

# KEY TRENDS TO WATCH: THE NEXT WAVE OF GROWTH IN CORPORATE PRO BONO SERVICE

---

2014 REPORT

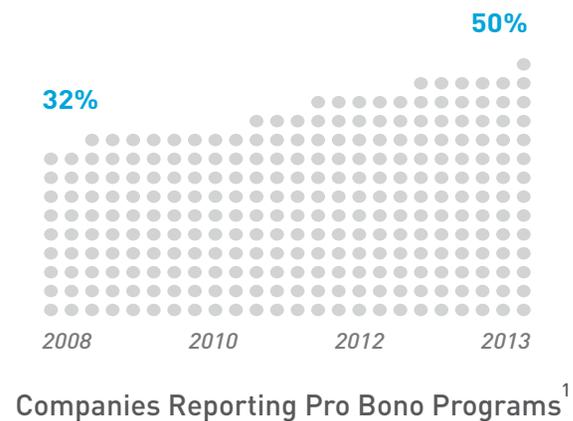
CECP's recently released *Giving in Numbers* is the tenth edition of this annual benchmarking report. In addition to marking a decade of corporate philanthropy benchmarking, this particular edition is also the sixth year since CECP began tracking pro bono services specifically. CECP's 2008 adoption of pro bono service as a cash-equivalent form of giving was a critical step for the field; for the first time on a substantial platform, pro bono service was recognized as providing a value to nonprofits that was clearly distinct from traditional volunteer activities and more equivalent to the donation of products or funds.

With six years of comparative data, the recent release of *Giving in Numbers* presents an opportune time to reflect on the data trends observed over the past six years of growth and look ahead to the advances and approaches that we believe will drive the next six.

## THE GROWTH OF CORPORATE PRO BONO SERVICE

Corporate pro bono service has increased significantly over the past decade in overall volume and geographic reach, and as a growing percentage of companies' overall community support activities. Between 2008 and 2013 the number of companies that reported having a pro bono program increased from 32% to 50% of CECP survey respondents, and there was nearly a 350% increase in the number of companies offering both international and domestic pro bono programs.<sup>1</sup> As expectations for socially responsible business continue to increase around the world, we see frequent examples of companies increasingly looking to add value to the community with a more diverse portfolio of support beyond traditional cash contributions and volunteering.

In PwC's most recent Global CEO Survey, three-quarters of CEOs interviewed agreed that addressing broader community needs was important to their business, but called out that it is their non-financial efforts supporting the community that were a key contributor to their business' long-term success.<sup>2</sup> CECP's latest data reflects that as well, with financial services companies leading the way with pro bono service composing the largest reported percentage of their aggregate service and philanthropy (50%), followed by technology and communications (24% each), all representing increases from previous years.<sup>3</sup> In addition, this year's CECP survey also marked the first time since pro bono data collection began that there was representation from all industries among respondents reporting pro bono service as a component of their philanthropy strategy.



1 CECP (2014). *Giving in Numbers: 2014 Edition*.  
2 PwC (2014). *PwC 17th Annual Global CEO Survey*.  
3 CECP (2014). *Giving in Numbers: 2014 Edition*.

## THE NEXT WAVE OF GROWTH

Even with this incredible growth, companies are still looking to increase their pro bono efforts. Research suggests the broader category of skills-based volunteering, which includes pro bono service, currently composes an average of less than 15% of companies' overall volunteering activities, yet corporate leaders consistently indicated a future goal closer to 40%.<sup>4</sup> This persistent gap begs the questions - what is holding companies back from achieving their desired program scale and what will drive that growth in the coming years?

The variance between companies' aspirations for programmatic growth and their progress toward it has been one of the more consistent themes around corporate pro bono in recent years. Despite the rapid overall expansion of corporate pro bono, many of the obstacles to growth that individual companies cite have largely remained the same over the past six years: having bandwidth to run and scale a program, getting management buy-in, and identifying the right program participants.<sup>5</sup> But recent examples in the field have shown that integrating a pro bono program more deeply with key facets of a company's operations and services – its core competencies, its employee leadership development initiatives and its leadership structure – has great potential to mitigate these challenges by broadening the lens through which a company values pro bono and approaches options for growth. By adopting strategies that are more integrated across at least one of these key areas there is significant potential for accelerating closing the gap between current program size and the aspirational size we see reflected in the data.

### *Three new ways your company can drive value with corporate pro bono:*



Accelerate programmatic growth by leveraging your company's core strengths to address key areas of nonprofit organizational need.



Lean into the leadership development benefits of pro bono service by linking your program to existing employee engagement and development efforts.



Engage your internal business leaders as owners of pro bono program delivery.

