



BEYOND PAINTING CLASSROOMS WORKSHOP REPORT

New and Exciting Approaches to Employee Volunteering

24 August 2016 - Johannesburg, South Africa

1 Introduction



On 24 August 2016, a record number of participants attended the Beyond Painting Classrooms workshop themed *New and Exciting Approaches to Employee Volunteering*. Colleen du Toit (CEO, CAF Southern Africa) and Desiree Storey (Manager, FirstRand Volunteers Programme), welcomed approximately 80 participants to the workshop and provided context on the Beyond Painting Classrooms initiative.

Now in its fourth year, Beyond Painting Classrooms is an initiative open to all individuals passionate and committed to strengthening employee volunteering in South Africa. Through convening and knowledge development, the initiative provides opportunities for practitioners to learn, share and reflect on how to increase the social and business benefits of corporate employee volunteering. While the programme team acknowledges the value of all forms of employee volunteering, it believes that volunteering that is strategic, planned and executed as an integral part to how companies do business and how NGOs operate results in enhanced benefit for all involved.

“FirstRand takes a blended value approach to its work. The FirstRand Volunteers Programme and Beyond Painting Classrooms form part of our social value proposition, and enables us to innovate internally as well as through BPC.”

Desiree Storey (Manager, FirstRand Volunteers Programme)

The workshop featured a novel theatrical performance on corporate employee volunteering relationships from Zikkazimba Productions, as well as presentations by Refilwe Community Project, Operation Hope and Mercedes Benz South Africa, which are summarised in this report.

The objectives for the workshop were to:

- create a creative space for participants to reflect on how to strengthen employee volunteering relationships;
- showcase new and exciting approaches to employee volunteering; and
- enable sharing and learning about new and exciting approaches to employee volunteering.

2 Zikkazimba Productions on corporate employee volunteering relationships



For the first time at a Beyond Painting Classrooms event, acting was used as a tool to inspire dialogue aimed at strengthening corporate employee volunteering relationships. Zikkazimba's employee volunteering relationships script drew on real as well as stereotypical perceptions of what undermines effective and mutually beneficial relationships in the employee volunteering space. The intention was to use humour to create new avenues for self-reflection and inspire individuals to take personal responsibility for improving relationships.

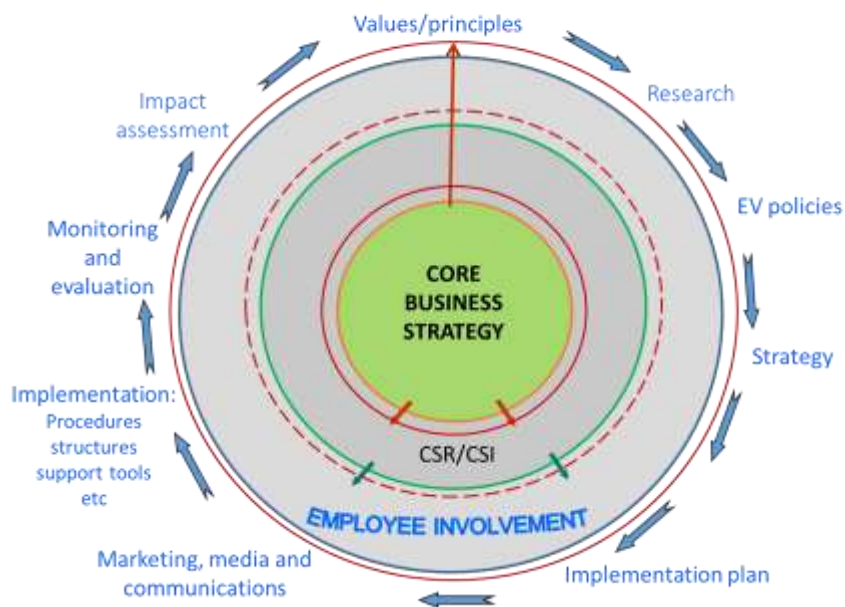
A variety of themes shaping NGO-corporate relationships, which have been debated through panel discussions and group work at previous BPC events, were featured in the performance. For example:

- differences in culture and values;
- lack of communication and/or miscommunication;
- poor planning and volunteer management generally;
- different expectations and motivations for volunteering;
- power differentials where NGO often feels overpowered and lacks assertiveness;
- inappropriate behaviour and perceptions from corporate employee volunteering; and
- lack of appreciation by the NGO of corporate employee volunteering and for the potential value of volunteering.

After the performance, NGO and corporate participants separately discussed their reactions to the performance. Participants overwhelmingly thought the performance offered a realistic lens into the dynamics of NGO-corporate relationships. Participants also felt that the performance represented a missed opportunity for NGO and corporate representatives to work together – in other words, there was hope that the mistakes depicted in the performance could be rectified

A number of recommendations emerged focused on how processes and behaviours could be modified to strengthen NGO-corporate relationships and ultimately the outcomes of corporate employee volunteering. The recommendations, summarised in this section, correspond to the various stages of corporate employee volunteering management from strategy development to implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The CAF Southern Africa diagram below illustrates the volunteer management cycle in its ideal form – aligned to core business strategy/organisational strategy, CSR/CSI strategy and a driver of employee engagement.

