



The Business Case for Employer Volunteer Programs

Introduction: *The majority of volunteers became engaged in their main volunteer activity because they were directly asked. Most often, this invitation comes from someone in a place where the person has a preexisting relationship (church, school, community etc.). Yet the place people congregate the most, their place of employment, is only responsible for connecting 1.5% of volunteers with their main volunteer activity. We see this as an under-utilized opportunity to mobilize Iowa human capital that can help employers increase their productivity and bottom line as well as help Iowa move toward our goals of meeting community challenges, making lives better, and becoming the state with the highest volunteerism rate in the U.S.*

Engaged Employees are Better Employees

- According to the 2008/2009 study, [Driving Business Results Through Continuous Engagement by WorkUSA](#), companies with engaged employees experience 26% higher revenue per employee, 13% total higher total returns to shareholders, and a 50% higher market premium.
- According to a [Gallup](#) study, companies with high levels of employee engagement enjoy a significant uplift of every business performance number. Gallup performed a meta-analysis across 199 studies covering 152 organizations, 44 industries, and 26 countries. They discovered that for companies where employees were more engaged than not, their profitability jumped by 16%. Not only that, general productivity was 18% higher than other companies. Customer loyalty was 12% higher and quality jumped up by an incredible 60%. ([Harvard Business Review](#))

Volunteering increases employee engagement, recruitment, and retention

- In Ireland, [a recent study](#) found that 87% of employees who volunteered with their companies reported an improved perception of their employer. More importantly, a whopping 82% felt more committed to the organization for which they worked.
- In another study conducted by [VolunteerMatch](#) and [UnitedHealthcare](#) entitled "[Do Good Live Well Study Reviewing the Benefits of Volunteering](#)", researchers found that employees who volunteer through their workplace report improved relationships and cohesion with colleagues and better attitudes towards their employer.
- Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM) conducted a large study of Australian employers in 2013 finding that: "Corporate volunteering leads to improved employee engagement, organisational commitment, job satisfaction and retention." Additionally they found that the most common barrier to volunteering was "not being asked (38%)".
- [Research](#) among employees at Barclays Bank shows that pride in the bank as an employer increased with the number of times they had volunteered. Those who had volunteered four or more times were more likely to agree that they talked to family and friends about Barclays' support for the community than those who had only volunteered once.
- In 2011 Deloitte did a study on employer volunteer program impact [Volunteer Impact Study](#) finding that:
 - Millennials who volunteer through company-sponsored programs are more likely to be proud, loyal and satisfied employees.
 - Those who frequently volunteer are twice as likely to be "very satisfied" with career progression
 - Frequent volunteers are two times more likely to rate their company culture as "very positive" compared with those who rarely or never volunteer
 - Even 61% of those millennials who rarely or never volunteer would consider a company's commitment to the community when making a job decision
 - One major [study](#) of the attitudes of thousands of employees in a high street financial services company carried out by academics at the University of Bath found compelling evidence that "*employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility have a major impact on organizational commitment*". Because of the employer commitment to volunteering in schools, employee retention, health and performance all improved. (Education and Employers Taskforce 2009)

Volunteering Improves Employee Health

Individuals who volunteer live significantly longer, healthier and better lives. Health Benefits of Volunteering, CNCS, 2007
http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf

- The results of a survey of a large, ethnically diverse sample of older adults showed no association between receiving social support and improved health; however, the study did find that those who gave social support to others had lower rates of mortality than those who did not, even when controlling for socioeconomic status, education, marital status, age, gender, and ethnicity (Brown et al., 2005).
- In addition, an analysis of the Americans' Changing Lives data set by Musick and Wilson explored the possible effect of volunteering on depression by comparing the volunteering habits of individuals in 1986 and differences in the level of depression between 1986 and 1994. Controlling for other forms of social interaction, the researchers found statistically significant, positive relationships between volunteering and lower levels of depression.
- An analysis of data from the Longitudinal Study of Aging found that those individuals who volunteer have lower mortality rates than those who do not, even when controlling for physical health (Sabin, 1993). This finding was confirmed when controlling for other factors, such as age, marital status, education, and gender. Respondents to the National Health Interview Survey who volunteered in 1983 were considerably more likely to still be alive in 1991 (Rogers, 1996).
- Using the Americans' Changing Lives survey, one study found that when respondents from a subgroup in 1986 volunteered, they had a lower mortality rate in 1994, even after adjustments for age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. In addition, those respondents with low levels of informal social interaction most benefited from volunteering (Musick et al., 1999).
- Those individuals suffering from chronic pain experienced declines in their pain intensity and decreased levels of disability and depression when they began to serve as peer volunteers for others also suffering from chronic pain (Arnstein et al., 2002).
- According to a Duke study of individuals with post-coronary artery disease, those individuals who volunteered after their heart attack reported reductions in despair and depression, two factors that have been linked to an increased likelihood of mortality in this type of patient (Sullivan and Sullivan, 1997).
- A study of the Americans' Changing Lives survey found a threshold of volunteering was necessary for health benefits. Those individuals who volunteered at least 40 hours per year, as well as those who volunteered with just one organization, or group, had the lowest risk of mortality (Musick et al., 1999).
- State volunteer rates are strongly connected with the physical health of the states' population. Using health and volunteering data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Center for Disease Control, we find that states with a high volunteer rate also have lower rates of mortality and incidences of heart disease. These state-level findings parallel those of noted sociologist and Harvard University professor Robert Putnam, who found a strong correlation between the level of social capital and measures of good health in his widely acclaimed book, *Bowling Alone*. When put in the context of the other findings presented above, the correlations presented here suggest that state policies designed to increase volunteering may serve to enhance the mental and physical well-being of the state's residents.

How your organization can improve employee engagement and expand volunteerism in Iowa:

- Contact Michelle Raymer (michelle.raymer@iowa.gov) to be engaged in the initiative
- Develop an employee volunteer program at your organization
- Cross-promote with Volunteer Iowa to highlight your volunteer efforts and opportunities
- Connect with your local Volunteer Center
- Co-develop an employer volunteer program training opportunity for Iowa's employers