



Beyond Employee Giving:

How LinkedIn Approaches Corporate Social Responsibility
(And How You Can, Too)

by GuideStar

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The Case for the Modern CSR Strategy

When's the last time you evaluated your workplace giving strategy?

American consumers value companies they believe demonstrate a commitment to corporate social responsibility, according to a recent study. In fact, Millennial (and soon to be Generation Z) careerists are entering the workforce with a greater awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) than any prior generation. Sixty-two percent of surveyed millennials "only want to work for an organization that delivers social and environmental impacts."

This shift is causing an increased demand for an effective corporate social responsibility approach throughout the private sector. Workplace giving is more than just a selling point to attract employees and customers, however. It generates over \$4 billion annually—much of which is unrestricted, sustainable support that enables charities to deliver vital services throughout the nation.

Whether your corporation is thinking of starting a workplace giving strategy, or strengthening one already in place, here's what you'll need to know.

How, then, can a business modernize its workplace giving policy to be better at doing social good, all while gaining key stakeholder buy-in and, most important, remaining focused on its customers and products?

Popular Workplace Giving Models

Although corporate giving programs come in many forms, the premise remains the same: corporations encourage employee philanthropy through programs that donate money and resources to nonprofits that employees (ideally) care deeply about. Any successful workplace giving strategy includes at least one of these four elements:

Matching Gift Programs

More than 65 percent of Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft, GE, and the Ford Foundation, offer matching programs. Companies match monetary donations made by employees to a range of nonprofits determined by the employer. The most common minimum amount that companies will match is \$25, though they range from a minimum of \$1 to \$100, with maximums from \$1,000 to \$15,000.

Community Grants

Corporations provide grants to support their local communities through the work of organizations improving the lives of employees, customers, and local neighborhoods. Most frequently, organizations apply directly to the company for community grants by providing an overview of how the grant will be used.

Employee Volunteer Grants

Also known as Dollar for Doer Grant Programs, these charitable giving programs provide a monetary donation to eligible nonprofits as a way to recognize employees who volunteer. By recognizing employee interests, these programs benefit both the employees and the surrounding community.

Giving Goods and Services

These programs allow companies to provide pro bono in-house expertise or goods to nonprofit organizations. A notable example is Apple strategically donating its computers to public schools. These donations not only save the schools money when updating their computer systems but also introduce Apple products and its user experience to future consumers.

Through a combination of these and other strategies, such as automatic payroll deductions, challenge grants, fundraising matches, and more, corporate social responsibility not only helps local communities but also sets the stage to help companies improve their long-term bottom line by developing the people within their communities to become future employees, customers, and ambassadors of its products.

Case Study: LinkedIn for Good

In Silicon Valley it's not rare to find driven, goal-oriented, and generally content employees. What is rare, however, is finding a company with deeply engaged and fulfilled employees at twice the industry standard rate. Unless, of course, you're LinkedIn. With opportunities for employees to use their skills for good, paid volunteer hours each month, a global youth mentorship campaign, an employee match program, and discounted flagship products for the social sector, it's safe to say LinkedIn incorporates purpose into every part of their business.

"Five years ago, we started LinkedIn for Good to better support the nonprofit community, which was already utilizing our services. We formalized nonprofit discounts and enhanced our nonprofit department size and budget. It was the right thing to do—we would be doing the sector a disservice if we didn't have specific nonprofit support," says Lauren Vesty, marketing manager for LinkedIn for Good.

"We constantly calibrate what we are doing and where we put our resources, so that we're best positioned to make an impact."

The group's focus is to connect underserved communities to economic opportunity. "We're in a unique position to connect the nonprofit sector to world class talent. Seventy-five percent of professionals on LinkedIn are interested in working at a nonprofit. That is a huge group of talent waiting to hear about the right nonprofit job! LinkedIn for Good helps nonprofits locate the talent and connections they need to continue making the world a better place."

For LinkedIn, that means leveraging all of their assets for their social responsibility program. Recognizing employees as one of their most valuable channels, they engage with the surrounding communities through the LinkedIn Coaches Program. Starting in 2011, LinkedIn partnered with Year Up and other youth development organizations to tackle youth employment. Using the train-the-trainer model, the coaches program has trained thousands of underserved students across the globe on how to build their networks, choose careers, and apply for jobs. LinkedIn was the first Silicon Valley employer to hire Year Up interns. More than 40 Year Up Interns have been hired since 2011. Says Vesty, "Giving youth real work experience, training, and exposure to jobs is the best way to connect them to economic opportunity, which is LinkedIn's vision."

According to Vesty, what makes LinkedIn stand apart is that they have taken the time to figure out their core strength, and how they are best positioned to contribute to the social sector. In their case, it's by providing their job-recruiting services at a discounted rate to organizations that otherwise would be unable to afford paid options.

