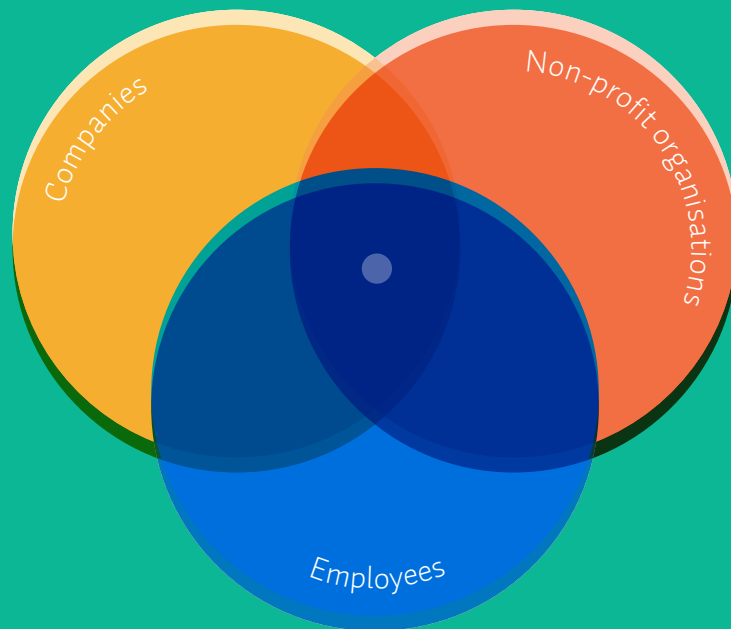


# Choosing the right set-up for **corporate volunteering**

Insights from the **DAX30**



BEYOND  
PHILANTHROPY



UNIVERSITÄT  
MANNHEIM

# Foreword

The role of companies in society has undergone a marked change in recent years. Companies' sustainability efforts have become more strategic and ambitious, not least through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the EU Directive on Non-Financial Reporting. It is no longer a question of whether companies should assume a social responsibility beyond profit making, but rather how they can best contribute to society and to sustainable development generally. In some articles, companies have even been called the new 'agents of global justice',<sup>1</sup> which well illustrates the high expectations placed on them.

When it comes to this development, employee volunteer engagement as part of corporate citizenship strategies is unquestionably a hot topic. Skills-based volunteering in particular – i.e. volunteering activities that involve employees using their professional skills for a charitable purpose – has received a lot of attention recently and was described not long ago by the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* as 'the new executive training ground'.<sup>2</sup>

This report takes a look at corporate volunteering among DAX 30 companies. Our findings follow a series of recent publications on the same subject (see e.g. UPJ 2018 and Stifterverband 2018) that review the current state of corporate volunteering in Germany. Building upon the results of these studies, we delve deeper by:

1. gleaning in-depth insights from conversations with 25 of the DAX 30 companies
2. employing a trimodal approach, which involves examining not only the company's perspective but also the perspective of employees and non-profits
3. critically scrutinising current developments at the companies and outlining points for further reflection.

A distinctive feature of our report is that it is the product of a collaboration between two very different organisations. Despite our different backgrounds, we share a similar perspective on the issues of corporate responsibility in general and corporate volunteering in particular. By pooling our experience working with companies and our methodological expertise, we were able to develop a more in-depth understanding of corporate volunteering.

We hope that this report's findings provide a basis for a critical discussion of the trend and help lead to constructive progress on the topic going forward. We consider this to be particularly important given the fact that companies in our society are more and more frequently supplying public goods, thereby raising questions about the legitimacy of such activities. In particular in light of the current challenges, not only in the area of ecological sustainability but also in terms of social cohesion, it is important that corporate engagement reaches its full potential, develops an awareness of its political dimension and reflects the preferences of stakeholders in a balanced way.



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<sup>1</sup> Wettstein, 2009.  
<sup>2</sup> MacArthur & Ness, 2013.

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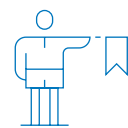
## Executive summary

Our insights from the DAX 30 show how Germany's largest publicly listed companies are tackling the hot topic of corporate volunteering – which refers to a company's support of its employees' societal engagement. In interviews with company representatives, it quickly became clear that the understanding and implementation of corporate volunteering, the motivations for pursuing it and the methods used to assess its impact were as varied and diverse as the companies themselves. However, at the same time, all companies are faced with the same questions:

- Should we support our employees in their private volunteering activities or develop our own programmes – or even both?
- Which type of corporate volunteering is more attractive to our employees: traditional or skills-based?
- What role do internal stakeholders such as management boards or works councils play?
- How do non-profits – from their perspective as potential partners – view corporate volunteering?
- Which business and social objectives are corporate volunteering programmes pursuing?
- How can the impact of corporate volunteering be measured?
- How should we communicate our corporate volunteering activities?

In light of these questions, and in view of the diversity among the companies, we have concluded that there is not any one magic formula for all-round successful corporate volunteering. But that doesn't mean companies have to get by without any guidance whatsoever. We believe instead that there are basic rules of the game which can prove useful when trying to choose the right set-up for corporate volunteering.

First of all, it is helpful to define clear parameters, thereby delineating the company-specific playing field in which corporate volunteering takes place. In order to ensure a successful kick-off, the employees' needs must be identified and incorporated into programme development. Once the game is underway, it is necessary that executives and senior management provide coaching in the form of credible buy-in of their employees' engagement. Finally, one must not forget that 'after the game is before the game'. It is only through an understanding of performance that one can learn from past efforts and improve and optimize future engagement. Well-thought-out and context-specific impact measurement procedures are vital for the management of corporate volunteering programmes.



This is significant because, in all likelihood, corporate volunteering will continue to become more relevant as part of overarching corporate citizenship strategies. But nevertheless, or perhaps because of this, the topic still needs to be examined critically in terms of issues such as real added value, authenticity and legitimacy. And this is something that ultimately benefits everyone – companies, employees and society.



**In a nutshell:**  
if corporate volunteering practitioners have clearly defined their playing field, executed the kick-off properly, secured solid coaching and kept a constant eye on performance, then corporate volunteering can be beneficial for the company, the employee and the non-profit.

# Introduction

Nearly half of all Germans take part in volunteering activities, according to the Federal Government's Fourth German Survey on Volunteering.<sup>3</sup> Our civil society depends on the day-to-day commitment of these people, which acts as a connecting element amidst increasing social divisions. In turbulent times like those we are experiencing today, we should remind ourselves that companies also play an important role in the functioning of our society.

Various studies, such as '[From Good Intentions to Real Results – Corporate Citizenship of Germany's DAX 30](#)'<sup>4</sup> or the '[Corporate Citizenship Survey](#)'<sup>5</sup> have shown that companies in Germany are becoming increasingly conscious of their social responsibility. Through various initiatives and the leveraging of diverse resources, they are taking a stand on social issues and thus breaking down the boundary between civil society and the market. More and more frequently, the employees of such companies are playing a central role in this domain through their voluntary engagement in non-profit organisations, for example, as part of corporate volunteering programmes. Not only can corporate volunteering bring a company's employees closer together, but it also builds bridges between employees and various social groups outside

the firm as well as supports social projects.

Therefore, at first glance, corporate volunteering appears to be a promising tool that can trigger positive effects both within and outside companies. The case study '[Corporate Volunteering in Deutschland](#)', published by the German business network UPJ in 2018, used online questionnaires to look into the corporate volunteering practices of over 50 companies operating in Germany and found that this form of assuming corporate social responsibility is steadily increasing in quantitative terms. But what does corporate volunteering look like exactly in large German companies? What is the status quo of how such programmes are managed? What challenges and obstacles are faced by those practitioners who want to establish corporate volunteering programmes? What expectations do employees and social organisations have of corporate volunteering programmes?



The [Chair of Corporate Social Responsibility \(CSR\) of the University of Mannheim](#) and [Beyond Philanthropy](#) have teamed up to answer these questions. We held approximately hour-long conversations with 25 of the 30 DAX companies about their corporate volunteering activities, thus allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of their initiatives and of the associated motivations and challenges. However, because of the bridge-building character of corporate volunteering, the topic cannot be examined without considering the perspectives of employees and non-profit partners. We have therefore chosen a trimodal approach for our study. In addition to the qualitative interviews with DAX companies, we conducted a questionnaire survey of over 1,200 employees in Germany and spoke with ten non-profit organisations to gather information about their experiences with

corporate volunteering initiatives.

The specific make-up of the project team (Chair of CSR of the University of Mannheim and Beyond Philanthropy) enabled the current state of research as well as the experience gained from many years of advising companies on corporate citizenship issues to be incorporated into the analysis and interpretation of the findings. It is on this basis that in the following we set out the results of our research while maintaining a critical view of the topic. The outcome of our work consists of practice-oriented guidelines and points for further reflection that should serve to help company decision-makers set up corporate volunteering programmes in such a way that benefits all parties involved – the company, the employees and the non-profits.

<sup>3</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2016.

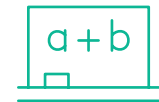
<sup>4</sup> Beyond Philanthropy & goetzpartners, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Civil Society in Numbers (ZiviZ) at Stifterverband, 2018.

