

Here's how to improve corporate volunteerism

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

I refer to the commentary "It is only in giving that we truly receive" (Dec 13). Good volunteerism, I believe, is marked by consistency, sustainability and strong impact.

In this vein, the observation that "corporate volunteerism in Singa-

pore is commonly expressed narrowly and insipidly as employees being given time off, often a day or two, to volunteer or take part in a one-off activity" is fair.

Moreover, corporate volunteerism is often conflated with corporate social responsibility, with a disproportionate emphasis on media-friendly

events or financial contributions that may reflect positively on the company but may do little for the beneficiaries.

If companies want to nurture more meaningful volunteerism within their organisations, three recommendations are in order.

First, the organic development of corporate volunteerism should be

facilitated by employees with a history of volunteerism, and furthered through projects aligned with these workers' skill sets.

Engineers with expertise in data analysis or executives with experience in social media marketing, for instance, could help charities to process data sets or promote events respectively.

Employees would still make a difference if they take up generic roles as regular volunteers, yet specialisation would be more beneficial in this regard to both charities and volunteers.

The second recommendation is coordination with, and attachment to, a particular charity for the long-term, starting with a needs analysis.

The alignment of employees with the charity will allow for a relevant agenda to be decided upon, and thereafter when a service or programme is implemented, output and outcome data should be collected and analysed to ascertain impact.

The final, related recommendation is to ensure the consistency and sustainability of projects. An obvious undertaking would be for companies to stick to a charity for a few years, even if the teams and their employee compositions change.

Guidance can be sought from American writers and non-profit professionals Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely, who defined philanthropic contributions progressively as relief, improvement, social reform and civic engagement.

In the bigger picture, companies and their employees can conceptualise projects more ambitiously, with aspirations for the future.

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New silver card to be given out over next four months

FROM JASMINE KWOK

Senior Director, Membership and Community Partnership Division, for Chief Executive Director, People's Association

We thank Ms Lim Quee Lan for her feedback ("Why no heads-up on new PASSion card?"; Dec 7).

The new PASSion Silver Concession Card is a two-in-one card offering convenience and concessions on public transport, People's Association programmes as well as merchant benefits that have been put together specially for seniors.

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