Your *Virtual* Volunteering Guide

Shifting your volunteering program during COVID-19

As a corporate volunteer leader, you face a unique challenge right now in figuring out how you can make an impact for your people and communities. While social distancing is our best defense against COVID-19, it makes large team building events and days of service that once drove engagement in volunteering programs impossible.

But that unique challenge is also a unique opportunity to reimagine your volunteering approach and foster a sense of togetherness and social connection that's at the core of what you do. Your people need that connection now more than ever, and nonprofits who rely on the time and skills of people in their communities need it, too!

So how do you get started? There is no question that taking your volunteering program virtual is one of the best ways to engage and empower your employees.

Benevity wants to help you get started quickly and easily. In this guide we'll cover:

- ☑ **Program design and strategy insights** to help you make the shift to virtual volunteering.
- ☑ **Tips and resources** to build your own virtual volunteering library.
- ☑ **Communication and starter templates** to help you launch and amplify your efforts and activate your employees.

Designing Your Virtual Volunteering Program

Here are a few key strategies you can use to drive engagement with your employees and amplify the impact of your virtual volunteering program. Let's go!

1. Define what virtual volunteering looks like in the context of your program

Whether it's skills-based volunteering, micro-volunteering or small acts of kindness, virtual volunteering opens the door to a whole new way of thinking about what it means to volunteer. Think about your various teams and people, your industry and business context, and your company culture to see what kinds of skills or activities would work well for you. Then consider reaching out to your nonprofit partners to figure out together how your employees might be able to help them virtually.

BENEVITY SPARK TIP

Use Benevity's Missions module to promote virtual volunteering content and related actions (time tracking, Acts of Goodness). This is a great way to encourage action and engagement across your program.

Adobe's take on virtual volunteering

Adobe created a virtual volunteering directory, with a list of volunteer opportunities their people could choose from. They also set up a virtual team building event where they used one of their own products, Adobe Spark, to create get-well cards for people who were suffering from COVID-19. Adobe employees logged 2000 more volunteer hours in March 2020 than they did in March 2019!

2. Encourage small Acts of Goodness

Look for ways you can tweak your existing program guidelines to include and reward small acts of community service. Things as basic as buying groceries for a senior or walking a single parent's dog while they watch their kids can have a huge impact. And you can amplify that impact by allowing your people to track their time and receive volunteer rewards.

BENEVITY SPARK TIP

Consider offering rewards for every hour volunteered instead of a lump-sum volunteer grant after a certain number of hours is reached. And allow volunteers to track time in smaller blocks that will add up. Even 15 minutes can make a big difference.

SAP's take on small Acts of Goodness

SAP recently launched a series of volunteering opportunities called #sapkids, where SAP employees can support their colleagues who have kids by taking 30 minutes to do a virtual music class, exercise, storytime, or whatever else they can think of! How amazing is that?

Did you know?

Volunteers are donors too! Benevity client data shows that among employees who volunteer, 72% also donate money through their workplace giving programs. And when they do, they give twice as much those who don't volunteer.

3. Offer more (and more relevant) choice

One of the biggest challenges in engaging people in corporate volunteer programs is getting enough content for your people to find something resonant, relevant and relatively easy for them to get involved in. There are a few ways you can increase the breadth of volunteer opportunities in your program without increasing your workload:

- **VolunteerMatch:** If you have a large employee base in the U.S., VolunteerMatch can provide access to millions of remote and virtual opportunities. In fact, 60% of their opportunities are virtual, which is a big reason Benevity offers an integration with VolunteerMatch.

- **Open cause-created content:** Allow your nonprofit partners to publish content and opportunities directly to your giving and volunteering program site. Some software platforms, like Spark, provide your partners with special access to do that. Talk to your Benevity Client Success Manager to enable cause-created content in your program.

BENEVITY SPARK TIP

Make virtual volunteering front and centre by using "Virtual" or "COVID-19 Response" quick filters in Spark to pull these new opportunities to the top of search.

Coming Soon in Spark

We'll be moving virtual opportunities to the top carousel in "Browse Volunteer Opportunities" to make search and discovery of these opportunities easier.

Building Your Own
Virtual Volunteering Library

Creating your own library of virtual volunteering opportunities that are relevant to your business, people and local communities will help you engage with your employees in a meaningful way. And it doesn't have to be a huge job! We created some templates and resources to help you get started, as well a list of vetted nonprofits that already offer virtual volunteer opportunities. We also recommend that you tap into the passion, ingenuity and ideas of your people to help co-create virtual ways to help their fellow neighbors, co-workers and communities.

1. Publish your own virtual opportunities

Use the bundle of resources and templates we've created for you to publish and promote various kinds of remote opportunities (and not just volunteering!) for your people.

Download our Virtual Volunteering & Acts of Goodness Templates

This package contains resources to help you continue to engage your people in volunteering while social distancing, including:

- **Finding and participating in virtual volunteering**
- **Doing skills-based volunteering**
- **Performing small Acts of Goodness as volunteer activities**
- **Encouraging employees to track their volunteer time**

2. Get your program ambassadors involved

If your program spans multiple cities or countries, local program ambassadors can help you identify and create relevant opportunities with local organizations (and, if necessary, change in-person events you had planned into virtual ones). Encourage your ambassadors to reach out to local nonprofits to find out if there are ways you can match your employees' specific skills and experiences with their needs through virtual volunteering.

BENEVITY SPARK TIP

Publish your Volunteer Opportunities or Featured Causes to your Spark site, and then promote them in your News Items, Spark bulk email, on your intranet and through social media (and don't forget to share your progress and results via those same channels!)

