

CYNTHIA D. McCAULEY D. SCOTT DeRUE
PAUL R. YOST SYLVESTER TAYLOR

EXPERIENCE- DRIVEN LEADER DEVELOPMENT



**MODELS, TOOLS, BEST PRACTICES, AND ADVICE
FOR ON-THE-JOB DEVELOPMENT**



WILEY

Copyright © 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Published by Wiley

One Montgomery Street, Suite 1200, San Francisco, CA 94104-4594
www.wiley.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, 201-748-6011, fax 201-748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Readers should be aware that Internet websites offered as citations and/or sources for further information may have changed or disappeared between the time this was written and when it is read.

For additional copies/bulk purchases of this book in the U.S. please contact 800-274-4434.

Wiley books and products are available through most bookstores. To contact Wiley directly call our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-274-4434, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3985, fax 317-572-4002, or visit www.wiley.com

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

••

Printed in the United States of America

HB Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Corporate Volunteerism as an Avenue for Leadership Development

Shannon M. Wallis

Arrow Leadership Strategies

Jeffrey J. McHenry

Rainier Leadership Solutions



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IS one of the most impactful ways to develop leaders. However, finding meaningful experiences that provide real world challenges outside the workplace, where developing leaders may feel more comfortable and safer practicing new skills, can be daunting. Enter corporate volunteerism programs, a growing trend in leadership development. Corporate volunteerism programs are skill-based volunteer programs that are usually aligned with a firm's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Although not exclusively, many programs are focused on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises, and educational institutions found in emerging markets.

According to CDC Development Solutions (2012), the annual growth rate of corporate volunteerism programs since 2006 is 52 percent. In fact, the number of countries visited by these volunteerism programs has grown from four countries in 2006 to sixty-two countries in 2012.

Corporate volunteerism programs bring many benefits to a firm, including increased staff motivation and retention, professional skill growth, better understanding and increased knowledge of opportunities and challenges in emerging markets, substantive improvements in communities where the organization has projects, and enhancement of the firm's image

both internally and externally. If done well, the benefits for leaders are substantial. Corporate volunteerism programs enable leaders to build a more global perspective, develop an understanding of national competitiveness, and demonstrate a commitment to corporate citizenship.

Projects come in many varieties. IBM's Corporate Service Corps consists of teams of eight to fifteen high potential leaders who work with government, business, and civic leaders in emerging markets to help address high-priority issues over a one-month period (Litow, 2012; see *Developing Socially Responsible Global Leaders Through Service Projects* on page 107 of this book). In comparison, Microsoft's award-winning Front Lines™ program teams two to three high potential Microsoft executives with a similar number of executives from selected NGOs, social enterprises, and government agencies to solve urgent business problems during a three-day immersive and six-week follow-up virtual experience ("Global impact," 2011).

While there are many ways to develop leaders through these experiences, a key factor in the success of volunteerism programs is securing appropriate internal and external partners for the experience itself. Leadership development professionals struggle with how to identify and select both internal and external partners as well as business challenges that best serve the objectives of their programs. While organizations such as United Planet, Emerging World, and CDC Development Solutions have strong connections to potential agencies, they don't necessarily know the agencies that are best aligned with a firm's strategic objectives or the learning objectives of the firm's leadership development programs. Decisions about internal and external partners must be made by the firm's leadership development team.

Identifying and Selecting Partners

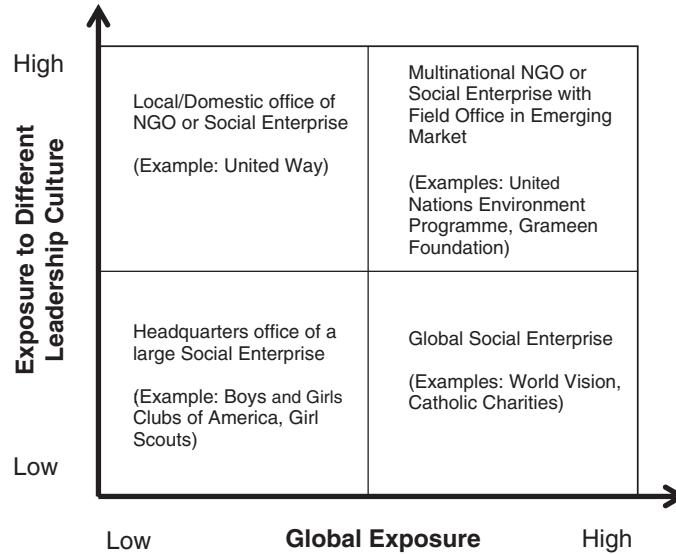
The following steps can help leadership development professionals identify and select the partners who are the best fit for their firm's program.

Step 1: Determine Learning Objectives for the Program

Before any work is done identifying and screening potential partners, the firm must establish learning objectives for the development experience. This may seem like an obvious step, but we have observed organizations get so carried away in their excitement about working with a particular development agency or executive education partner that they fail to take the time to determine whether that partner is a good fit for their learning objectives.