# 2.

## Corporate volunteering in practice at DAX30 companies

In the first half of this report, we present the findings of our three-part study. The insights gleaned from our extensive interviews with DAX 30 companies are the main point of departure for this exercise. In addition to defining corporate volunteering, we also provide a picture of how companies are implementing corporate volunteering in practical terms as well as the results that are to be achieved by employees and companies.



## Methodology

In order to make the topic of corporate volunteering accessible and analysable, it is necessary to incorporate the perspectives of three groups: **1** companies, **2** employees and **3** the non-profit organisations with which the volunteering activities were conducted.

The results of this study are therefore based on data gathering activities that covered all three target groups.

**1** The company perspective was examined through semi-structured qualitative interviews with experts. Altogether 25 of the DAX 30\* companies participated in the phone interviews, which lasted 56 minutes on average. These included:

*adidas AG · BASF SE · Bayer AG · Beiersdorf AG  
Commerzbank AG · Continental AG · Covestro AG  
Daimler AG · Deutsche Bank AG · Deutsche Börse AG  
Deutsche Lufthansa AG · Deutsche Post DHL Group  
Deutsche Telekom AG · E.ON SE  
Fresenius SE & Co. KGaA  
Fresenius Medical Care AG & Co. KGaA  
HeidelbergCement AG · Henkel AG & Co. KGaA  
Münchener Rückversicherungs-Gesellschaft AG  
RWE AG · SAP SE · Siemens AG · thyssenkrupp AG  
Volkswagen AG · Vonovia SE*

**2** The employee perspective was ascertained through an online questionnaire. The sample included a total of 1,257 full or part-time employees in Germany, of which just under 35 per cent were employed at a company with more than 1,000 employees.

**3** It was especially because the study mainly focused on companies that the perspective of non-profit organisations was not ignored, for in almost all cases corporate volunteering would be impossible without them. Therefore, face-to-face interviews with representatives of ten non-profits were conducted.

**Please note:** further information about the methodology can be requested by contacting the project partners. Their contact details are listed at the end of this report.

(\*The selection of respondents was based on companies listed on the DAX 30 on 19 March 2018.)



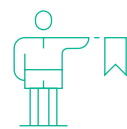
# Definition of corporate volunteering

That the discussion of corporate volunteering is being conducted on an increasingly sound basis and that implementation efforts are characterised by continuously growing practical experience has not necessarily resulted in all participants having the same understanding of corporate volunteering. In fact, quite the opposite is true: the interviews with DAX 30 representatives show that not only do the individual companies have different understandings of the topic, but also that there is a clear discrepancy in many companies between their stated understanding and actual implementation. This situation can be attributed, among other things, to the fact that 19 of the 25 interviewed DAX 30 companies lack a uniform corporate-wide definition of what falls under corporate volunteering and how it should be implemented in practice.

All the respondents agreed that corporate volunteering is essentially about employee volunteer engagement, and that such engagement involves partnering with a non-profit organisation and thus creates added social value.

Alongside this shared understanding of corporate volunteering, however, are very different views regarding, in particular, the following questions:

- Does corporate volunteering have to take place during work hours or can volunteer engagement outside of work hours also be considered as corporate volunteering?
- Is corporate volunteering always voluntary or can it be a mandatory part of training and continuing education programmes or of team-building activities?
- Do the volunteering activities of employees have to be clearly associated with the company in terms of fostering a favourable public perception?
- What role should companies play in corporate volunteering and which resources contribute to employee volunteer engagement?
- How much freedom of choice should employees have in corporate volunteering activities?
- To what extent should employees use their professional skills during their volunteering activities?



## 2.1

Due to the great deal of variation in how companies define and design their corporate volunteering programmes, we have based this study on a broad definition of corporate volunteering. This aims to do justice to the programmatic diversity among the companies while still providing a useful framework for discussing the topic. We therefore define corporate volunteering as follows:

Corporate volunteering describes formal and informal practices, policies and programmes that companies establish in order to promote, facilitate and/or coordinate employee volunteer engagement during and outside of work hours.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Based on Henning & Jones 2013 and Tschrhart & St. Clair, 2008.

💡 Skills-based volunteering	✂ Traditional volunteering*
<p>Employees engage in volunteering activities that utilise their specific professional skills and expertise.</p> <p>Example: A volunteer financial accountant prepares a financial plan for a non-profit organisation.</p>	<p>Employees engage in volunteering activities that do not require them to utilise their specific professional skills and expertise.</p> <p>Example: An employee volunteers in a soup kitchen, serving meals to those in need.</p>
<p><small>*Also known as hands-on volunteering</small></p>	

# Operationalisation of corporate volunteering

## 2.2

### The design of corporate volunteering projects

Just as the definition of corporate volunteering varies greatly between the respondents, so too does its practical implementation. The various approaches pursued by the companies can be divided into two general categories: **1.** supporting the private volunteering activities of employees and **2.** planning and implementing programmes organised through the company. Certain companies also employ a combination of these two categories.

#### 1 Promoting employees' private volunteering activities

Many company employees already have a long-standing commitment to social projects outside of work. Even if these private volunteering activities have nothing to do with the company, the majority of DAX 30 companies see promoting this sort of social engagement as an important aspect of corporate volunteering. There are two different ways that companies can do this:

#### Advocating volunteer work

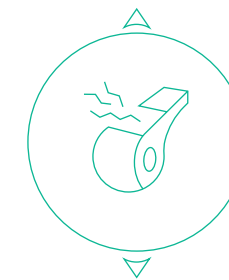
Companies use communication measures to draw attention to the topic of volunteering. Alongside event-specific campaigns, various corporate information channels are used to publish information on volunteering throughout the year. Certain companies also make use of digital volunteering platforms or networking events, which make it easier for employees to find volunteering opportunities within their local community or to motivate others for their existing volunteer work.

#### Recognising and supporting volunteer work

Companies can not only encourage more volunteering through communication measures, but can also reward existing involvement by creating the appropriate conditions and recognising this volunteering activity. The interviewed DAX 30 companies use very different methods to this end. Recognition can take the form of paid leave, support through financial or product donations, logistical support, and prizes awarded to employees who are particularly socially active.

#### Example: Deutsche Telekom – encouraging volunteering

Deutsche Telekom supports its employees in their volunteering activities, creates networking opportunities and encourages volunteering via its internal social media platform. The company regards this as important work: “Our social engagement is how we express our position as an actor within the triad of civil society, politics and business. We therefore provide our employees with many opportunities to volunteer – preferably with a focus on promoting media literacy. This includes promoting any existing volunteer work that our employees are involved in as well as encouraging them to become involved in new areas. There are therefore two strands to our approach, which we demonstrate via our corporate citizenship programme ‘engagement@telekom’.”



#### Example: Henkel – promoting global corporate volunteering

Henkel supports its employees and retired workers in their volunteering activities as part of its worldwide corporate volunteering initiative. The funding is decided by a jury in accordance with clearly defined guidelines. The level of funding provided is determined by the intensity of the volunteer work, by the number of people that benefit from this work and by the sustainability of the project.



## 2 Company-organised volunteering initiatives

For the majority of companies, the concept of corporate volunteering goes beyond merely promoting their employees' private volunteering activities. They therefore also design their own corporate volunteering formats, which can vary greatly with regard to planning and implementation effort:

### Company-wide Social Days

Nine of the interviewed companies stated that they hold so-called Social Days or Help Days for their employees. These are often organised and implemented in collaboration with external partners. Generally, these schemes bring the topic of volunteering to the fore for one day – either across the whole company or in particular departments. It is not unusual for the interviewed companies to have expanded their original Social Day into an event that lasts a week or even into a whole 'Month of Service'. During these periods, employees have the chance to engage in volunteer work – usually traditional volunteering – with non-profit organisations located close to their workplace. Companies regard these Social Days not only as a valuable opportunity to support local non-profits, but also as an effective team-building tool.

### Company-initiated volunteering programmes for employees

Much like the Social Days, this form of corporate volunteering is closely tied to the individual company. The main differences are the design and the intensity of the assignments. Many companies look for partners with whom they can offer their employees regular volunteering opportunities. Job coaching and student mentoring programmes are particularly common. While the initiative here comes from the company, the interviewed DAX 30 companies are relying more and more on the employees'

personal involvement when it comes to designing specific corporate volunteering activities. For example, they may be asked to come up with their own projects that they then implement together with their team. The company lends its support by providing the necessary time and financial resources as well as product donations and logistical assistance.

### Posting employees to social organisations

For corporate volunteering projects that require more intensive involvement, employees may be 'posted' to non-profits for a longer period of time to support them in their project work. The interviewed companies allow around two weeks to three months for such projects. Participants in these programmes can not only lend their professional expertise, but can also develop their own soft skills in areas such as innovation, leadership and communication. Companies are therefore also increasingly using this form of corporate volunteering as a staff development tool. Interested employees often have to complete an application process specified by the company.

