

CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS

WHY TO RECOGNIZE VOLUNTEERS

Recognition, or saying “thank you” in public, has multiple benefits. To the volunteer, recognition signifies that someone notices and appreciates their volunteer efforts. In addition, these individuals can be recognized as role models for other employees to emulate. Recognition also enhances a company’s reputation as an involved corporate citizen.

Many committed volunteers work hard in the background and don’t advertise their accomplishments, but this is a good time to let them know you and your team have taken notice.

Some examples of employee awards include recognizing individuals who have:

- Taken on a leadership role
- Engaged others
- Met a specific goal, like amount of funds raised or goods collected
- Made a personal connection to the volunteer work
- Went above and beyond their initial commitment

Remember to highlight the **impact** a volunteer’s work had on the nonprofit and the nonprofit’s mission, as well. Encourage nominators to consider everyone carefully and to give as much support for their choice as possible (in numbers if at all possible).

IDEAS FOR RECOGNITION

- Spotlight the “volunteer of the month” on your website. Also, include information as to what the volunteer did to receive this type of recognition.
- Ask a local radio station or television station to cover your community/volunteer activity.
- Have the CEO, executive champion, or the employee’s manager send the employee a thank you letter.
- Make a monetary donation to the employee’s nonprofit of choice.
- Offer the employee a day-off with pay or a volunteer day-off to volunteer at their favorite charity.
- Allow the employee to select the next group employee volunteer activity.
- Give your outstanding volunteers company logoed merchandise that celebrates their volunteer activity.
- Create a circulating monthly or quarterly volunteer trophy for the “volunteer of the month” or “department of the quarter.”
- Take photos of your volunteers in action: (With their written permission)
 - Use photos of your employees volunteering to decorate your lobby and office area.
 - Post photos to your website, intranet, blog and social media sites.

- Start a lobby photo album of CSR activities; include quotes and information on the activity so that visitors will see the team's efforts.
- Include volunteering photos in the company annual report or CSR report.

HOW SHOULD EMPLOYEES BE REWARDED?

What to give as a reward and how to share recognition — both publicly and with the rest of the company.

Rather than give your employees plaques or trophies, consider reinforcing their connection to the nonprofit, which will be more gratifying.

Ideas for recognition:

- Free day off to volunteer
- Let them choose the next group volunteer project
- Monetary donation to their chosen nonprofit
- Handwritten personalized note from their manager or the CEO
- Share awards or milestones on your website or company's social media channels
- Include shoutouts to recognized employees in your newsletter
- For fun visuals, create a photo gallery of award winners in your break room or lobby
- Celebrate employee awards at your next all-hands meeting. You might even invite a representative to the nonprofit to join your celebration
- Take out an ad in a local publication or business journal to say thank you to your employee volunteers and to spread brand awareness
- Share a video message from your executive director, commending volunteers
- Host an online meetup to thank and encourage volunteers
- Schedule a one-on-one video or phone call with key volunteers to thank them for their contributions and ask for their ideas
- Post a volunteer slideshow on your social media, using pictures from previous events
- Call volunteers to check on them and say thank you

Be sure to highlight employee efforts and explain your business's relationship with your nonprofit partners. This is a powerful way to promote your company, its volunteer efforts, give exposure to the nonprofit, and recognize your employees' volunteer work. Studies show again and again that employees aren't motivated by increased pay or promotions; they're motivated by simple appreciation... so make sure you're offering it.