"We constantly calibrate—what are we doing and where we put our resources, so that we're best positioned to make an impact," she continues. LinkedIn for Good measures the number of users who have added a volunteer/causes section (more than 26 million), the number of volunteer opportunities on their network (more than 68,000), and the number of nonprofit hires influenced by LinkedIn (24,000).

"For us, it's about bringing amazing talent to the nonprofit sector. Great people are critical to any organization's success—we want to bring the best of the best to the nonprofit sector. GuideStar helps us achieve our mission by guiding our focus on which nonprofits would best benefit from our solutions," says Vesty.

How to Start

Here are five key points to consider before implementing a new or refreshed CSR success strategy:

1. Find Your Niche

Don't spread your philanthropic initiatives too thin—in this case, aim for inch-wide, mile-deep mentality. Figure out what your company's core strength is and what it's best positioned to solve for the nonprofit sector. Relate it back to your corporation's mission, identity, values, and purpose—and eliminate programs that are not in alignment. [GuideStar Pro](#), the world's most powerful search engine on nonprofits, will provide the information you need to determine your corporation's charity of choice. GuideStar Pro contains information on nonprofits' missions, programs, and investments, ensuring your donation dollars go to sustainable, transparent, and financially accountable nonprofits.

Assessing a nonprofit's financial stability is also crucial to ensuring that an organization worthy of your donation will be in operation long enough to make an impact with your contribution. [Financial SCAN](#) helps by combining GuideStar's IRS Forms 990 data and Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) expert analysis in an easy-to-use tool that brings insight about a nonprofit's financial health and provides a comparison to similar organizations.

2. Gain Key Stakeholder Buy-in

CSR programs are often initiated and run in an uncoordinated way by a variety of managers, frequently without the active engagement of the CEO—but that doesn't have to be the case. Using workplace giving to improve competitive context—the quality of the business environment and location in which you operate—keeps the focus on the social needs of the community. By leveraging the unique attributes your corporation possesses to address those needs, employees and leadership can partner with the surrounding community to make giving and volunteering not only ingrained in your company's culture, but loved by many.

3. Use the Right Tools

Don't get hit with IRS penalties—make sure a donation will be in compliance with IRS regulations before committing to it. Before your company gives, you must verify that the organization is eligible to receive charitable gifts. Otherwise, your corporation could incur fines, and employees who use the program may find their gifts disallowed. [GuideStar Charity Check](#) retrieves the information you need to qualify grant and payout recipients, all in a single date- and time-stamped report that documents your due diligence.

4. Track your Progress

Know the metrics worth tracking in order to continually assess your CSR strategy's impact. For starters, track your matching gifts program and expand from there—the experts at [Double the Donation](#) suggest at minimum measuring total individual donations, number of verified matching gifts, and matching gift percentage.

But don't underestimate the power of anecdotal data. Stories can be just as powerful as numbers when documenting the success of your workplace social good program. In [LinkedIn's](#) case, when [IDEA Public Schools](#) in Texas had a principal unexpectedly leave mid-year, they anticipated an average of six months of searching before finding a replacement. When they used their LinkedIn Recruiter seat to find a replacement, however, they successfully recruited a new principal within one month.

5. Build the Ecosystem

How effectively do you communicate your corporate social responsibility position to your employees? Walk through your matching gifts policy and other workplace giving strategies through the eyes of an employee: how easy or time intensive is the process? How can it be streamlined? Compile a company-wide survey to examine employee perspectives and gain feedback. Perhaps your employees would desire more paid volunteer hours—use the insights to build your giving strategy around employee priorities.

In fact, employee performance [directly increases](#) when they truly feel they're working for a purpose. When giving is extremely valued in your company culture, build an ecosystem where employees can amplify and participate in those values.

Did you know?

Corporations use GuideStar in a variety of ways. Companies rely on us for powering workplace giving platforms by pulling in nonprofit data with our [APIs](#), integrating instant nonprofit search and verification. We also provide custom list building for nonprofit market sizing and integration into CRM systems—for instance, corporations can identify the top 100,000 nonprofits by employee size or revenue. Additionally, subscriptions to [GuideStar Pro](#) give easy access to in-depth and accurate nonprofit information with a custom search feature and more than 2 million Nonprofit Profiles detailing an overview of programs, financials, and operations.

Conclusion

Workplace giving is about more than checking off an admirable trait in your company's portfolio for stakeholders. It's about making a difference in your community and for those who live there. Reach GuideStar's Business Department by phone at **866-710-7663** or [contact us online](#) to learn more about how our tools can assist you in building a successful corporate social responsibility strategy.