Almost all the interviewed DAX 30 companies offer corporate volunteering opportunities that combine two

or three of the formats described above. Consequently, they generally offer a combination of traditional and skills-based volunteering. It is very rare for a company to restrict itself to only one of these two forms of volunteering.



### Example: Deutsche Post DHL Group – Global Volunteering Day

For the Deutsche Post DHL Group, every day is a Social Day. Here, volunteer work is not tied to specific days, but is possible all year round. The company uses a two-week campaigning period for its Global Volunteering Day to promote the topic of volunteering and to motivate its employees to get involved.

### Example: Social sabbatical

#### Bayer – Bayer People Care for Society / short-term social sabbatical

Employees at Bayer, in consultation with their manager, have the opportunity to apply for the Bayer People Care for Society programme. This programme is part of Bayer's general CSR strategy. The written application is reviewed and evaluated by a jury, following which the successful applicants are sent to work within a social organisation for three months. These employees receive additional funds of between €8,000 and €10,000 to implement specific projects on site.

#### SAP – SAP Social Sabbatical for global engagement

The global engagement programme forms part of the SAP's pro bono Social Sabbatical initiative, which sees employees contribute their professional skills and expertise to social projects around the world. Teams of employees leave the company for a period of four weeks to solve specific problems for non-profit organisations and social businesses. Every year, SAP's top talent can apply for a total of 120 places.

### Example: BASF – Der Mitmacher

'Der Mitmacher' (The Participant) is one of five volunteering opportunities offered by BASF. In cooperation with the German Non-denominational Welfare Association, a so-called 'marketplace' is set up where 20 to 25 organisations can present projects for which they require support. The organisations are then matched with BASF units that help to implement the project as a team.

## How voluntary is corporate volunteering?



In ten of the DAX 30 companies interviewed, corporate volunteering is already integrated into the company's training programmes and, in some cases, is even a mandatory module for apprentices, dual training students or young managers. This development raises the question of whether and to what extent such schemes can still be called 'voluntary'.

However, these training components are not the only factors that cast doubt on the voluntary nature of corporate volunteering. Employer expectations as well as the peer pressure that can be felt when participating in company-wide Social Days or team projects are all aspects that can make an employee's decision to participate less voluntary.

The fact that such formats diminish the voluntariness of social engagement is not a bad thing per se. But it should generally be questioned whether these activities still count as corporate volunteering and, if so, what consequences this more restricted sense of 'volunteering' has on the social engagement of the employees. How does it change their attitude towards the social project? What is the motivation behind their involvement? How does it change the relationship between the employer and the non-profit partner?

### Deutsche Lufthansa AG – social assignments for trainees

Being assigned to work in a social business for several weeks is an integral part of the ProTeam trainee programme at Deutsche Lufthansa. The participating trainees are stationed at a social business abroad, where they learn how it is possible to solve social problems with entrepreneurial approaches.

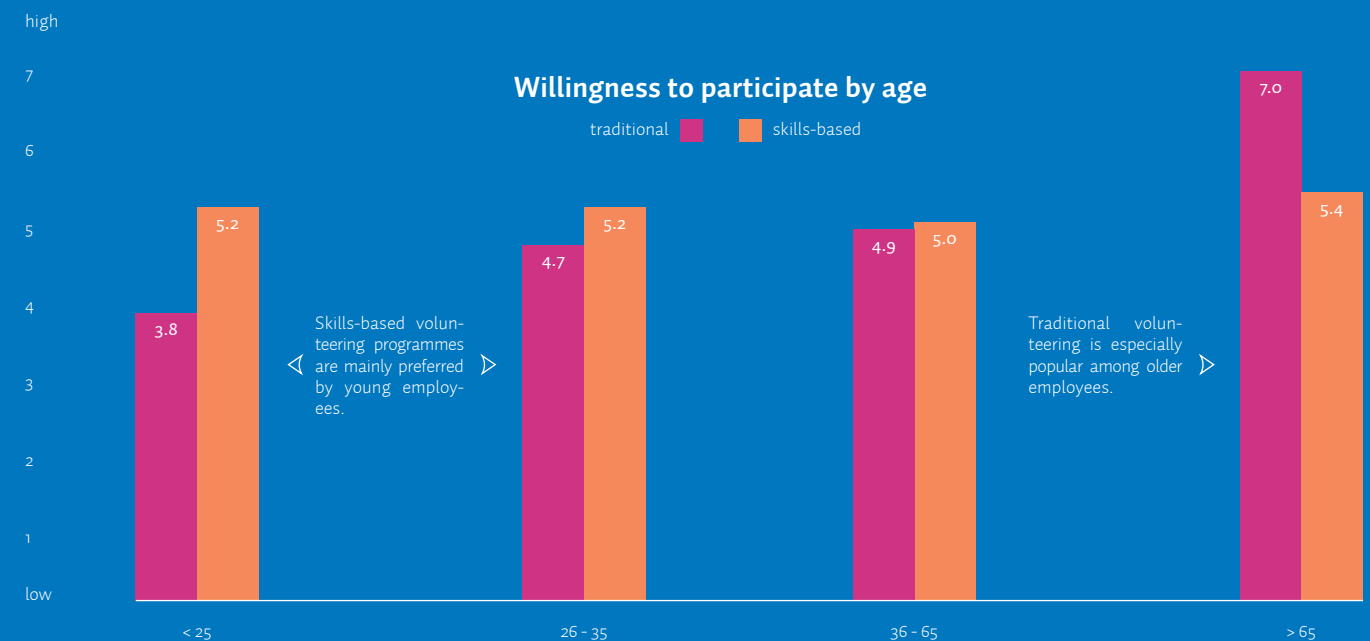
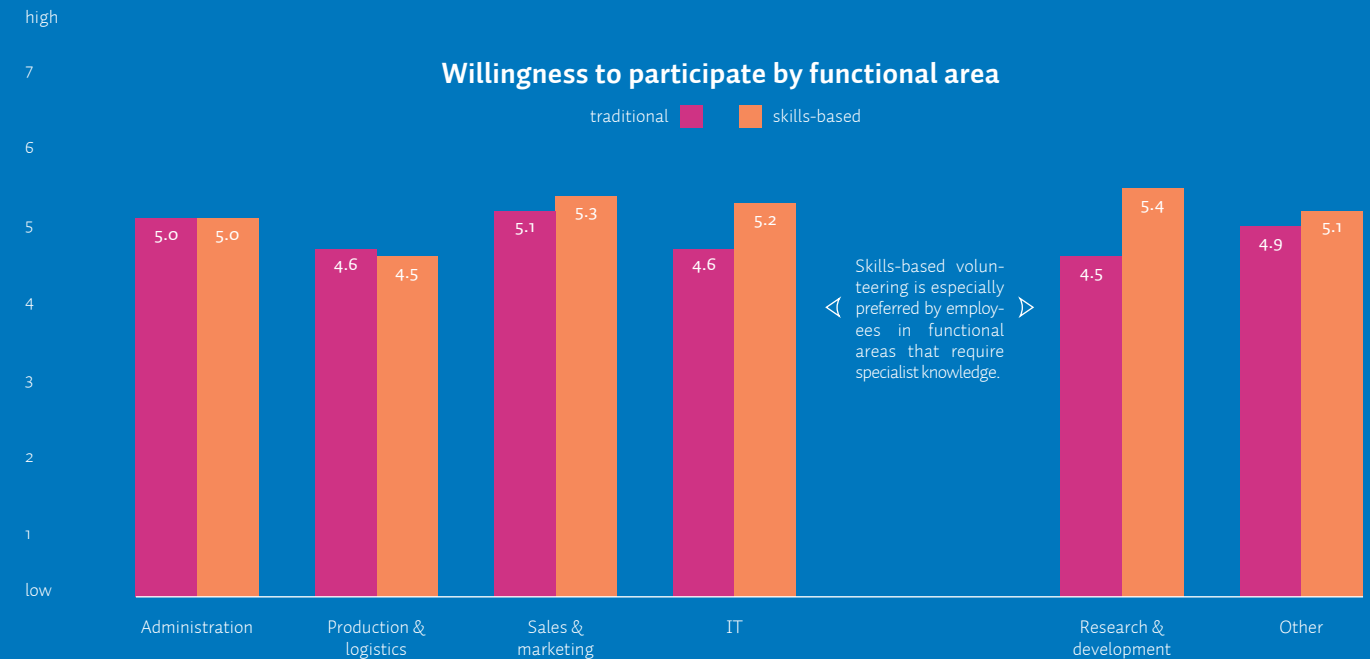
## Skills-based vs. traditional volunteering – a comparison

Our discussions with the DAX 30 companies reflect a development that is also apparent in the discourse surrounding corporate volunteering: companies are increasingly trying to incorporate their employees' expertise and professional skills into their corporate volunteering initiatives and are therefore offering more and more skills-based volunteering programmes.

The questionnaire survey conducted with employees provides interesting insight into how the participants perceive such programmes. The survey results show that there is significantly greater willingness to participate in corporate volunteering activities where one's own professional skills can be put to use.

