

## Top tips to creating suitable employee volunteering opportunities

- 1) Clarify your own need. One easy way to do this is to sit down with some of your colleagues to brainstorm the different needs within your organisation and explore how you might involve employee volunteers in addressing those needs. Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve will help you shape what you ask employee volunteers to do. Take time to prioritise what needs to be done, rather than asking for everything, which is off-putting and unrealistic for busy employees.
- 2) Consider the time requirement needed from the employee volunteers and if this is the best use of their skills. The larger companies usually have a time off policy for staff volunteering, ranging from one to five days per year. This means that employee volunteers may only be able to commit a small amount of time to your project. Smaller companies may not have a policy in place but may want to offer a team challenge day to all staff.
- 3) Understand appropriate ways that employee volunteers can use their time:
  - a. One off – this means packaging all the work you need to be done into a day, whether refurbishing an area, taking out your clients for a day out or a skills sharing workshop. One-off volunteering opportunities can sometimes lead to longer term partnerships if they are well managed and communication lines are kept open.
  - b. Ongoing support – a good way for employee volunteers to be able to commit to a more regular volunteering commitment, is for them to share the responsibility of a time slot with other colleagues, for example devising a rota. Or alternatively the task could be cut into very small time chunks so to be carried out once a week during their lunch break.
  - c. Assignments – you may also package the work into a project that the volunteer could undertake during their own time and off site. This will also help in honing volunteers’ project management skills. The example below is an assignment to design a leaflet.

1-2 hours (on site)	Initial consultation and briefing
2-4 hours (off site)	Work assignment by volunteer
1-2 hours (on site)	Second meeting to discuss progress
2-4 hours (off site)	Finishing work
1-2 hours (on site)	Handover of completed assignment
- 4) Take into consideration that for health and safety reasons, employers are usually only able to grant their staff time off to volunteer during work hours to ensure that they are covered by appropriate insurance.
- 5) Try to build a skills development angle into your opportunities and list benefits both the employees and their organisation can gain from the experience, such as project management and leadership skills etc. See the tasks from their perspective and their WIFM - ‘what’s in it for me’? Using employer supported volunteering as a means to support workforce development is becoming more popular for companies. [Read Volunteering England’s HR guide.](#)

6) As well as skills development, team building is another sought after part of corporate community involvement. Many companies now see group volunteering as a means to increase team spirit, camaraderie and effectiveness.

7) Some examples of team building opportunities:

Alternatives	Advantages	Example (for a team of 25 volunteers)
<b>Set up a Volunteer Rota (shared task)</b>	Volunteering on rotation allows staff to swap times with each other when needed. It then becomes a team effort to keep the commitment to the charity, giving the team a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.	350 volunteer hrs = 50 volunteer days The team could commit to running their own extended-school support at a local school to help children learn to read. One to two volunteers to manage a weekly session for two hours for a term.
<b>Split the team to do separate tasks with the same charity</b>	The charity's multiple needs are met in just one volunteering event, at the same time providing different activity choices for volunteers according to their interest.	Working with a refugees charity... Five volunteers to do an office collection of winter wear for refugees 10 volunteers to invite refugees to their workplace, do a CV surgery and mock interviews to aid refugees in finding work in the UK. Five volunteers to support an English class for refugees. Five volunteers to work with charity coordinator to develop an effective strategy to recruit refugee mentors from the corporate sector.
<b>Split the team to do the same task on different days</b>	Allows more flexibility in setting the time, giving volunteers several time options to participate.	Three days, with 10-20 volunteers per day, to transform a tired playground into a fun, crazy mini golf course.
<b>Split the team to volunteer with different charities on the same day</b>	Employee volunteers can choose a central theme, for example, homelessness, and work with different charities to benefit several sets of clients, thereby giving the volunteers a more	10 volunteers to organise and join a group of young homeless people for a fun day out which they otherwise will not be able to afford by themselves. 10 volunteers to revamp a garden to make it a more relaxing experience for hostel residents during their stay.

	diverse perspective and richer shared experience.	Five volunteers to work with a charity worker on how to promote their services and reach more homeless clients.
<b>Design a project management challenge for volunteers to do in their own time</b>	Addresses staff development needs through volunteering. This involves planning, objectives setting, scoping, implementation and evaluation.	Working with a diverse team of colleagues to design and deliver a toy library for a neighbourhood family service unit working with disadvantaged children.

- 8) Ensure that work you ask employee volunteers to do is achievable and has clear outputs. This needs to be communicated directly from the outset, especially when advertising the volunteering opportunity, so to attract the right person with the right skills who can do the right job for you.
- 9) Consider your capacity and how you will work with volunteers throughout the life of the project. Ensure that you have a contact person from your organisation that will be able to deal with enquiries, someone who can coordinate the volunteers and the means to brief and support volunteers so they know what to do.
- 10) Don't forget to mention additional requirements, such as CRB checks, qualifications, etc.
- 11) Think about whether it might be advantageous to link up with your local employee volunteering broker.