In addition, in the context of CECP's Giving in Numbers report – which historically has primarily captured data on the existence of a pro bono program and, when possible, the dollar valuation associated with it – the idea of growth has been most easily defined in terms of volume. However, what we are now seeing in the field is a shift toward redefining what "growth" can mean as well as how it can be achieved, adding dimension to how companies seek to expand their programs beyond just terms of size. Volume alone can no longer capture the full value of a company's program's potential. Instead, companies are further investing in a program's potential impact by increasing its integration with a company's unique assets.

<sup>4</sup> CECP (2014). *Giving in Numbers: 2014 Edition*.

<sup>5</sup> LBG Associates (March 2013), *Corporate Pro Bono Readiness*. In partnership with Capital One, Common Impact, Points of Light and Taproot Foundation.

Here we take a closer look at how these trends are coming to life – examples of strategies and activities that are propelling pro bono programs forward and have the potential to not only increase the volume of these efforts, but amplify a company’s value to the community as well as its employees and its bottom line.

## 1. CONNECTING YOUR CORE COMPETENCY WITH NONPROFITS’ NEEDS

Accelerate programmatic growth by leveraging your company’s core strengths to address key areas of nonprofit organizational need.

It is common practice for a company to align a new business offering with the core competencies of its talent. This is often an efficient way to provide the greatest value and get the `most immediate return. So it should not be surprising that this rings true when it comes to offering pro bono services as well. When a company leverages its core competencies to address critical, relevant needs in the nonprofit sector it yields benefits across many fronts, both helping to alleviate the common program management challenges cited here as well as deepening the company’s unique value to its community partners by providing targeted support.

- **Leverage a reputation for excellence.** Focusing on an area of expertise for which your company is well known often accelerates building understanding, awareness and demand both with your external stakeholders (the nonprofits you want to serve) and your internal stakeholders (potential volunteers). Using a broadly resonant example can help more easily secure program participants both internally and externally and also creates a very compelling narrative for external consumption.

### *Connecting pro bono to your core:*



Leverage reputation for excellence



Take advantage of existing methodologies



Accelerate matching nonprofit need to employee expertise



Fulfill critical needs facing nonprofits

- **Take advantage of existing methodologies and processes.** Leveraging existing methodologies and business frameworks that accompany a company's core focus can often help greatly reduce the amount of unique investment needed to support the design and execution of a pro bono offering.
- **Accelerate the matching of need to expertise.** Focusing on providing services aligned with a company's core competencies can also enable more efficient vetting and matching of nonprofits' needs and employee skills because there is typically a greater understanding across the company of the nature and application of this core area of expertise.
- **Fulfill critical unmet needs facing nonprofits.** While general business functions are becoming a little more accessible with the increase in companies providing pro bono services (basic marketing, IT, strategic planning) there is a real opportunity to help organizations with some of the more specific types of expertise that are critically needed. Going beyond basic shared services and delving into more advanced and targeted support can go far in helping organizations tackle challenges for which they cannot easily access support. While this should not push companies to provide support in focus areas where there might not be relevant nonprofit need, there are some opportunities to provide unique services from which some specific types of organizations could greatly benefit and which would otherwise be difficult to access. In the right circumstances the value to the organization of that unique fit can sometimes outweigh a high volume of pro bono offerings that organizations could access elsewhere.

## AMERICAN EXPRESS



Across industries and geographies, American Express is well known for its dedication to customer service and fostering customer loyalty. When it launched its global pro bono program, called “Serve2Gether Consulting”, American Express saw a unique opportunity to ensure that nonprofit organizations and social enterprises are also able to benefit from that core area of expertise. As Tim McClimon, President of the American Express Foundation, shared at the program’s launch in 2012, “service is at the heart of American Express. It’s in our DNA, and it’s what we do best. So it’s logical for us to extend that commitment to service to help nonprofit organizations with business issues that are impacting them every day.”

American Express has included a growing number of pro bono projects across its suite of “Serve2Gether Consulting” services that leverage this critical understanding of how to help an organization use data, customer relationship management and digital communications to drive customer engagement and loyalty and deliver high quality services. Available project types include Building Customer Relationships, Targeting New Audiences and Digital Marketing Strategy, among others. In addition to immediately fostering a pool of interested and relevant American Express volunteers, the inclusion of these offerings has also resonated particularly strongly with a segment of the nonprofit sector in which the American Express Foundation is deeply invested: theaters, museums and cultural sites.