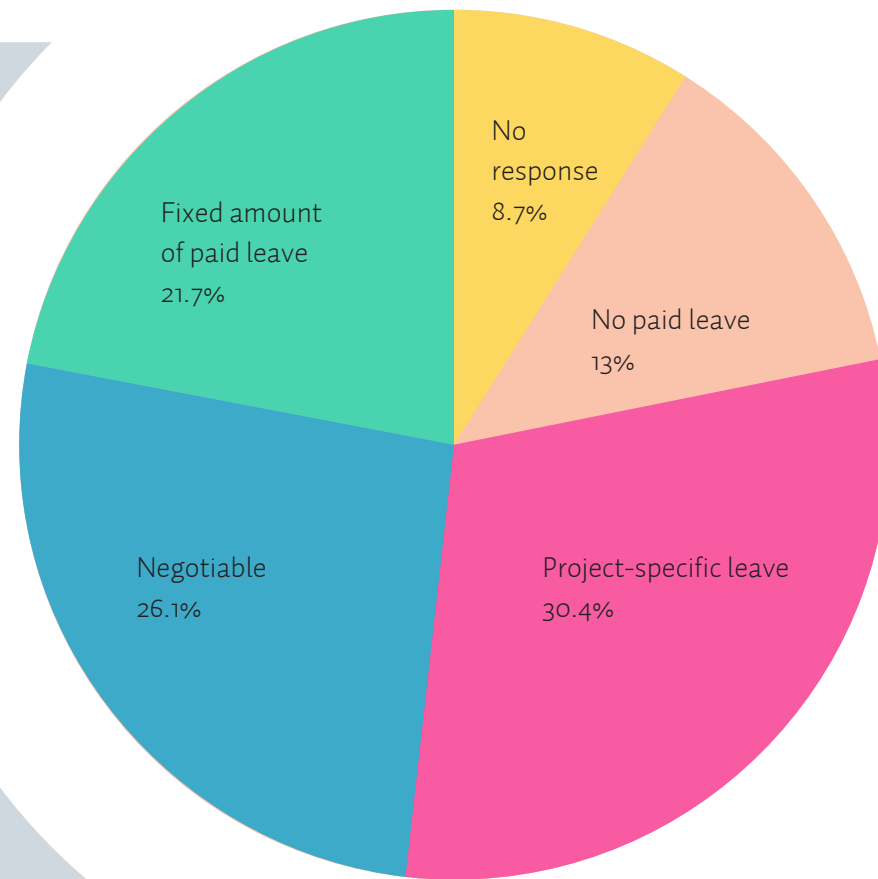
This is particularly true for employees who possess special professional skills (e.g. specialist technical knowledge). It is also clear that young employees in particular (i.e. Millennials and Generation Z) have a preference for skills-based volunteering.

As well as functional area and age, gender can also affect an employee's willingness to participate in skills-based volunteering activities: men show a stronger tendency than women towards participating in programmes that allow them to use their professional skills. And yet across the entire range of corporate volunteering opportunities offered, men show less of a willingness to get involved than their female counterparts.



Regardless of which approach a company chooses to pursue, one of the first questions that needs to be addressed is whether the corporate volunteering will take place during or outside of work hours. Although the vast majority of respondents declared themselves in favour of paid leave when defining the concept, the reality of what is actually practised within the companies is different.

## Paid leave for corporate volunteering



Only some 22 per cent of the interviewed DAX 30 companies have general rules in place that provide employees with a certain number of paid hours to dedicate to volunteer work. The duration of this paid leave ranges from one to five days per year. Thirty per cent of the companies, however, provide their employees with project-specific leave. This means that the amount of leave granted depends on which corporate volunteering scheme the employee chooses to participate in. For example, participation in a Social Day would equate to only one day of leave, whereas participation in a long-term mentoring programme would see the employee granted more paid time off. In 26 per cent of cases, volunteering leave is a matter of individual negotiation between company and employee. Employees must discuss and negotiate their

plans and requirements with their supervisors. There are therefore no equal opportunities when it comes to participation in corporate volunteering.

Only 13 per cent of the interviewed DAX 30 companies offer corporate volunteering opportunities solely outside of normal work hours and therefore provide no paid volunteering leave. The reason for this is not solely a lack of willingness to credit the hours that employees give to corporate volunteering. According to company statements, releasing employees during work hours also creates labour law issues concerning, for example, the insurance coverage of the employees. This can represent an obstacle to granting paid volunteering leave.

## What role do the works councils play in corporate volunteering?

In the conversations with DAX 30 representatives, the works councils were repeatedly mentioned as important actors. These councils seem to play a particularly important role in negotiating paid leave for the corporate volunteers. While one company explicitly emphasised that it had come to an agreement with the works council that no paid leave would be offered, others attributed a much more critical position to the works council:

*“If management decides to offer corporate volunteering opportunities within the company, it may well be that the works council says: ‘Yes, that would be great. But you need to give us, the participating employees, a day off to get involved. If the company wants us to offer our services for a day, then we would like this time to be recognised as work hours. If these initiatives help the company to achieve public recognition and prestige but we’re dedicating our free time, what’s in it for us?’” (BASF)*



Granting their employees paid leave is the largest resource that companies invest in corporate volunteering. They also give donations to the participating non-profits, provide the necessary infrastructure and logistics, share their expertise and place their network at the project’s disposal. The amount and variety of resources that are provided by each company vary greatly.

## The management of corporate volunteering projects

In general, responsibility for the management of corporate volunteering activities in the DAX 30 companies lies predominantly in three corporate departments: HR (36%), sustainability/CSR (32%) and communications (24%). These departments either organise the company’s corporate volunteering themselves or serve as important cooperation and consultation partners for the responsible departments. The management boards show a remarkably high level of involvement. Within the interviewed companies, 50 per cent of the responsible departments report directly to the management board – and in some cases the original initiative for launching corporate volunteering even came from the management board itself. This reflects the increasing relevance of corporate volunteering in the business world.

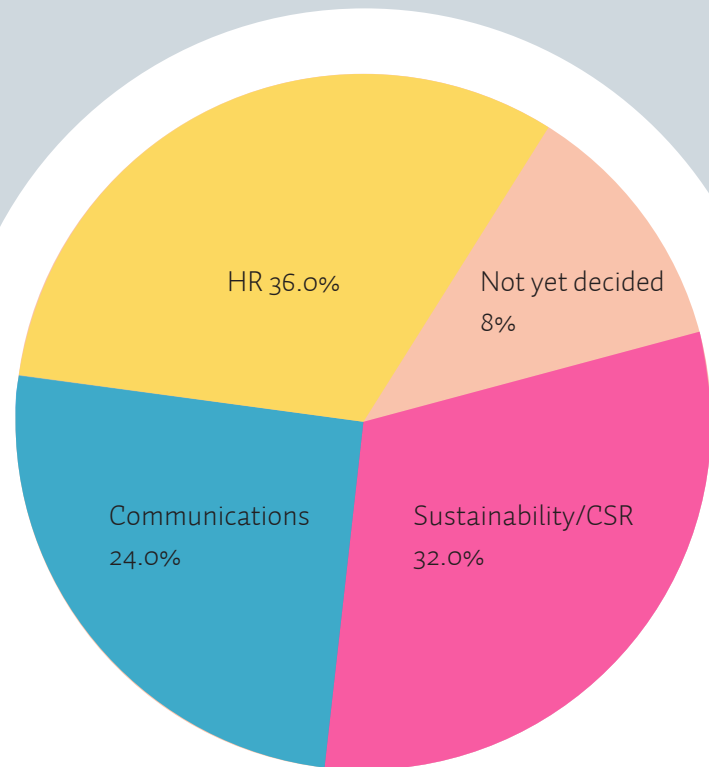
For two of the interviewed DAX 30 companies, their corporate foundations also play an important role in the operative implementation of corporate volunteering initiatives. In both of these cases, there is close communication between the foundation and the company’s HR department.

Example: Munich Re –  
Dr Hans-Jürgen Schinzler Foundation



This foundation was created in 2004 by the former CEO of Munich Re, Dr Hans-Jürgen Schinzler. The foundation capital was provided in equal shares by the founder and Munich Re. The foundation supports a variety of socially relevant projects, to which current and former employees give time as volunteers. In addition, the foundation organises various Social Days every year in order to continuously motivate its employees to get involved in social engagement activities.

## Who's responsible for corporate volunteering?



While the responsibilities for corporate volunteering are clearly assigned in almost all DAX 30 corporate headquarters in Germany, the management of international locations remains a particular challenge for the respondents. A large number of the respondents were not able to provide clear statements regarding which projects are being implemented at individual locations and how many hours employees at these locations are dedicating to volunteering.

The vast majority of companies that mentioned international corporate volunteering during the interviews spoke of decentralised implementation with a great deal of autonomy at local level. The main reason given for this was that the respective locations are able to better assess local needs and thus more effectively plan corporate volunteering activities. However, there is a clear trend towards the greater formalisation of corporate volunteering, which will see more centrally defined guidelines for understanding and implementing corporate volunteering initiatives.

