



Business Roundtable
Partnership for Disaster Response

Preparing Employees to Be Disaster-Ready Volunteers

A Guide to Building an Effective Volunteer Training Program



Introduction

In the past several years, companies and their employees have demonstrated an extraordinary willingness and capacity to contribute to disaster response and recovery efforts at home and abroad. Employees have a tremendous range of expertise that can be extremely helpful at the time of a disaster.

But without the right training, employees' talent and enthusiasm may go to waste. Working with a relief agency to train employees in advance of an emergency can be a very effective way for companies to contribute to disaster response efforts and make a significant impact on communities in need.

This guide provides an overview of key issues for companies to consider when establishing a program to train and deploy employee volunteers to expedite disaster relief. They include:

- Engaging employees
- Establishing relationships with relief agencies
- Tapping skilled volunteers
- Designing a comprehensive training program
- Developing policies to support employee volunteerism
- Launching an international employee volunteerism program
- Communicating the benefits of volunteering internally and externally

EMPLOYEES HAVE DEMONSTRATED AN EXTRAORDINARY WILLINGNESS AND CAPACITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

Engaging employees

DISASTROUS EVENTS EVOKE
POWERFUL CHARITABLE RESPONSES
FROM A COMPANY'S WORKFORCE



Increasingly, corporate volunteerism and community involvement are becoming part of a company's fabric. Employees want to participate in volunteer activities that take them beyond the four walls of the office, and job seekers take a company's community involvement into consideration when choosing where to work. Further, corporate volunteerism is a tangible way to express a company's commitment to the communities where its employees live and work.

Disastrous events, in particular, evoke powerful charitable responses from America's workforce. Engaging your employees in disaster relief efforts provides much-needed support to relief organizations and also provides meaningful opportunities for employees to build relationships with one another.

Employees can provide vital assistance at the time of a disaster or in advance of an emergency. Here are some ways to engage your employees in disaster volunteering:

- **Develop company-sponsored programs.** Companies can actively encourage employees to become trained to volunteer during a disaster by: promoting training programs at the workplace; recognizing employees who become involved; organizing group volunteer projects; developing partnerships with relief agencies; or sponsoring volunteer efforts through financial support for a program.
- **Support employee-driven programs.** Often, employees take the initiative in determining how and where they would like to volunteer. Companies can demonstrate their support by highlighting the efforts of employees who receive training and recognizing the contributions they make as disaster volunteers.

Motivating Employee Volunteers

When a company's leadership communicates its support for employee volunteerism, employees know that their contributions are valued by the company and will be motivated to volunteer. Company and program leaders should provide consistent support, encouragement and recognition of employees' achievements.

While commitment from the top is crucial, establishing a corporate culture that appreciates volunteerism will help mobilize and implement a program. Finding champions who will promote the program at all levels is critical to continued success and momentum.

Best practice: engaging and motivating employees



Ready When the Time Comes: Encouraging Employee Involvement and Leadership



To motivate and encourage volunteerism among employees, a company should provide support from its leadership, while encouraging enthusiasm as a program base. The *Ready When the Time Comes* model does just that. Developed in partnership with national founding sponsor W.W. Grainger, Inc. and the American Red Cross, *Ready When the Time Comes* is a corporate disaster volunteer program that screens and trains employees in advance of a disaster in order to deploy trained volunteers when a disaster strikes.

Hurricane Katrina underscored two key elements that contribute to a successful volunteering program: first, concerned individuals are deeply motivated to help during a disaster; and second,



there is a critical need for volunteers across the country who are prepared to respond within the affected areas for extended periods. As a result, W.W. Grainger, Inc. worked with the American Red Cross to launch the *Ready When the Time Comes* program in order to offer human resources in addition to in-kind services and product donations.

Knowing the value of a pre-screened, pre-trained corps of volunteers, local chapters of the American Red Cross help to recruit local companies. More than 100 corporations and businesses across the country have partnered with the American Red Cross to support the program in 22 metropolitan areas.

The model is successful in engaging and motivating employees for two reasons: CEO support and recognition as well as “champions” throughout the company. Each local company branch or American Red Cross chapter that seeks to establish *Ready When the Time Comes*, needs to find an employee who will act as the champion, garnering interest and enthusiasm for the program at the grassroots level.