One excellent example comes from the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City. This museum receives over 200,000 visitors a year, but it faced a number of challenges in effectively engaging visitors after they left. To help the museum ultimately drive the engagement of more visitors, donors and supporters, the American Express “Serve2Gether Consulting” team analyzed and mapped the museum’s audience of current visitors, identified the most effective asks and communication approach for its high priority audience segments and identified a customer relationship management system that was more appropriate for the organization’s needs, ultimately enabling the museum to better capture information from new museum visitors, organize and segment its increased database of supporters and execute an effective email communication plan. Subsequently, within the first year following this project the museum saw a 75% increase in its mailing list with opt-out rates lower than industry standards and high conversion rates for featured content and asks – results that customer-facing organizations in any industry or sector would admire.

*“Service is at the heart of American Express. It’s in our DNA, and it’s what we do best. So it’s logical for us to extend that commitment to service to help nonprofit organizations with business issues that are impacting them every day.”*

*Tim McClimon, President of the American Express Foundation*

## 2. INVESTING IN YOUR TALENT WITH PRO BONO SERVICE

Lean into the leadership development benefits of pro bono service by linking your program to existing employee engagement and development efforts.

Integrating a pro bono program with a company's existing talent development priorities has the potential to deepen the program's internal impact on talent as well as its residual benefits on the community. While currently upwards of 70% of corporate pro bono programs are reported to be run by a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department<sup>6</sup>, there is a rapidly increasing set of companies adding pro bono service opportunities to an existing leadership development program or beginning and expanding programs in direct partnership with talent development initiatives driven by Human Resources (HR). We have seen this type of integration add a layer of depth to program value - transforming pro bono from simply a nice-to-have community service initiative to a core strategic investment in a company's primary asset, its talent. In addition to providing tangible professional development benefits, pro bono service as a talent development investment also helps reinforce a company's emphasis on purpose and social good to its future leaders at a critical point in employees' tenure at the company.

### Talent development through pro bono:



Benefit from Human Resources' perspective on employee strengths



Pro bono as leadership development



Leverage the resources of HR programming

- **Benefit from Human Resources' perspective on employee expertise.** Screening internal talent to identify the right participants for a pro bono engagement is often cited as one of the most challenging tasks for a CSR-led program. In most cases, HR is very well equipped with a sense of the skills, expertise and potential of employees and can help facilitate an effective matching process.
- **Pro bono as leadership development.** The experiential learning element of pro bono service presents employers with an opportunity to address the leadership gap currently plaguing many companies by developing the hard and soft skills of their future business leaders. In fact, we have found that over 80% of participants feel they have strengthened their overall skills by participating, and over 90% of participants report stretching relevant leadership skills through the experience.<sup>7</sup>
- **Leverage the resources and support of HR programming.** Integrating pro bono service into other high priority internal programming also most likely increases the resources and support available to effectively and successfully manage these offerings, including staff time and budget as well as evaluation techniques.

<sup>6</sup> LBG Associates (March 2013), *Corporate Pro Bono Readiness*. In partnership with Capital One, Common Impact, Points of Light and Taproot Foundation.

<sup>7</sup> Taproot Foundation (August 2014). Bridging the leadership gap: Developing high-potential talent through pro bono service.

## METLIFE

MetLife considers leadership development for employees a top priority. Especially during a time when many companies are reporting a leadership gap stemming from a shortage of skills to excel in today's work environment, MetLife understands that the evolving and competitive field of leadership development demands dynamic experiential learning opportunities that develop leaders by putting them in new contexts and high-stakes situations. MetLife's HR and Foundation teams joined forces to envision how pro bono could fit into their leadership development efforts. They worked together with the shared belief that a pro bono initiative would not only deepen the company's investment in its nonprofit partners, but would also develop the competencies of its future leaders.

To execute on their vision, MetLife built a pro bono component into its existing Global Leadership Development Program (GLDP), a selective 4.5 year program for MBA graduates. To pilot the program, the GLDP cohort engaged in tightly-scoped consulting sessions to build the marketing and business strategies of MetLife's nonprofit partners. Employees were grouped and assigned to pro bono project opportunities based on the match of their expertise to the unique needs of the nonprofit. "By including pro bono as a core element of our Global Leadership Development Program, we have immediately multiplied the impact of our investment by building the capabilities of our future leaders while leveraging their unique skills to strengthen our community giving overall," says Jamie Armentor, Assistant Vice President, Global Learning and Development.

MetLife is confident the skills its emerging leaders will gain from this unique cross-sector experience will help prepare them to lead in an ever-evolving business world. MetLife looks forward to making pro bono a mainstay in its program for years to come.