## To what extent is corporate volunteering digitally managed?

The challenges described by companies that arise from the decentralised structures of corporate volunteering raise the question of whether digital services and platforms could facilitate central control. In fact, six of the companies interviewed state that they are developing or have already developed their own digital applications. These apps digitally represent all current processes in the area of corporate volunteering and make it easier for companies to manage and report on ongoing projects. At the same time, platform-like solutions make it easier for companies to integrate employees and help them to find suitable corporate volunteering programmes. Companies are increasingly using services offered by external providers, the most frequently mentioned of which were Benevity, United Ways and Betterplace. However, so far these services are only used at the level of individual countries.



In addition to the main responsible departments, the corporate foundations and the country units, companies depend on the support of third-sector partner organisations in the implementation and management of corporate volunteering initiatives. These include local non-profit organisations as well as voluntary agencies, intermediary organisations and large welfare associations. None of the interviewed companies offer completely autonomous corporate volunteering initiatives.

## The perspective of non-profit organisations



Looking at the statements of the interviewed DAX 30 companies, there is no doubt that non-profit organisations are regarded as essential corporate volunteering partners. Regardless of the corporate volunteering approach pursued, the companies always rely on the support of non-profits for implementation. These organisations either take in volunteers themselves or develop individual volunteering opportunities with and for the company. As a result, the companies end up quite dependent on the non-profits – which can also be explained by the fact that companies are increasingly seeing corporate volunteering not only as a service to society, but also as a staff development tool.

The non-profit organisations themselves are also reacting to the changes in demand, seeing themselves partly as service providers for corporate volunteering measures – which represent an additional funding opportunity. This altered self-image has been met with approval and criticism from both companies and the wider non-profit sector.

In contrast to skills-based activities conducted by individual volunteers, major effort can be required on the part of the non-profit organisation to incorporate a large number of volunteers that are unfamiliar with their work for just one day. Both sides are becoming more and more aware of this fact, so that by now most corporate volunteering partnerships are with large non-profits and these are compensated for their efforts in organising corporate Social Days.

At the same time, companies state that they mainly conduct corporate volunteering activities with organisations that they already support via donations. With the addition of corporate volunteering, a dependency relationship can arise in the opposite direction – creating a classic donor-recipient situation between the non-profit and the company. As a result,

the organisation may agree to undertake activities that it is not actually capable of performing, which can produce disappointing results for both the non-profit and the company.

Of course, there are also many positive examples of successful corporate volunteering partnerships between companies and non-profits. To achieve this, all actors involved must recognise that this is an equal and mutually beneficial partnership. Corporate volunteering can give such organisations access to additional resources and new networks, as well as help them attract extra volunteers. The companies, in turn, increase their visibility by participating in volunteering opportunities in their region and gain innovation-boosting insights into new worlds.

On the basis of our conversations with non-profits, it is clear that the following factors in particular are necessary in order for these effects to be felt and for the collaboration to be satisfactory and successful:

- Mutual trust
- Long-term perspectives
- Mutual understanding (language, goals, processes)
- Coordination of expectations, needs and abilities
- Transparent communication and expectation management
- Clear rules for the collaboration



## The communication of corporate volunteering

Although the communication department only assumes the main responsibility for corporate volunteering in 24 per cent of the cases, communication plays an important role for all the interviewed companies. A clear distinction must be made here between internal and external communications.

At various points, the companies emphasised that the external communication of corporate volunteering activities is not a priority for them and that they tend to be rather discreet in this area. This attitude can partly be explained by the fact that employees react negatively if they get the impression that their involvement in corporate volunteering activities is being used for marketing purposes.

For this reason, most external communications occur via the company's website, sustainability reports and press releases in predominantly regional media. The respondents made no mention of any larger-scale external communication efforts.

Three of the DAX 30 respondents also pointed out that when it comes to external communications, they mainly benefit from the communication measures of their non-profit partners.

Internal communications are therefore more important to the interviewed DAX 30 companies than external communications. This is a vital tool in informing employees about corporate volunteering opportunities and motivating them to participate. The communication channels used are primarily classic internal communication tools such as intranet, newsletters, employee newspapers and digital (volunteering) platforms. Some of the interviewed companies also expand their internal communication measures by using various event formats in which corporate volunteering programmes are reported on and experiences are exchanged.

*“We always report on activities internally, but you have to be careful with external communications. We don't want to engage in green-washing.”*

Deutsche Lufthansa



## 2.3

### Motivations and goals for corporate volunteering

Having shown what the operationalisation of corporate volunteering looks like in practice, we will now address the question of why companies decide to offer corporate volunteering opportunities in the first place. They are under no legal obligation whatsoever to do so, traditional forms of volunteering usually have nothing to do with their core business, and it generally involves a great deal of effort on the part of the company and its partners. So what is it that motivates companies to engage with this topic? The statements from the interviewed DAX 30 companies point to two central motivations, which correspond to the classic distinction between the 'social case' and the 'business case':

#### 1 The social case – assuming social responsibility

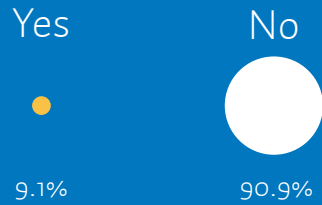
The most frequently cited motivation for corporate volunteering among the DAX 30 respondents was the assumption of social responsibility – although the companies offered only a vague description of what this meant. The majority of the interviewees explicitly expressed a desire to give something back to society and to participate in social change processes through corporate volunteering. This includes companies using corporate volunteering to generate a greater awareness of social issues among their employees. The non-profit partners play an important role in the assumption of social responsibility described by the respondents. Companies see their corporate volunteering measures as an opportunity to help solve the problems faced by non-profit organisations and thus to generate added value for society. The interviewed companies feel a growing pressure from their community to be more involved in this capacity, and many cities and municipalities are now expecting forms of commitment from local companies that go beyond monetary donations. Corporate volunteering provides a good opportunity to come into direct contact with one's community and to work with those in it to solve social problems.

# Employee motivations

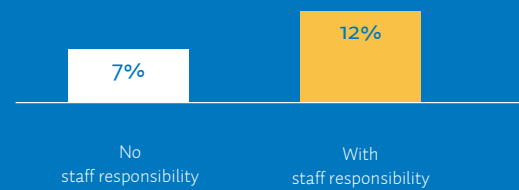
In addition to the motivations that drive companies to offer corporate volunteering, we were also interested in what motivates employees to take advantage of such opportunities.

## 1. Who can be motivated to participate in corporate volunteering schemes?

**Have you ever participated in a corporate volunteering programme?**

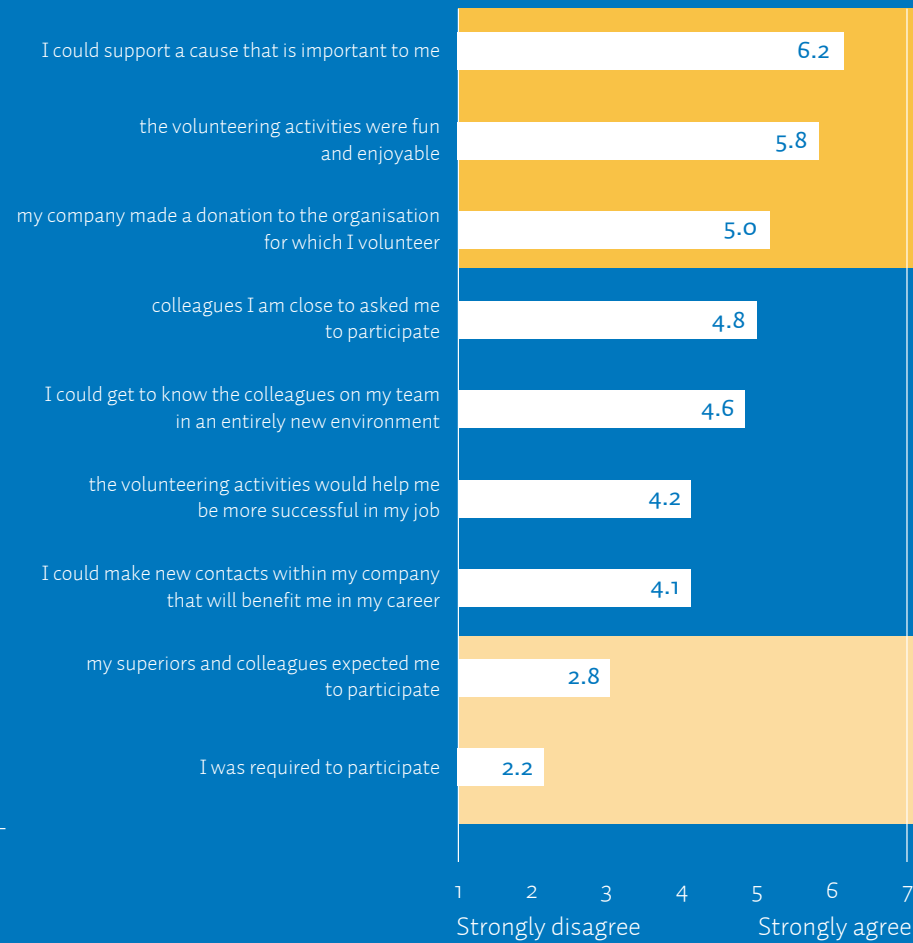


**The participation rate in corporate volunteering is higher among employees with staff responsibility than among those with no staff responsibility.**

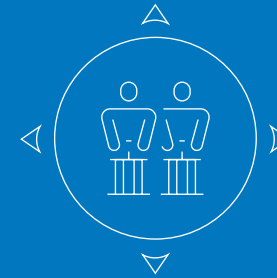


## 2. What would motivate more employees to participate in corporate volunteering schemes?

**I would be motivated to participate in a corporate volunteering programme if...**



Survey findings regarding employees' motivations for participating in corporate volunteering activities underscore the importance of a carefully chosen corporate volunteering portfolio, one that enables employees to support causes they feel are important. Requiring participation or placing high expectations on employees may reduce motivation to get involved in corporate volunteering programmes.

