career progression*

Volunteering Works (2007), *Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England*.

Copies of the employer and employee survey are available upon request

Please contact research@vinspired.com or (020) 7960 7000

Volunteering Works

powered by **v**

www.volunteeringworks.org

v, National Young Volunteers Service
5th Floor Dean Bradley House
52 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2AF
research@vinspired.com
(020) 7960 7000