ECI programme elements – good planning/management = success



Values and principles

Values and principles are essential building blocks to any corporate employee volunteering programme. The values and principles of employee volunteering, however, are often insufficiently articulated, imperfectly understood and/or inadequately practiced.

In order to strengthen NGO-corporate relationships, participants spoke about the need to clearly define employee volunteering programme values and to share these widely within organisations as well as with partner organisations. Some values and principles discussed at

the workshop, which organisations may want to consider integrating into their programmes include:

- honest communication;
- building on capabilities (not fixing problems);
- mutual respect;
- humility;
- openness to learning;
- unconditional service;
- professionalism;
- partnership;
- empowerment;
- accountability; and
- commitment to making a lasting difference.

Policies and strategy

Corporate employee volunteer programmes must have clearly defined policies and procedures which should inform the corporate's values, principles and code of ethics. A programme strategy with the mission, vision, goals and activities constitutes the guiding light of any programme. A robust internal and external communications strategy will increase employee participation and highlight the good work of the NPO's supported. Feedback reports from corporate employees and NGOs will provide the impact for the beneficiaries and consolidate lessons learned to improve the programme strategy. To ensure that programme strategies align closely to the needs of NGOs, both corporate and NGO representatives recommended that NGOs participate in programme strategy development. This would also help to position NGOs as more equal partners in the corporate-NGO relationship. Too often, NGOs feel overpowered as well as incompetent when working with corporates, shared one participant.

"20% of companies offer a pro bono programme domestically."
CECP, Giving Around the Globe 16th Edition

Both corporates and NGOs also need to consider how best to incorporate skills-based volunteering and *pro bono* services into employee volunteering programme strategies and policies. NGOs at the workshop conveyed their interest in securing this kind of support from corporate employee volunteers (e.g. marketing and communications, human resources, strategic planning, and financial management). The evidence shows that skills-based volunteering is being embraced by corporate South Africa, but there is great scope for growth. Information about corporate employee volunteering strategies and programmes should be available online in sufficient detail so that NGOs can understanding the potential for engagement and craft their requests accordingly.

Planning and implementation

Challenges with planning for corporate employee volunteering was the issue most often cited by workshop participants. The need for open, honest and ongoing lines of communication between NGOs and corporates was highlighted. Guidelines for partner communications should be detailed in programme policies and then effectively implemented so that expectations are communicated, aligned and managed where necessary.

“Ideally host organisations need to become more forthcoming in expressing their needs for the strategic human resources they require to strengthen their operations.”

International Voluntary Service in SADC, Perold et al

Corporate representatives encouraged NGOs to scope corporate employee volunteering opportunities more carefully. Volunteer role descriptions should include information on the tasks, timeframe, duration, deliverables and competencies as well as attitudes required. Taproot Foundation in the US has scoped a number of volunteer tasks, which can help organisations get started: <https://www.taprootfoundation.org/get-probono/be-powered-pro-bono/project-finder>.

Corporates should also consider involving NGOs in briefing sessions with corporate employee volunteers. This would not only support volunteer readiness, but would go a long way in recognising the expertise of NGOs partners. Companies and NGO partners might also want to consider collaborating on a code of good practice.

Corporate representatives suggested that NGOs cultivate multiple relationships in companies given high staff turnover rates and also endeavour to understand the particular roles and responsibilities of the various contacts. NGOs encouraged corporates to speak to the relevant volunteer management contact in NGOs, which is not necessarily the CEO. Both companies and NGOs have a responsibility to make contact information accessible, so that these relationships and understandings can be developed.

Finally, corporate and NGO partners should consider signing a simple volunteer contract prior to implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation

There was minimal discussion about monitoring and evaluation. However, the employee volunteering theatre performance demonstrated the implications of poor planning, inadequate communications and a lack of strategy in volunteering. A few NGOs emphasised the importance of monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of volunteering on all those involved. . Undoubtedly monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems should be developed at the inception of programmes, in keeping with programme values and intended outcomes.

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."

Edward Everett Hale

Before concluding the workshop, all participants committed to taking responsibility for building stronger, more effective employee volunteering relationships by making small changes in their everyday approach to employee volunteering.

3 Examples of new and exciting approaches: panel presentations

Presenters from Refilwe Community Project, Operation Hope and Mercedes Benz South Africa gave high level insights into new and exciting approaches to skills-based volunteering as well as marketing and volunteer mobilisation.