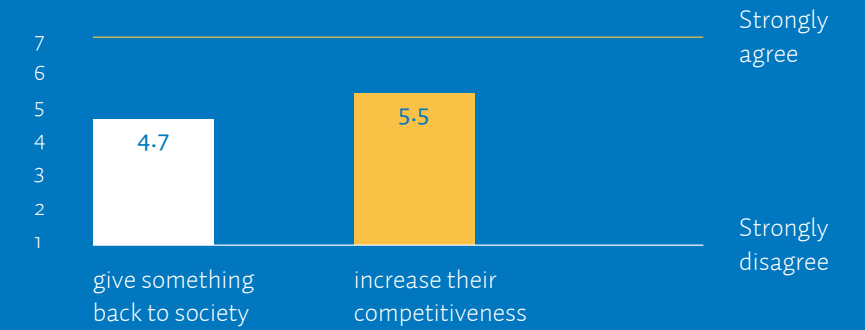


The strongest motivations to participate in corporate volunteering are supporting important causes, enjoying the volunteer experience and the company providing financial support to the non-profit organisation.

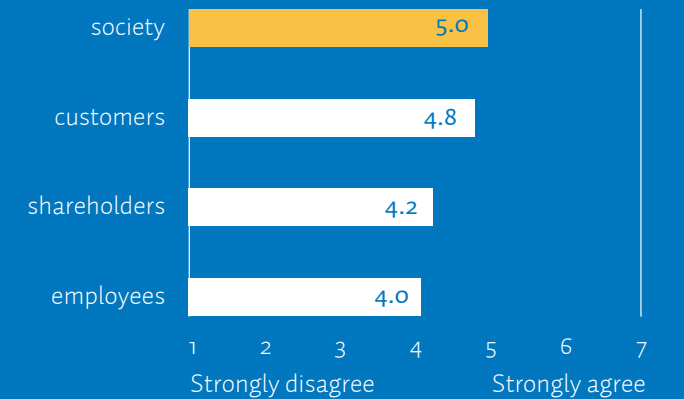
Corporate volunteering programmes that are mandatory and for which employees feel high expectations from colleagues and supervisors to participate receive low marks in terms of motivation.

## 3. What do employees believe is the companies' main motivation for offering volunteering programmes?

**Companies offer corporate volunteering in order to...**



**Companies offer corporate volunteering because it is expected of them by...**



In the interviews with DAX 30 companies, it was stated that the main motivation for corporate volunteering was to give something back to society and thus assume their own responsibility. In contrast to this, the surveyed employees believed that companies were more motivated in this regard by the desire to increase their competitiveness. Employees also assumed that companies primarily seek to fulfil the expectations of society and those of their customers. The interviewed DAX 30 representatives cited employee expectations as a driver for engagement in the domain of corporate volunteering. Employees had a different take on this matter. They saw their own expectations as playing a less important role in companies' decision to offer corporate volunteering.



## 2 The business case – making a positive impact on companies and employees



Though the main motivation cited by the DAX 30 respondents was the assumption of social responsibility, they did concede that corporate volunteering is not merely a charitable endeavour for the company. One only has to ask about the positive impact of corporate volunteering for it to become clear that this is certainly felt by the employees, and thus also by the company. The following five issues came up particularly often:

### Broadening one's horizons

For the respondents, the greatest benefit of corporate volunteering is that it expands the horizons of their employees. Volunteering gives employees a different perspective, which adds variety to their work and increases their awareness of new topics. This positive effect of corporate volunteering is particularly noticeable among employees who do not volunteer their time privately. Social engagement requires employees to be open to new ideas and to gain experience in a field they are unfamiliar with.

### Skills acquisition

The second most frequently mentioned benefit of corporate volunteering goes hand in hand with the broadening of employees' horizons. By working in an entirely new field, they face new challenges and acquire new skills – both on a personal and professional level. Personality development, improved self-confidence, improved emotional intelligence and awareness of social issues were all mentioned by the respondents as skills that employees can acquire through corporate volunteering. At the same time, volunteering gives employees

a chance to practise their project management, teamwork, leadership and staff management skills. And it is not only the participants themselves, but also the company that benefits from its employees' newly acquired skills.

### Employer attractiveness and employee retention

The third most important benefit that the interviewed DAX 30 companies hope to gain from corporate volunteering is stronger positioning as an attractive employer. Social engagement initiatives such as corporate volunteering are considered particularly relevant in terms of building their reputation among highly qualified applicants from the so-called Millennials generation – i.e. those born after 1980 – or the even younger Generation Z. More and more applicants are inquiring about a company's volunteering opportunities during the job interview, and demand from the existing workforce is also increasing. In addition to the mere possibility of volunteering, employee expectations include engaging in meaningful activities within the company that are accomplished with the help of corporate volunteering. Companies therefore expect corporate volunteering not only to attract new staff, but also to retain existing employees and increase their identification with the company itself.

### Employee motivation

Corporate volunteering should not only contribute to better employee retention, but also to higher employee motivation. According to the companies interviewed, corporate volunteering leads to greater employee involvement and greater job satisfaction.

Additional motivation can also be achieved through team building, which more than a third of respondents hope is another by-product of corporate volunteering. This is a particularly important aspect of activities such as Social Days.

### Innovation and business development

The interview results show that companies not only want to benefit from more skilled and motivated employees, but also see corporate volunteering as an opportunity to develop their business. Through volunteering, employees acquire new knowledge, broaden their skill set and gain experience outside their familiar environment. They then take this new knowledge back into the workplace, where it can help them to foster new ideas and solutions for the company's particular business area. Furthermore, corporate volunteering promotes better internal and external networking among employees, which can also have a positive effect on a company's business activities. This is particularly the case if companies use corporate volunteering initiatives to cooperate with social enterprises working in an area that is relevant to their business, thereby gaining access to important social innovations.<sup>6</sup> The employees expand their network beyond their individual sector and can thus improve their understanding of new target groups. Employee networking within the company, meanwhile, breaks down hierarchical boundaries and promotes the exchange of ideas.



## The positive impact of corporate volunteering



The questionnaires filled in by employees who participate in corporate volunteering confirm the positive effects assumed by companies. In addition to greater job satisfaction, increased commitment to the company and stronger identification with one's employer, corporate volunteering also leads to a significantly greater sense of purpose in one's work.

<sup>6</sup> See Kunzelmann & Scheerer, 2019.

# Measuring the impact of corporate volunteering

## 2.4

### The design of corporate volunteering projects

The motivations and positive effects described above show that expectations of corporate volunteering among DAX 30 companies are high. However, the question remains as to what extent companies are using targeted impact assessment methods to track the fulfilment of these expectations and the actual effects achieved through their various corporate volunteering schemes.

While two of the interviewed DAX 30 companies already measure the impact of their corporate volunteering activities using specially developed digital instruments and three more are currently in the process of establishing impact measurement methods using consulting services, the question of impact measurement has so far played only a minor role for the majority of the remaining companies. Although many of them state that they want to track the impact of their social engagement more closely in the future, they presently lack either the time or the knowledge required to systematically measure the actual impact of corporate volunteering.

*“It’s not something we’re doing yet and I don’t see it happening in the future. Of course I’d like to measure impact, but in the end it comes down to capacity.”*

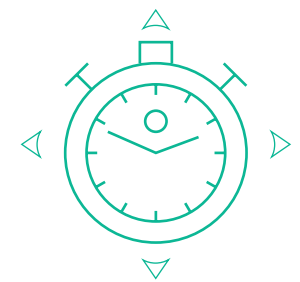
Thyssenkrupp

There are also company representatives who question whether it is even possible to measure the impact of corporate volunteering. The main reason cited for this is the diversity of the activities carried out and the associated complexity of the impact pathways.

In addition to measuring the impact of their corporate volunteering initiatives on society, some companies are trying to evaluate the impact on participating employees. A total of seven of the DAX 30 companies we interviewed stated that they evaluate the results of their corporate volunteering activities by conducting employee surveys or discussion groups, some of which also involve the collaborating non-profit organisations.