*"By including pro bono as a core element of our Global Leadership Development Program, we have immediately multiplied the impact of our investment by building the capabilities of our future leaders while leveraging their unique skills to strengthen our community giving overall."*

*Jamie Armentor, Assistant Vice President,  
Global Learning and Development, MetLife.*

### 3. SCALING THE PRO BONO ETHIC BY ENGAGING INTERNAL BUSINESS LEADERS

Engage your internal business leaders as owners of pro bono program delivery, changing the paradigm of pro bono as volunteerism to pro bono as core to your employees' professional ethic while also improving the scalability of the program.

Although companies typically look to their CSR department to design, develop and manage their pro bono programs<sup>8</sup>, several forward-looking companies are taking a page from the legal profession and adopting a deeply ingrained professional ethic of pro bono service as a driving source of scale. Law firms have long built this ethic by engaging their internal functional area executives in certain aspects of program ownership. Whether this means scoping nonprofit needs when the need falls in their area of expertise, matching the right talent to the right project or directly participating themselves, this lens of subject matter expertise complements a CSR professional's expertise in nonprofit support.

- **Leverage internal subject matter leaders to develop and sustain a more informed program.** The CSR team is critical to building and strengthening community partnerships, and bringing deep nonprofit and program implementation knowledge to a pro bono program. But there is substantial opportunity to employ internal subject matter leaders in helping to clearly identify volunteer skills and roles, relevant project types, and even identifying the most appropriate time period to drive maximum participation in programs. It provides a unique opportunity to directly address two of the common obstacles companies face in scaling their pro bono efforts - lack of management resources and difficulty in identifying the right projects and participants.
- **Foster buy-in, support and accountability by engaging internal business leaders in program leadership roles.** Participation by the internal subject matter leaders does not have to be limited to pro bono project volunteer time. Nor does program management have to be limited to only the CSR team. Involve leadership from the relevant internal functional groups up front in the planning, design and oversight of a pro bono program in order to build and reinforce their investment in the program, provide relevant support and strengthen the pro bono ethic among their peers.

<sup>8</sup> LBG Associates (March 2013), *Corporate Pro Bono Readiness*. In partnership with Capital One, Common Impact, Points of Light and Taproot Foundation.



Adobe designed its “Pro Bono Initiative” with input from across the business. The Corporate Responsibility (CR) team started by gathering input from employees and leaders from across the company, including HR and many of the company’s key functional teams like design, product, and marketing. To engage these stakeholders in the development and implementation of the program, CR formed a cross-functional pro bono steering committee that would help promote the initiative internally and make decisions about how the program could integrate into the company’s business goals. Julia Love, Manager of Corporate Responsibility at Adobe, says “Our Pro Bono Initiative is a program built by employees for employees. Engaging employees from across the business to help build and grow our program is the secret to its success.”

Executive leadership is instrumental to the success of a company’s pro bono program: Michael Gough, VP of Experience Design, leads a team of designers focused on the next big product innovations at Adobe. His specific experience and leadership in the field of design, one of the company’s core competencies, was critical to demonstrating that pro bono could strengthen core employee skill sets and help the company do what it does best. Case in point: Gough’s team of designers led a high-profile pro bono project with a local children’s museum. Together, they designed and built an interactive space for young toddlers to practice their creativity through sight, hearing, and touch.

Gough has also been engaged by CR as a vocal champion of the program to the rest of the company, recognizing the benefits Adobe’s “Pro Bono Initiative” has both for altruistic and, as he put it, “selfish” reasons. “Pro bono is one of the most selfish things a manager can do with a team,” notes Gough. “It engages and energizes your team, it sharpens their skills and creativity, and it gives them a new perspective on their day-to-day work.”

Adobe’s “Pro Bono Initiative” is in its third year and continues to thrive, thanks to this innovative approach to involving leaders from across the business.

***“Our Pro Bono Initiative is a program built by employees for employees. Engaging employees from across the business to help build and grow our program is the secret to its success.”***

***Julia Love, Manager of Corporate Responsibility, Adobe.***

*TAPROOT FOUNDATION is a US-based nonprofit organization that is a leader in pro bono service. Through its programs, advisory services support and field-building work, Taproot makes business talent available to organizations working to improve society.*

---

[www.taprootfoundation.org](http://www.taprootfoundation.org)

©Taproot Foundation 2014 | Authored by Lindsay Firestone Gruber and Kristin Teti | Designed by Ali Akbar Sahiwala



This report was possible through the support of PwC.

*'PwC' refers to the PwC United States member firm, and may sometimes refer to the PwC network. Each member firm is a separate legal entity. Please see [www.pwc.com/structure](http://www.pwc.com/structure) for details. The Taproot Foundation is the author of this paper. PwC has not independently verified, validated or audited any data to verify the accuracy or completeness of the information presented here. The content is for general information purposes only, and should not be used as a substitute for consultation with professional advisors.*