

Thought Leadership

Building Workplace Culture Through Employee Volunteer Programs



**Junior
Achievement™**

Culture and the New World of Work

The way we work has changed. While employers had been experimenting with remote and hybrid work models for years before the COVID pandemic, that event accelerated the reliance on technology and Work from Home (WFH).

Though countless employers have begun initiating Return to Office (RTO) plans, [research by Mercer](#) shows that most will continue to offer remote and hybrid options, often to attract and retain talent. But this approach also raises concerns, with a majority of corporate leaders (51%) expressing reservations about the impact of these models on corporate culture, as noted in the same study by Mercer. This concern goes beyond employers to the employees themselves, with large percentages of remote workers feeling left out of company culture, according to the [Harvard Business Review](#).

While there are certainly advantages of hybrid and remote work models for both employers (attracting a wider array of talent, lower operating costs) and employees (better work-life balance, a more affordable lifestyle), the downside to an organization is a talent pool that operates more like siloed independent contractors than a cohesive and unified team that's loyal to each other and committed to a common mission.



For those organizations prioritizing RTO, fostering a collaborative and welcoming culture is essential. As research from [Poly and Worktech Academy](#) points out, employers hoping to attract workers back to the office will need to curate a culture that makes the commute worthwhile in the minds of associates. This includes finding ways to bring down silos between teams and create a cross-functional environment where employees feel they have a voice and their input is welcomed.

Focusing on curating an effective corporate culture can pay long-term dividends. [Research by PwC](#) shows that employees who consider themselves engaged in the workplace are 87 percent less likely to resign than those who don't. [Gallup has found](#) that workplaces with cultures that encourage employee engagement are also more profitable.

The Role of Employee Volunteer Programs

One way organizations can be proactive in curating a culture that attracts and retains associates is through corporate volunteerism, or an Employee Volunteer Program (EVP). [Research by America's Charities](#) shows that 71 percent of employees say it's important to work for an organization supporting giving and volunteering. Additionally, beyond the workplace, the [Journal of Happiness](#) has noted a link between volunteering and both physical and mental well-being.

The [Points of Light Foundation defines](#) Employee Volunteer Programs as "a planned, managed effort that seeks to motivate and enable employees to effectively serve community needs through the leadership of the employer." Benefits associated with EVPs, according to Points of Light, include the development of employees' professional and leadership skills, the boosting of employee morale and loyalty, and the attracting of new talent.



Given the challenges organizations face in fostering strong workplace cultures coming out of the pandemic, EVPs are one way to demonstrate organizational values in action and give employees the opportunity to connect with each other in person and in a positive, cross-functional way. Corporate volunteerism helps build skills and relationships across an organization.

What the Research Shows

The benefits of EVPs are reinforced by [survey results from Deloitte](#) that show 89 percent of respondents believe that companies that sponsor volunteer activities offer a better overall working environment than those that do not. Additionally, 77 percent say that company-sponsored volunteer activities are essential to employee well-being, and 74 percent think volunteerism provides an improved sense of purpose. A prior [study by Deloitte](#) shows that HR managers believe EVPs have a positive impact on employee development, morale, and organizational culture.

A 2017 study by Junior Achievement found that more than two-thirds (67%) of JA volunteers surveyed said that they felt that volunteering for Junior Achievement gave them a "sense of fulfillment," while a majority responded that it made them "feel happy" (59%) and left them with a "sense of impact" (56%). Others said that they "felt inspired" (40%) or that their experience helped them develop "personal skills" (30%). A separate 2017 study of CSR professionals by JA found that most (59%) said that they integrated Employee Volunteer Programs into their Corporate Responsibility efforts to help build "company morale." This was followed by nearly as many respondents (55%) saying the use of these programs was aimed at increasing employee "satisfaction and retention."

What Comes Next?

Whether your organization currently has an EVP or considering establishing one, The Points of Light Foundation provides guidance with seven steps to create an effective program. Elements include:

1. THE PLAN

Effective EVPs have specific societal, employee and business goals with clear strategies and tactics.

2. MEASUREMENT

High-performing EVPs measure the degree to which they are accomplishing their plan.

3. DESIGN

Effective EVPs integrate into the business by leveraging employee skills and corporate assets.

4. LEADERSHIP

Effective EVPs benefit from vocal and continual support from company leadership.

5. PARTNERSHIPS

High-performing EVPs understand the importance of strategic partnerships and collaboration with government, private, and nonprofit partners.

6. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Effective EVPs generate broad-based employee enthusiasm, support and stewardship for the EVP and enrich the employee work-related experience as demonstrated by increased morale, productivity, retention, and workplace skills.

7. SUCCESS AND GROWTH

High-performing EVPs recognize, communicate and celebrate success internally and externally while continuously learning from peers, volunteers and partners and reflecting on potential program improvements.

Our Response

Junior Achievement (JA) is one of the largest Employee Volunteer Program solution providers in the country. Each year, hundreds of thousands of employees participate in JA's turnkey, skills-based volunteer initiatives. To learn more from the JA organization in your community, visit [JA.org/Locations](https://www.ja.org/locations).