In addition, most of the DAX 30 respondents report on the output of their corporate volunteering activities in their sustainability reports. At the level of corporate volunteering, the main indicators used are the following:

- Number of participating employees
- Number of hours spent volunteering
- Number of implemented projects
- Type of projects
- Number of beneficiaries (often referred to as ‘lives impacted’)
- Value of material or financial donations



More information on measuring impact using the IOOI method can be found on page 39

# 3.

## Choosing the right set-up for corporate volunteering



What conclusions can therefore be drawn about implementing corporate volunteering in a way that integrates the perspectives of companies, employees and non-profits?

Due to the diversity among the companies and the wide range of engagement possibilities in the sphere of corporate volunteering, we cannot make any concrete action recommendations here which will guarantee the success of corporate volunteering programmes. We would, however, like to set out rules of the game that may offer useful orientation to setting up and further developing corporate volunteering programmes.

## 3.1

### The playing field: setting clear parameters for corporate volunteering

The first step involves clearly staking out the playing field of corporate volunteering for all participants. The company should therefore ensure that a uniform understanding exists internally as to what constitutes corporate volunteering. In doing so, it sets the parameters within which support for employee volunteer engagement can take place.

The question of whether the implementation can be centrally organised and managed is a strategic decision which rests with the company itself and depends on its size and how it operates. The more decentralised the management of corporate volunteering should be, the more important it is to establish clear rules, processes and quality standards and to communicate these to responsible staff in the form of guidelines and handbooks. Specifying a core business-related topic for the entire company or focusing, for example, on the SDGs can often ease the decentralised management of corporate volunteering. A topic closely related to the company's core business activities can also help link corporate volunteering to the overall strategy for corporate citizenship and achieve a greater impact by leveraging specialist skills and expertise.

In general, companies need to realise that opting for a decentralised management of corporate volunteering requires giving up some control. Some of the DAX 30 companies we interviewed reported that their corporate headquarters had ended up losing the overview of which employee volunteering activities were taking place at the different locations. To prevent this situation from occurring, it is advisable to clarify who is responsible for what at the local level and to designate specific contact persons. These contact persons should, despite the decentralised arrangement, keep headquarters abreast of local corporate volunteering activities. Companies are thus able to maintain an overview of employee volunteering activities and meet adequate reporting standards. Digital platforms in particular can help here, whether they are developed in-house or purchased from an external provider.

Decentralised structures are not uncommon in the world of corporate volunteering and often explicitly desired due to their local character. If nothing else, they ease the process of adapting the programmes to the circumstances and needs of employees at the local level. However, when it comes to parameters such as the number of hours that employees are released from work to participate in corporate volunteering, companies should keep in mind that inconsistent policies among employees could lead to a feeling of unfairness or discontent.



## Guiding questions: defining the playing field

- How do you define corporate volunteering in your company?
- What goals does your company want to accomplish with corporate volunteering?
- Is there an overarching topic to which the corporate volunteering programmes should contribute?
- What and how many resources do you want to use for corporate volunteering?
- To what extent should employees utilise their specific professional skills and expertise in volunteering activities?
- How much freedom should employees have to determine and influence the activities?
- Who is responsible for corporate volunteering at headquarters and at the different locations?
- What rules and quality standards are required to develop and implement corporate volunteering schemes?
- What information do you need to effectively manage and carry out reporting of corporate volunteering activities?

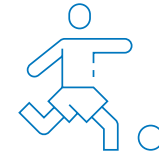
# 3.2



## The kick-off: taking employees' needs into account

Even the best set-up corporate volunteering programme won't help if, in the end, it fails to gain acceptance among employees. Companies should therefore find ways to motivate employees without putting pressure on them to participate. Well-balanced internal communications that reach all employees help raise awareness of corporate volunteering throughout the company. However, such communications should not create the impression that taking part in the corporate volunteering activities is expected because this could cause employees to feel an indirect pressure to participate. As a general rule of thumb, employees should not fear negative consequences if they do not participate. Incorporating volunteering activities into performance review processes or linking them to professional advancement within the company ought to be viewed in a critical light. Such an incentivisation takes away the voluntary nature of volunteering.

Employee non-profit programmes which constitute part of a company's training and education programmes represent a special case in this context. As already mentioned, DAX 30 companies are increasingly requiring apprentices, dual training students or young managers to carry out projects with or at non-profit organisations. We do not seek to question the usefulness of such programmes per se. Yet questions remain as to whether this type of engagement should actually be included under



the rubric of corporate volunteering, and as to with what attitude employees approach the non-profit partners and how this can influence the partnership.

In addition to appropriate internal communications, attention should be given to a needs-based design of corporate volunteering programmes. It is important to take into account the diversity of interests and life situations among employees and set up a corresponding corporate volunteering scheme. How varied are the topics, types of engagement, time commitments and locations of the corporate volunteering opportunities really? Of course, it goes without saying that it is not possible to satisfy everyone. However, in order to develop a corporate volunteering scheme that addresses the interests and expectations of as many employees as possible, companies should consider carrying out an employee survey in advance. Such a survey can gather information about employees' previous volunteer experience as well as what topics they are interested in and how much time they have available. As with any employee survey, it is sensible to coordinate closely with the works council.

In the midst of efforts to motivate employees to participate in corporate volunteering through appropriate communications and a well-balanced scheme, it should not be forgotten that the initiative to engage in corporate volunteering often comes directly from employees. This makes it all the more important that you support the personal initiative of employees and allow a reasonable degree of autonomy in corporate volunteering activities.



much autonomy

VS

little autonomy



Our employee questionnaire found that autonomy in volunteering has a positive impact on employees' willingness to participate. Employee volunteers are granted much autonomy in cases where they can freely choose the partner organisation and design the project themselves. Autonomy is restricted where companies call the shots when it comes to determining the make-up of teams and setting schedules for volunteering activities.

# The coaching: receiving credible buy-in from executives and senior management

## 3-3

Once a corporate volunteering programme is successfully up and running, it is time to concentrate on making the scheme sustainable. In order to ensure that corporate volunteering will be around for the long term, a commitment from members of staff at the middle or even senior management level is of significant value. This boosts the credibility of the volunteering programme and convinces employees of their employer's good intentions.

The fact that support is needed from above doesn't mean that corporate volunteering can only be established through a top-down approach. It is certainly easier to get a corporate volunteering programme off the ground if management throws its supports behind the scheme from the very beginning. There are many examples, however, that show that corporate volunteering can also be launched in companies through bottom-up initiatives. In such cases, it is also advisable that members of senior management subsequently voice their support for the corporate volunteering activities that have emerged and, ideally, even get involved in volunteering themselves. If such support is not forthcoming, the company runs the risk of losing its credibility in the eyes of its employees. Furthermore, it is only really possible to sustainably establish and formalise a corporate volunteering programme if corporate management provides support and resources for the scheme.

### Possible forms of support from corporate management

#### Substantive support

- Paid leave from work
- Pledging financial resources
- Providing material resources such as product donations, infrastructure, etc.
- Setting up information and networking platforms for volunteers
- Approving training courses related to the volunteering activities

#### Symbolic support

- Participating themselves in the corporate volunteering programme
- Awarding prizes for corporate volunteering
- Celebration event for corporate volunteering participants
- Letter of thanks to corporate volunteering participants
- Recognising employee volunteering at public events



### Top three things employees find important about corporate volunteering



The response of employees to our questionnaire underlines the relevance of having the support of corporate management. This is considered to be a more important factor in corporate volunteering than the prospect of making new outside contacts and doing volunteer work as part of a team.



# The performance: meeting impact objectives by effectively measuring impact

## 3-4

Companies are under increasing pressure to report on the impact of their social engagement. In many cases, they supply important public goods and thus assume a quasi-state function. Since last year, companies with more than 500 employees are required to disclose their non-financial performance, which has triggered a surge in interest in impact measurement methods. The growing competition among companies for the top spots in sustainability rankings (such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index) also illustrates the increasing importance of measuring non-financial performance. The results from the interviews show, however, that there is still great variation among companies in terms of their impact measurement practices. While some companies are already using measurement tools, others doubt that measuring social impact is possible per se.

Because one can only manage what one can measure, it is both important and sensible to measure the social impact of corporate volunteering programmes, especially against the backdrop of needing to justify resource investments. The first step here is to define strategic impact objectives for the different levels of the programme, such as that of the employees or the non-profit organisations. A company could, for example, set the concrete objective of increasing employee satisfaction or identification with the company through its corporate volunteering programme.

Many companies provide information about resource investments or output produced (e.g. volunteering hours) in their sustainability reports. However, these figures provide no indication of whether the impact objectives were actually met. A poorly set-up corporate volunteering programme can produce a sizeable output (e.g. a large number of volunteering hours) without having a positive effect in terms of achieving impact objectives. It is therefore essential to take the measurement process a step further and translate the defined impact objectives into outcome variables, which can serve as corporate volunteering KPIs.

Once the outcome variables (e.g. employee satisfaction or identification with employer) have been defined, the company can look into the most effective methods for implementation (e.g. questionnaire survey, interviews, observations).