Consistent communication across company levels and establishing a key contact at the local American Red Cross chapter has also proven vital to the program’s continued success and reach. Over the last few years, *Ready When the Time Comes* volunteers have been called upon more than 30 times to support a range of disasters, including large-scale national events such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, as well as southeastern hurricanes, the California wildfires and local ice storms, flooding, tornadoes and chemical disasters in the West, Midwest and Northeast.

Establishing relationships with relief agencies

Employees may be eager to volunteer during a disaster, but with little or no training, they may overwhelm relief agencies that must respond quickly when disaster strikes. For employee volunteers to be most effective, they should be trained in advance so they can be integrated easily into the efforts of trained professionals who have expertise in confronting life-threatening challenges that a disaster can bring.

Developing a partnership with a relief agency in advance and establishing a rapid-response plan will enable your company's volunteers to mobilize quickly during a disaster. Activities to start building a partnership include:

- **Identifying a relief agency** whose mission aligns with your company's goals and has local reach in your areas of operation. Consider whether the agency has the

infrastructure to support your employee volunteers during a disaster. Can your employees get involved in ways that meet your objectives as a program sponsor and your employees' objectives as volunteers?

- **Sharing a list of expertise and needs** that trained volunteers could offer, such as supply chain management and technical and logistical assessment. Many of these needs are known ahead of time, while others are particular to each disaster.
- **Assigning a central contact person** within the company and at the partner organization who can regularly communicate needs and information to better determine the right type and number of employees to deploy during a disaster relief effort.

WITH LITTLE OR NO TRAINING, EMPLOYEES MAY OVERWHELM RELIEF AGENCIES THAT MUST RESPOND QUICKLY WHEN DISASTER STRIKES



Best practice: aligning with core business



Fannie Mae: Aligning Its Commitment to Employee Volunteerism with the Company's Affordable Housing Mission

When the devastation from Hurricane Katrina damaged nearly 300,000 homes and forced 770,000 people to evacuate the region, Fannie Mae employees immediately offered their services to help families rebuild and recover. Recognizing the important contribution that employees could make in hard-hit communities, the company established a Gulf Coast volunteer program, not just for the short term, but until the rebuilding work is complete.

Through its SERVE program (Serving, Engaged and Ready Volunteer Employees), Fannie Mae seeks to strengthen communities, complement its affordable housing business, and unleash the diverse talents, passions and knowledge of its employees to benefit the community.

The 2005 hurricanes put this mission to the test. Three years later, employees continue to take advantage of the program's week of paid leave to volunteer in the Gulf Coast. The results demonstrated a marked impact through the program's ongoing commitment:

- 1,400 employees, or one of every six, have participated in the company's coordinated trips to Louisiana
- These employees have provided more than 21,000 hours of service which have resulted in rebuilding 70 homes and nine new programs, with 16 more on the way as of June 2008.

Through these opportunities, employee volunteers apply their passion and housing expertise to help communities in need.

Tapping skilled volunteers



When disasters strike, whether in the U.S. or abroad, relief agencies can activate their vast networks to determine critical needs for assistance that skilled volunteers can fill. While the demands for services and expertise may be unique to each disaster or the affected region, relief agencies can identify many in advance. Depending upon its employees' knowledge, skills and training, a company may be able to "lend" employees to a relief agency to provide specific expertise, such as building its capacity to respond quickly and effectively.