Here are some questions that may be useful to organizations seeking to clarify the learning objectives for their development program:

- What leadership competencies should the program help build (e.g., cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, customer insights)?

Figure 16.1. Selecting a Target That Meets the Firm's Learning Goals

- What critical developmental experiences should leaders gain through the program (e.g., run a business where the leader has little or no business/functional expertise, work in a staff role, work outside one's home country)?

Typically, one of the learning goals of a volunteerism program is to broaden the way that leaders approach business and organizational challenges by exposing them to work in a very different culture. Thus, a key question facing program designers is what cultural boundaries they want leaders to cross as part of their volunteerism experience. For example, do they want to expose leaders to a nonprofit organizational culture, where the motives and values of the organization and its workforce likely differ significantly from the motives and values of those working in a for-profit firm? Or do the program designers want to expose leaders to people or a culture outside their home country in the hopes that it will make the leaders more globally aware? Figure 16.1 shows how the answers to these questions will help to identify the potential partner organizations that are best fit for a firm's program.

Step 2: Establish Criteria for Evaluating and Selecting Partners

The learning objectives in Step 1 lead directly to the most important criterion for evaluating and selecting partners: To what extent will this partner help and enable the organization to achieve the desired learning objectives for the volunteerism program?

It's important to specify at this point whether the volunteer experience should (or should not) be relevant to the firm's core businesses. Some firms choose to provide volunteerism

experiences that are completely unrelated to the company's businesses because they want leaders to operate in an environment that is completely new and different. Others prefer or focus exclusively on projects that relate to the firm's core business. For example, every volunteer project selected for Microsoft's Front Lines™ program includes an information technology (IT) component. This makes the projects more engaging and job-relevant for participants, enhances senior leader support for the program, makes it easier to recruit very committed internal partners (see Step 3), and has the side benefit of helping participants learn more about IT challenges in emerging markets.

Beyond this, there may be other practical and logistical considerations in selecting a partner (e.g., the scope and duration of the volunteerism assignment, travel time and expenses, and the number of volunteers the partner is able to successfully "manage" and deploy).

Step 3: Identify and Select Potential Internal Partners

Internal partners are typically found in three areas of the business: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) groups, sales organizations, and research and development groups responsible for new product introduction.

CSR groups, usually housed within a Corporate Affairs department, are often in an excellent position to partner. CSR groups typically focus their attention on local communities near the firm's headquarters location or in other locations where the firm has a very large number of employees, but some CSR groups in large multinational firms are engaged in global issues and are involved in CSR work all around the world. CSR programs generate positive press coverage and good relationships with local authorities, and CSR staff are well-versed in how to manage any situations that might result in sudden damage to the firm's reputation. CSR program administrators are familiar with the CSR objectives of the firm and know the types of agencies or initiatives that have been targeted for strategic purposes. The CSR group's relationships with these targets enable the CSR group to better assess the need within those agencies and the types of problems that might be present. They can work with leadership development professionals to match the objectives of the CSR program with the objectives of the leadership development experience to help ensure that participants have a beneficial learning experience.

Sales organizations are another option to consider, especially those based in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) or emerging markets in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. If the firm has a particular focus for its CSR and corporate citizenship activities (e.g., health care, affordable education, or technology), that focus usually will be cascaded down to the firm's regional and national sales subsidiaries. The subsidiaries will be engaged in local CSR initiatives that serve their local markets and highlight the firm's brand and commitment to the community. Regional and national subsidiaries will likely welcome the opportunity to work with a volunteerism program if it will enable the subsidiaries to make progress on their CSR initiatives or provide a "value added" service such as "free consulting

from a team of our high potential leaders” to their customers and CSR partners. It is an easy way for them to differentiate their organization from the competition. Another possible partner within the sales organization is a vertical sales team focused on NGO customers. The NGO sales team may already be helping their customers who are involved in work that lends itself readily to volunteerism projects (e.g., economic development, health care, energy conservation, environmental protection). Like sales subsidiaries, they may jump at the opportunity to partner with a leadership development program that will enable them to provide their customer with free consulting and attention.

Finally, research and development (R&D) groups can be an excellent internal partner option. Continually seeking new product ideas and ways to innovate, R&D groups may be interested in sending or sponsoring a team of leaders to travel to an emerging market to do volunteer work and simultaneously conduct ethnographic observations that spur creative thinking about possible R&D ventures. They may have strategic R&D partners or customers headquartered or deeply embedded in emerging markets who are interested in helping design and support a leadership development project.

The criteria developed in Step 2 can be used to help evaluate and select the internal partners who can best support and contribute to the success of the volunteerism program.

Step 4: Secure External Partners

Securing external partners requires as much if not more attention than selection of internal partners. Once the firm identifies internal partners, those partners will want to be involved in the selection of external partners.