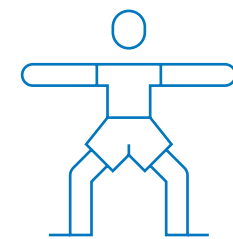
A lack of knowledge about impact measurement methods leads in many cases to practitioners either feeling overwhelmed by the topic or underestimating the feasibility of such an undertaking. This can result in them bypassing the topic of impact completely or being too quickly content with input or output indicators.



The IOOI logic helps with project evaluation. It sets the resources expended (input) against both the achieved results (output) and the impact achieved at the individual and macro-social levels (outcome and impact).

<b>Input</b>	→ e.g.	number of employees who participated in corporate volunteering number of hours employees spent on corporate volunteering
<b>Output</b>	→ e.g.	number of corporate volunteering projects implemented number of organisations and persons supported by corporate volunteering
<b>Outcome</b>	→ e.g.	change achieved at the supported organisations and target groups (e.g. attitudinal and behavioural changes) impact achieved among the participating employees (e.g. increase in how meaningful they perceive their work to be)
<b>Impact</b>	→ e.g.	social change to which the corporate volunteering project contributed and whose impact reaches beyond the supported organisations and persons

It is perfectly legitimate to admit that the desired impact cannot be completely backed up by numbers. Instead of stubbornly fixating on the impact objective, programme managers should accord greater importance to the outcome level. With support from non-profit partners, data scientists or evaluation consultants, companies may not ultimately succeed at quantifying the macro-social impact, but they will certainly gain insights that go beyond the number of hours employees spent on volunteering.





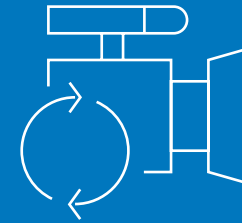
## Critical reflection – a macro-social view of corporate volunteering

The results of the Federal Government's Survey on Volunteering clearly show that people living in Germany are volunteering for society at an increasing rate. In 2014, the percentage of citizens engaged in volunteer work stood at 43.6 per cent. In light of the tremendous willingness to help in response to refugees arriving in increasing numbers since 2015, it can be assumed that the percentage of people volunteering in Germany has since risen further. In addition, some 20 per cent of the population is engaged in informal structures within their local community. Against the backdrop of a trend towards increased volunteer engagement in Germany, one has to ask, why do we need corporate volunteering at all?

Nearly half of the people living in Germany voluntarily devote some of their free time to issues that are important to them. What will happen to this engagement if volunteers now feel like they have to additionally get involved in corporate volunteering initiatives? The Survey on Volunteering also reveals that the time that volunteers have available for their unpaid help is already declining. Does corporate volunteering carry the risk of further reducing the time available for private volunteering?

Another question raised by the phenomenon of corporate volunteering concerns the legitimacy of how companies set their thematic priorities. The fact that they mainly offer corporate volunteering in areas they see as related to their core business, or where they recognise particularly good development opportunities for their employees, means that other thematic areas which are not attractive enough for the companies are in danger of falling by the wayside. This results in a situation where companies allocate resources in a way that resembles social redistribution, but where there is a complete lack of democratic legitimacy.

Corporate volunteering can also fundamentally change how non-profits conduct their work. On the one hand, they must design their volunteer offerings not only in a way that is suitable for corporate volunteering but in a way that appears to provide the greatest possible business benefits to the companies. On the other hand, they are increasingly encountering a new type of volunteer. While people who volunteer privately are mostly intrinsically motivated, the motivation for corporate volunteering participants may be influenced by expectations within the company, which would call into question the voluntary nature of their involvement. How does working with volunteers change when they feel pressure to perform or when they view their involvement as a form of 'voluntourism' – i.e. as a one-time adventure?



The negative effects of corporate volunteering outlined above may very well be overstated. After all, corporate volunteering is still not large enough to significantly alter the foundations of Germany's volunteering sector. But companies that want to offer corporate volunteering in the future or to expand existing programmes should always ask themselves the following questions:

- Which societal issues do we want to support through our corporate volunteering programmes? Which issues might we exclude, and why?
- Who made this decision and whose expectations of the company does it represent?
- What societal needs actually exist?
- To what extent could the corporate volunteering programme influence the current private volunteering activities of our employees?
- How does the implementation of corporate volunteering change how our non-profit partners operate and how effective they are?
- What benefits does the corporate volunteering programme bring to the non-profit partner, or does this only create additional work and expense for the partner?

If corporate volunteering programmes are set up properly, they can indeed help to strengthen civil society. Corporate volunteering can ultimately even lead to an increase in employees' private volunteering activities. Companies can see themselves as advocates for volunteering, can call attention to volunteering opportunities and can create more time for volunteering outside of work by implementing appropriate working arrangements. But to do this, companies must have a clear understanding of their role vis-à-vis civil society actors and a sound estimation of what contribution they are actually making through their corporate volunteering efforts.

# 4.

## Summary

The different motivations and goals that bring together companies, employees and non-profits for corporate volunteering are rendered visible through the trimodal approach used in the study. For companies which normally initiate and manage their employees' volunteering activities in a responsible manner, corporate volunteering represents something of a balancing act – one that can only be mastered through equal partnerships, trusting collaboration and transparent communication.

A look inside the DAX 30 companies revealed the diversity of ways in which Germany's largest companies are tackling corporate volunteering and its associated challenges. There were significant discrepancies identified among the individual companies. While some of the DAX 30 companies are yet to get out of the starting blocks and mainly view corporate volunteering through a theoretical lens, other companies have for years made supporting employee volunteering initiatives a strategic cornerstone of their engagement in society.

The diversity mentioned previously is reflected also – or precisely – in those companies that have already succeeded in firmly establishing corporate volunteering. Each of these companies has found its own ways of using volunteering initiatives to integrate its employees into its corporate social responsibility efforts. That is why our study cannot provide a formula that is guaranteed to produce successful corporate volunteering programmes. There are just too many different factors to consider when planning and designing such programmes: What type of organisational culture does the company have? What is the make-up of the workforce? What existing skills can be harnessed? What is the company's overarching corporate citizenship strategy? What partnerships already exist with non-profit organisations?



Regardless of the answers to these questions, our study showed that there are some key rules of the game that can help ease implementation and prevent challenges:

- 1 The playing field:** define clear parameters for corporate volunteering.
- 2 The kick-off:** identify employees' needs and take these into account when developing corporate volunteering programmes.
- 3 The coaching:** strengthen employees' social engagement by obtaining credible buy-in from executives and senior management.
- 4 The performance:** in order to allocate resources effectively, apply sound impact measurement methods to track progress in meeting impact objectives.

These rules of the games are not a magic formula or paint-by-numbers recipe for corporate volunteering success. But we do hope they provide guiding principles that those responsible for corporate volunteering can use to put their company's programmes on the right track. For only if corporate volunteering is carried out in a serious way can positive effects emerge for companies, employees and society.



### How might corporate volunteering develop in the future?\*

- Corporate volunteering will continue to increase in relevance.
- Corporate volunteering will be used more and more for training purposes.
- Digitalisation will significantly change how corporate volunteering is managed and implemented.
- Skills-based activities will play an increasingly important role in corporate volunteering.
- Companies will increasingly become advocates for volunteering.
- Corporate volunteering will also integrate other stakeholders such as customers.
- There will be a growing number of service providers supporting corporate volunteering.

\*According to interviews with DAX 30 representatives

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## Project partners

Beyond Philanthropy provides strategic advisory services to companies, social investors and foundations to make social change happen and maximize their social impact. In addition, Beyond Philanthropy is a certified B Corporation since May 2015. Over the last years, Beyond Philanthropy has developed specialized knowledge in CSR, philanthropy and social investment and created a global network of strategic partners. With its international reach and multidisciplinary team, Beyond Philanthropy has served clients in more than 30 countries, working on more than 80 projects with a direct impact on more than €100m of social change funds.



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The Chair of Corporate Social Responsibility at the Business School of the University of Mannheim was established in October 2015 under the direction of Prof Dr Laura Marie Edinger-Schons. The chair is financed through a crowdfunding model. In teaching and research, the chair is dedicated to the question of how companies, in collaboration with other societal actors, can contribute to sustainable development as defined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we engage in a continuous dialogue with industry, fellow researchers and students, thus contributing to the development of more sustainable and socially responsible business practices. Our research is characterised by a quantitative-empirical approach. The results of our research are published in top international journals (e.g. *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*) and have been recognised with a number of awards (e.g. Roman Herzog Research Award for Social Market Economy).



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# Acknowledgements

We would like to warmly thank everyone who made this study possible. This includes the employees who participated in our online questionnaire, the non-profit organisations that took the time to talk to us and the 25 DAX 30 companies whose representatives took part in extensive interviews. Thank you for your time, for the trust you placed in us and for your valuable input which formed the basis of this study. A special thanks goes to Annabelle Soeffing, whose work enabled us to understand the perspective of non-profits. We would also like to thank the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) and Civil Society in Numbers (ZiviZ) at Stifterverband, which provided support in the study's development stage.

March 2019



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