Global relief agencies have identified the following areas of expertise that often are needed:

- **Health and medical personnel** to provide direct health care services
- **Water and sanitation engineers** to maintain or restore access to clean water

- **Logisticians** to manage the procurement, transportation and distribution of essential relief supplies
- **Information technology experts** to set up communication systems, build local area networks and possibly develop specialized software
- **Construction workers** to rebuild damaged homes and buildings
- **Communications experts** to interface with the media and ensure that accurate information about the disaster and its impact is conveyed to both the local residents and the general public
- **Public/corporate affairs professionals** to help relief agencies navigate the local government

- **Human resource experts** to help relief agencies quickly hire local residents and manage an unexpected surge in their workforces

In addition to skilled professionals, successful relief operations also depend upon workers to help with immediate relief activities on the ground:

- Remove debris using construction equipment
- Drive trucks and other vehicles to transport personnel and equipment
- Build latrines
- Handle cargo at airfields and ports
- Interpret the local language
- Guard supplies and facilities
- Serve meals

Best practice: using technology to support volunteerism



IBM On Demand Community: Applying Innovative Technology to Create a New Model in Employee Volunteerism

One of the world's largest companies, IBM has a distinctive workforce structure: many of its 355,000 employees either work remotely or out of their homes. In order to meet the unique needs and desires of its employees to contribute back to their communities, IBM applied its technology and innovative expertise to create a volunteer resource called *IBM On Demand Community*.

Through the *IBM On Demand Community* web site, volunteers can register to gain “on demand” access to training materials and information for personalized volunteer projects. *On Demand Community* houses dozens of state-of-the-art online presentations, videos, web site reference links, software solutions and documents to assist IBM volunteers in not-for-profit organizations and educational settings. The materials are designed to allow employees maximum flexibility to help them engage in

volunteer projects. *On Demand Community* combines the strengths and skills of its employees with the power of innovative technologies and solutions.

Disaster Recovery Involvement

Core to IBM's humanitarian response strategy is Sahana, an open source disaster management system used to track everything from victim identification to refugee camps, relief organizations and donations of relief goods. Meaningful and urgent volunteer opportunities can arise when IBM supports a deployment of Sahana. In August 2007, IBM worked with the Peruvian government following a massive earthquake in that country. IBM recruited dozens of employees to deploy Sahana and help train local relief workers. Following an earthquake that devastated Chengdu, China in May 2008, a team of IBM developers customized and translated



Sahana software for disaster response logistics and management and provided technology and management for deployment.

For more information on *On Demand Community*, visit www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives/grant/giving/demand.shtml

Launching an international employee volunteerism program

Companies are becoming global citizens, and extending the reach of their employee volunteers to areas where they do business will help maintain a commitment to the international community.

Benefits

Corporate volunteerism in response to a disaster can help bring together a multinational workforce spread all over the world in a unique way. Employee volunteers are able to engage in substantive volunteer opportunities with colleagues they may not have otherwise met. Further, communicating regularly about how offices around the world are meeting local needs through volunteer efforts helps to create a shared experience among an international network of employees.

Keys to Preparation

Disasters, whether they happen in the U.S. or abroad, are always local affairs and need to

be managed at the local level. Since the best response to a disaster is to be prepared well in advance, companies that seek to get involved in international disasters should establish relationships with U.S.-based organizations that also maintain locations abroad.

A strong communication network is key to a company's success in responding to international disasters. Before disaster strikes, managers in every country should know:

- **Their level of authority** in decision-making regarding whether or not to deploy volunteers. Do they need approval from higher levels of management?
- **Whom to contact** at their partner relief agency in their local community.
- **A course of action** to communicate with the relief agency and with employees to activate volunteers quickly and efficiently.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM IN RESPONSE TO A DISASTER CAN HELP BRING TOGETHER A MULTINATIONAL WORKFORCE SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD IN A UNIQUE WAY

Best practice: international volunteerism



Pfizer Colleague Response Team: Activating an Immediate, International Response by Employees to Support Employees

Registering at 7.9 magnitude, the earthquake that hit Sichuan province in China was the most powerful earthquake to hit China in 58 years. Pfizer quickly organized a *Colleague Response Team (CRT)* to provide immediate support to colleagues and their families in the affected region.

Within three days of the earthquake, employees in Pfizer's Beijing office joined the CRT to contribute their unique areas of expertise, including human resources, public affairs and policy, medical, finance, legal, global security and environmental health and safety. The CRT organized volunteers to work in three eight-hour shifts to provide around the clock support to a total of 400 survivors, including 108 Pfizer colleagues.