According to Jay Strydom (Donor Relations Manager), Refilwe Community Project is moving "beyond painting classrooms" in its approach to corporate employee volunteering. Refilwe is a Christian development organisation, which provides care to vulnerable children and seeks to break the cycle of poverty. The organisation is now placing emphasis on encouraging employees to share their primary or professional skills, as well as their other skills associated with personal hobbies and interests. Strydom believes there is great potential to ignite the interest of employees in skills-based volunteering by tapping into these secondary as well as primary skills.

"Pro bono service constitutes a form of skills-based volunteering, but relies specifically on core professional skills and expertise of volunteers."
Beyond Painting Classrooms, 2015 Conference report

Strydom highlighted two examples of successful skills-based volunteering engagements – one international and one domestic. International corporate employee volunteering is a growing area, however, it is primarily limited to north-south interaction (e.g. USA to South Africa) as opposed to south-north (e.g. South Africa to USA) or south-south (South Africa to Lesotho). A USA volunteer worked onsite in South Africa as well as off site in the USA to help the organisation to build an M&E system. This helped the organisation to become more attractive to corporate donors who require evidence of the organisation's impact. Refilwe is also working with lawyers in South Africa, on a *pro bono* basis, to change child adoption laws in South Africa to enable South Africans from all racial backgrounds to adopt black orphans, explained Strydom.

Going forward, Refilwe hopes to engage more corporate employee volunteers in support of its organisational needs, such as social media, event planning, strategic planning and board membership. The organisation's "Office Olympics" provides an important marketing opportunity for the organisation to inspire and recruit corporate employee volunteers.



Operation Hope South Africa has integrated a skills-based approach to employee volunteering into its overall programme model, shared Zviko Mudimu (Managing Director, Operation Hope South Africa). Founded in 1992 in the United States, the organisation has grown into a global provider of financial literacy. Started in South Africa in 2007, the organisation seeks to be the "premier provider of financial literacy empowerment for youth, financial capability for communities and financial dignity for all". To date, the organisation has reached over 65 000 young men and women, with the support of approximately 3 500 volunteers.

The organisation offers opportunities for corporate employee volunteers to get involved as role models, mentors, teachers and judges. The Banking on our Future programme is a financial empowerment initiative that focuses on teaching youth financial literacy, financial dignity and entrepreneurship. Another flagship programme is Business in a Box Academy which targets Grade 9 and 10 learners. The programme supports young learners to understand business, write business plans, pitch business ideas and start businesses from scratch.

Given that volunteers deliver the organisation's programming, Operation Hope in the training of its volunteers. The commitment levels vary from a once-off two – three hours of judging, to teaching one hour a week for six to eight weeks, to mentoring for 10-15 hours throughout the duration of a competition. By creating opportunities for engagement, which have different time commitments and speak to different passions, Operation Hope can appeal to a broad range of corporate employee volunteers and volunteers more generally.

Employee volunteering at Mercedes-Benz South Africa is strongly aligned to the company's values and specifically the value of passion – “for our products and making a change”, shared Jeanette Clark (Manager Corporate Affairs: Marketing and Sales, Corporate Affairs, Mercedes-Benz South Africa). Corporate employee volunteering is also integrated into the company's Corporate Social Investment (CSI) strategy, along with the strategic pillars of community upliftment, education and youth development.



Clever marketing as well as strong leadership support and involvement help bring the programme's tagline to life – “Get Engaged, Get Inspired”. The company has created a physical space called the “Inspiration Atrium” as well as a digital platform to showcase and encourage staff to participate in the company's CSI activities. The Atrium has a uniquely in your face feel and deviates from corporate colours in order to stand out. Clark shared how the online and offline spaces have helped to encourage healthy competition among business units, as well as involve staff through social media. For example, staff participated in a conversation about homelessness and the role of business through the digital platform when the company's CEO and three other representatives took part in the CEO Sleepout.

Clark emphasised management level leadership support as a key success factor for effective employee engagement. The company employs a Champion/Ambassador Model which involves executives being champions of particular projects. While this took time to develop, it is now an embedded aspect of corporate culture at Mercedes-Benz South Africa. While it can be hard to devolve responsibility for projects, Clark emphasised that “People won't live their passion if you don't make them responsible”.

4 Conclusion





Overall, the quantitative and qualitative feedback from the workshop confirmed that participants appreciated the networking opportunity, the performance and speakers. While the venue was identified as an issue, the content was still well received.

All speaker presentations are available on the Beyond Painting Classrooms website: <https://www.firststrand.co.za/csi/volunteers/Pages/beyond-painting-classrooms-workshop-presentations.aspx>

The video of the performance, directed by Jaques de Silva with actors Khutjo Green and Megan Van Wyk, will be made available on the Beyond Painting Classrooms website in early 2017 along with a short guide for workshopping the performance and the various issues it raises. It is hoped that this tool will contribute to strengthening NGO-corporate engagement.