

Leading Best Practices in Pro Bono Service Conference Call Series Summary and Takeaways

PARTNERING WITH FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP August 6, 2008

Pro Bono Programs Overview:

Definition:

Professional services made accessible to organizations serving the public good.

Business Benefits of Pro Bono:

- Improves employee motivation, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, negotiation and delegation skills
- Engages employees across functional departments
- Improves employee morale, trust, and willingness to recommend company as a “good place to work”
- Improves employee retention and recruitment, particularly for Generation Y and Baby Boomer talent
- Allows for blended business and community relations strategy
- Increases the strategic reach and impact of corporate philanthropy

Unique requirements of pro bono service: Unlike other forms of volunteerism, pro bono work requires executive buy in. Its scope and duration generally exceed that of traditional hands-on volunteering, and requires specific skills/expertise to match the needs of the nonprofit partner.

Partnering with Functional Leadership:

The importance of partnering with functional leadership: Functional leaders know the right people to target for the specific skill sets required by project. With functional leader buy in, employees feel that their pro bono work is supported, recognized and appreciated. These leaders thereby create more ambassadors, not only for the program but also for the community affairs team and the company.

Benefits of partnership: Partnership between Community Affairs and functional leadership allow for both to do what they do best for the success of the company and the nonprofit partner. Functional leaders are key to identifying types of projects for which the core competencies of their employees would be well-suited. Functional leaders also are critical to volunteer outreach and recruitment because when they model the pro bono ethic, it trickles down. Community Affairs staff is essential for assessing the nonprofit’s needs and viability, managing internal HR impact, and tracking the day-to-day project development. Community Affairs also plays the important, though unglamorous, role of gate keeper—once nonprofits become aware of pro bono service offerings, the demand increases at an unmanageable rate for functional leaders alone to handle. Community Affairs helps make delivering pro bono services sustainable.

Presenters

Emily Talley

Senior Director,
Community Affairs
Capital One

Edwin Taylor

Brand Communications
Capital One

Anne Schaffer

Brand Communications
Capital One

Dana Nelson

Manager,
Community Relations
Target

Jill Heath

Senior Specialist,
Community Relations
Target

Bob Stoltz

Group Manager,
Interior and Fixture Design
Target

*“Pro bono (service)
is a great
development tool to
recruit, reward, and
retain top talent.”*

Dana Nelson, Target

“Brand Corps reached out to Community Affairs looking to partner on prioritization and goal alignment.”

Edwin Taylor,
Capital One

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Pro bono work is likely already taking place in your company**
Many corporate pro bono programs began as ad hoc efforts until they were recognized and formally supported by Community Affairs over a period of time. Employees are often already engaged in pro bono service, and their companies are simply unaware of the efforts.
- 2. Look to functional leaders to find it**
Functional leaders are a good source of information on the volunteer service activities of their team members. Leaders who are aware and supportive of their teams' pro bono activities are natural allies.
- 3. Community Affairs should partner with functional leaders to support, grow and sustain existing pro bono efforts**
Neither Community Affairs nor functional leaders alone have the time, expertise, influence and knowledge base to run a high-quality pro bono program without the benefit of the other's support.
- 4. Pro bono service is an evolving form of corporate engagement**
Most corporate pro bono programs are fairly new, and even the programs that have been around for “a long time” are still evolving. It is a relatively nascent field that is experiencing rapid growth and development.
- 5. There are best practices to help overcome the challenges faced in launching and growing a pro bono program**
Depending on the program's stage of development and unique needs, there are lessons to be learned from the companies that preceded you. You don't have to go it alone.
- 6. The Pro Bono Action Tank is here to help!**
We exist to be a resource for companies interested in leveraging their core competencies for greater positive social impact. Let us know how we can help!

About the Pro Bono Action Tank:

The Taproot Foundation's Pro Bono Action Tank (PBAT) is a coalition of leaders across the business, government and independent sectors leading the pro bono movement to ensure organizations serving the public good have access to the professional services they need to achieve their missions.

The PBAT serves a dual role as resource center and advocacy network for the pro bono movement. In this dual role, the PBAT provides guidance, publishes standards, best practices, and consulting resources as well as the inspiration to professional services firms, corporations, academia, trade associations, and nonprofit organizations seeking to expand and enhance access to world class capacity building services for organizations serving the public.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND RESERVE A SPACE FOR THESE UPCOMING CALLS

Sept 10- Starting Small – Running a Pilot (1pm PT / 3pm CT / 4pm ET)

How can you run a pilot project to begin your pro bono program?

Oct 23- Professional Development (11am PT / 1pm CT / 2pm ET)

How can pro bono service be integrated into professional development efforts?

Dec 4- Defining Core Competencies (11am PT / 1pm CT / 2pm ET)

What types of pro bono service best leverage your employees' skills and reinforce your brand?

RSVP to Jamie Hartman, Executive Director of the Pro Bono Action Tank at jamie@taprootfoundation.org