It's useful to step back at this point and have a discussion with the internal partners about the criteria (Step 2) that will be used to evaluate and select targets. There may be some additional criteria the firm considers in choosing external partners, such as their capability and capacity to engage in a project of this nature, and whether they have a real and urgent business problem to solve. We have heard a number of stories about prospective nonprofit partners who are doing outstanding work, but don't have the experience or know-how required to use a team of senior-level leaders effectively on a volunteer project, and have not given adequate thought to the problem they would like the leaders to help them solve. Useful questions for evaluating external partners include:

- Does the external partner have senior leaders who would welcome and promote this type of partnership?
- Does the external partner have leaders who need development in complementary areas?
- Does the external partner have associates with the capacity to engage in this type of project?
- Does the external partner have a real and urgent business problem to solve?

Of all these considerations, selecting the business problem should be of utmost concern. Firms should avoid selecting problems that are already being worked by another team inside the firm or the external partner. If there is another team already working on the problem, either find a different problem or find a way to include the volunteerism program participants in the team already working the problem. The risk of having two separate teams “owning” the problem is that the leaders participating in the volunteerism program may decide that they are “dispensable” and invest little effort in their problem. This minimizes the urgency and does not create the best learning environment for participants because they have no “skin in the game.”

Ideally, there will be a “problem owner” in the external partner organization who feels a real and urgent business need to solve the problem—it should be part of the problem owner’s job description or one of his or her annual objectives. It’s even better if the problem owner has made little to no headway yet on the problem. The problem should be critical to the target organization’s success, a matter of passionate interest to its leaders, and within the target organization’s accountability and scope of impact.

Another consideration may be whether the external partner is involved in work that is directly relevant to the firm’s strategic business objectives. For example, is it possible that cooperation with a particular external partner on a volunteerism program could lead to new business opportunities or growth in an existing business, to better relationships between the firm and key government officials, or to goodwill or recognition that helps the firm achieve its CSR goals regionally or in a specific country?

Again, once a list of prospective external partners has been identified, the criteria from Step 2 and the additional considerations and criteria listed above should be used to select the best target(s) for the volunteerism projects.

Step 5: Conclude Project and Follow Up with External Partners

The main work of the project begins following Step 4. If all goes well, participants will immerse themselves in a deep understanding of the problem and work with the external partner to develop and help implement solutions that enable the external partner to better achieve its organizational mission.

Once most project work has been completed, it’s important to follow up with the external partner to gather feedback and decide on any next steps. To begin, the project team should determine whether the external partner was satisfied with project outcomes and how the project was conducted. For example:

- Was the work completed appropriately, and were the deliverables in line with the external partner’s expectations?
- Were the various phases of the project—contracting, planning, problem solving, and implementation—completed efficiently and effectively?
- Were there any unpleasant surprises along the way?

- What was the quality of partnership between project team and external partner staff?
- What advice would the external partner have for the future?
- Would the external partner be interested in doing something like this again, if the right opportunity arose?

Second, the project team should inquire whether the external partner might be a positive reference for the firm. Can the external partner give a clear account of how their organization and the stakeholders they serve benefited from the project? Would the external partner be willing to share their experience with the news media, be cited in press releases and articles, or provide reference to other prospective partners? It's very useful to include the firm's Corporate Affairs or CSR staff in these conversations.

Third, the project team should examine whether the project revealed any new business opportunities for the firm with the external partner, with a government agency, or with another organization. The account representative who supports the external partner should be very involved in these conversations, possibly along with one or more staff working in the country where the work was done. We know some leadership development professionals become uneasy at the idea that their firm might "exploit" a corporate volunteerism project to increase sales and profits; however, our experience is that external partners are very appreciative of these conversations. Their chief interests are serving their clients and achieving their mission. They will be delighted if the corporate volunteer project points to ways that they can do this more effectively by doing more business with the firm.

Conclusion

When firms follow these five steps to selecting great partners and business problems, the learning experience for leaders can be exceptional. The most impactful learning and development experiences happen on the job because the problems are real and challenging and the stakes are high. Corporate volunteerism projects with NGOs, social enterprises, and educational institutions in emerging markets are a great alternative approach to professional and leadership skill development because the learning experience has very similar urgency to on-the-job learning. By providing meaningful options for development that involve real-world challenges and an opportunity to practice new skills outside the workplace in a relatively safe environment, volunteerism projects prepare leaders for future success as they do good work for society.

References

- CDC Development Solutions. (2012). *International corporate volunteerism benchmarking study 2012*. Washington, DC: CDC Development Solutions.

- Global impact submission: Front lines—partnership between Microsoft and Emerging World. (2011). *Global Focus: The EFMD Business Magazine*, 5, 25–28.
- Litow, S. (2012, November 14). Global volunteerism is good for business. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/global-volunteerism-is-good-for-business/265166/