When the Chinese government issued an after-shock alert for Chengdu and the surrounding areas a week after the earthquake, the CRT was able to immediately address colleague concerns for safety by securing shelter in a one-story hotel for colleagues and their families whose homes were damaged or who were concerned about safety. The CRT also arranged transportation for those who wished to relocate.

Pfizer also reached out to the Red Cross Society of China to see if the organization needed any professional assistance that its employees could offer. The Red Cross responded that it needed additional staff to help with administrative duties to keep the organization running smoothly. In response, more than 70 Pfizer volunteers provided continuous support to help with processing donations, filing, documentation and other needs.



With the support and leadership of company executives, Pfizer's employees dedicated their time and technical expertise, working around the clock to support their colleagues and the communities where they work.

Designing a comprehensive training program

Once companies have identified areas of need that their employees can fill, they can develop tailored volunteer programs in partnership with a disaster relief agency to train employees and integrate them into the agency's operations.

Many relief agencies already have training programs that they can make available to companies and their employees so that a company does not need to develop something on its own. For example, companies can partner with local chapters of national social service organizations, including the American Red Cross, HOPE worldwide or United Way; professional first-responders, such as the local fire department; or the government. *Ready When the Time Comes* is an example of a training program that pairs companies with their local Red Cross chapter to train employees as disaster-response volunteers (see “Best practice: engaging and motivating employees,” page 4).

A company can also encourage employees to find external sources of training rather than develop an internal model. For example, the American Red Cross offers an online disaster volunteer training module, managed by the federal government. HOPE worldwide and the Points of Light & Hands On Network are two other major volunteer organizations that work with companies to train and mobilize volunteers to respond to disasters. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), a national program run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, helps train people to respond to emergency situations in their communities. Once trained, CERT members support first responders, provide assistance to survivors and organize untrained, unaffiliated volunteers who arrive at a disaster site.

MANY RELIEF AGENCIES ALREADY HAVE TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT THEY MAKE AVAILABLE TO COMPANIES AND THEIR EMPLOYEES SO THAT A COMPANY DOES NOT NEED TO DEVELOP SOMETHING ON ITS OWN

Developing policies to support employee volunteerism

Time is the most valuable resource a company can give to the community and to employees who want to volunteer. In crisis situations, employees usually need some time away from work to fulfill their volunteer roles. An effective workplace policy that integrates volunteering into business operations and employee benefits will help encourage employees to participate.

Consider these options:

- **Establish paid volunteer leave:** A growing number of companies have begun offering employees paid volunteer leave, which has led to significant increases in participation.
- **Institute flex-time:** Work with company managers to create work schedules that allow employees to volunteer before, during, or after the workday.
- **Use other available time:** Allow employees to use their sick leave, paid leave, or compensation time to volunteer, or allow them to “donate” it to co-workers who volunteer.
- **Create an after-hours program:** If it is too difficult for your company to allow workers to volunteer on company time, consider an incentive program to encourage participation such as awarding an extra vacation day for a certain number of volunteer hours.

TIME IS THE MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE A COMPANY CAN GIVE TO THE COMMUNITY AND TO EMPLOYEES WHO WANT TO VOLUNTEER



Communicating the benefits of volunteering internally and externally

Communicating your company's commitment to training employees as disaster-ready volunteers will help to instill pride and belonging among your workforce, as well as demonstrate your contributions to the larger community.

In addition to helping communities in need, employee volunteerism provides many benefits for employees and companies. It is important for companies to communicate their activities internally to support and foster employees' enthusiasm, as well as build a strong culture of volunteerism that is recognized by the communities where they work.

- Volunteerism can **enhance professional development** among your employees. Consider volunteer training and experience as growth opportunities for your employees to gain and apply new skills.

- Employee volunteers can become **ambassadors for a company's commitment** to the communities where it operates. A company must maintain regular communications with its local partner agency in order to stay prepared for a disaster before it strikes – helping to uphold an ongoing partnership.
- Companies can **build camaraderie among employees**, helping employees feel that they are part of the company community. Companies experienced in domestic and international volunteering have expressed that employees who previously felt disconnected from the company were able to become better integrated through the sense of community they experienced through volunteering.
- A strong program in employee volunteerism can be a profound **recruitment tool for job seekers** who are looking for corporations that are responsible citizens in their communities.



When promoting volunteerism, companies have several important roles to play. A first crucial step is helping employees understand that the best way to assist as a volunteer is to be trained before disaster strikes. By establishing partnerships with relief agencies, training volunteers in advance, putting the right policies in place and communicating its program successes both internally and externally, a company and its employees can provide lasting benefits both to communities affected by a disaster and to the employees themselves.

A COMPANY AND ITS EMPLOYEES CAN PROVIDE LASTING BENEFITS TO BOTH COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY A DISASTER AND TO THE EMPLOYEES THEMSELVES

Resources

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

Each year, the American Red Cross (ARC) responds to over 70,000 disaster incidents, serving those affected with shelter, mass care and financial assistance. Through almost 900 locally supported chapters, more than 15 million people gain the skills they need to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their homes, communities and world.

Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy (CECP)
www.corporatephilanthropy.org/collaborations

The Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy works to lead the business community in raising the level and quality of corporate philanthropy. CECP's members have responded to natural disasters with overwhelming generosity and support, and its Web site compiles resources for companies on disaster response.

Habitat for Humanity
www.habitat.org/disaster/default.aspx

The Disaster Response Office at Habitat for Humanity International works with the global Habitat community in disaster mitigation, preparedness, shelter and long-term recovery initiatives to address the housing needs that arise from natural disasters and humanitarian emergency conflicts.

HOPE worldwide
www.hopeww.org

HOPE worldwide has a network of volunteers serving more than one million people annually, working with comprehensive disaster response programs on all six inhabited continents.

Network for Good
www.networkforgood.org

Network for Good has matched more than 230,000 volunteers with thousands of nonprofits, and maintains a database of volunteer opportunities specifically in crisis relief.

Partnership for Disaster Response
www.respondtodisaster.org

The Partnership for Disaster Response is an initiative of Business Roundtable (a membership association of CEOs of leading U.S. companies) to expand corporate commitment – beyond financial contributions – to respond to natural disasters. www.respondtodisaster.org is the first comprehensive clearinghouse of information to help the business community better prepare and respond to disasters.

Points of Light & Hands On Network
www.pointsoflight.org | www.helpindisaster.org

The Points of Light & Hands On Network connects 370 civic hubs managing millions of volunteers and 50,000 volunteer driven community impact projects annually around the country. Through a partnership with FEMA and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network manages unaffiliated volunteers in disasters.

Salvation Army
www.salvationarmy.org

The International Emergency Services section of The Salvation Army provides support, training and resources to respond to the needs of those affected by emergencies without discrimination.

United Way
www.unitedway.org

United Way, run by volunteers and professionals from the local community, are involved in crisis relief as first responders and also maintain long-term commitments to recovery for the communities in which they work.

USA Freedom Corps (USAFC)
www.usafreedomcorps.gov

The USAFC promotes and expands volunteer service in America by partnering with national service programs, working to strengthen the non-profit sector, recognizing volunteers, and helping to connect individuals with volunteer opportunities.

VolunteerMatch
www.volunteermatch.org

VolunteerMatch, supporting a community of over two million users, works with nonprofit, business and governmental leaders to strengthen relationships around community volunteering and service. VolunteerMatch maintains a real-time, Web-based map of U.S. disaster relief volunteer opportunities.



Business Roundtable
Partnership for Disaster Response

www.respondtodisaster.org

1717 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 872-1260
www.businessroundtable.org

Business Roundtable first activated the *Partnership for Disaster Response* immediately following Hurricane Katrina. The Partnership is an effort to expand corporate commitment – beyond financial contributions – to respond to natural disasters. The Partnership’s goal is to enhance the efficiency of the private sector’s disaster response by facilitating public-private collaborations to prepare for the health, social and economic burdens that natural disasters can create.

Business Roundtable (www.businessroundtable.org) is an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies with \$4.5 trillion in annual revenues and nearly 10 million employees. Member companies comprise nearly a third of the total value of the U.S. stock markets and represent over 40 percent of all corporate income taxes paid to the federal government. Collectively, they returned \$114 billion in dividends to shareholders and the economy in 2006.