3. Find causes that already have virtual opportunities

There are plenty of great nonprofits that are already creating interesting and engaging virtual opportunities your people can take part in. Check out our recommendations below — carefully selected and vetted by the Benevity Causes team. And for more great ideas, see the lists from **Points of Light** or **Thrive Global**.

Benevity's recommended causes & resources

Help make knowledge accessible by transcribing for:

- **Smithsonian Institution**
- **Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team**
- **Royal British Columbia Museum Foundation**
- **The New York Public Library Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundations**
- **TechSoup Global**

Share your experience and become a mentor with:

- **The Multicultural History Society of Ontario / La Société D'Histoire Multiculturelle De L'Ontario**
- **Upchieve**
- **The Prince's Trust**
- **Business Council for Peace Inc**
- **Beacon Foundation**
- **CareerVillage**

Speak a second language? Try translating for:

- **Tarjimly**
- **Translators Without Borders-us Inc**

Support your community:

- **Family Eldercare Inc**
- **Kids Help Phone / Jeunesse J' Ecoute**
- **Young Minds Trust**
- **Trevor Project Inc**
- **Skills for Change of Metro Toronto**
- **Hire Heroes USA**
- **Building Impact**
- **Become a Crisis Counsellor**
- **Meals on Wheels**

More ideas:

- **UN Online Volunteering**
- **Red Cross Digital Volunteering**
- **Amnesty Decoders**
- **National Park Service**
- **National & Community Service**
- **Global Youth Service Day April 17-19**
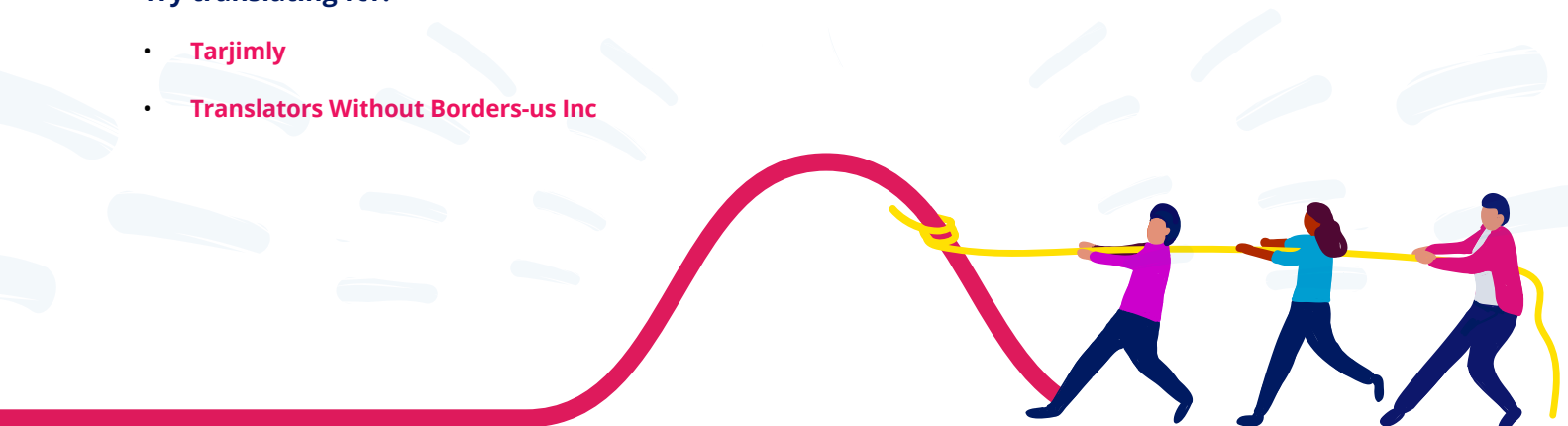
4. Co-create an Acts of Goodness directory with your employees

Get your employees involved in the creation of your virtual volunteering program by asking them to share ways that they're already doing good in their communities during this time. Then compile a list of Acts of Goodness that are relevant to your people and create virtual events or volunteer opportunities to rally everyone to make a difference together. Encourage them to track their volunteer time and share the progress and results so they can see the collective impact they're making one small act at a time. Use our **Acts of Goodness Template** to get you started!

BENEVITY SPARK TIP

When creating an "Acts of Goodness" opportunity in Spark, don't add an end date, and select "this opportunity is remote or has no location." There's no need to attach a cause. Just write "Acts of Goodness volunteering" as the shift name and get started!

A few ideas to kickstart the creativity:

- Donating blood.

- Collecting food donations from neighbors' doorsteps and delivering them to food banks.

- Coordinating a virtual story time, exercise or entertainment hour for children (to help out parents who may not have childcare.)

- Purchasing arts and craft supplies for parents who may need them while they are homeschooling their children.

- Taking part in digital support groups for causes that matter to you.

- Joining an adopt-a-senior Facebook group.

- Supporting small businesses in your community by ordering gift cards to use later or get deliveries, if available.

- Checking on elderly neighbors and offering to run errands or grab groceries.

Communications *Templates*

To ensure that both your employees and cause partners are aware of your shift to virtual volunteering and what opportunities are available to keep them connected during this time, it's important to communicate, communicate, communicate. Working closely with your marketing and communications team can help you get the word out effectively. And don't forget to have a communications channel for your people to provide input and feedback, whether it's an internal instant messaging channel or another platform. Different communities and nonprofits will have different needs, and your employees may be able to provide important local insights.

Here are a few communications templates to get your started:

COPY AND PASTE FOR YOUR OWN USE

Employee intranet message

Our world looks different now with COVID-19. But that doesn't mean we have to stop making a difference – in fact it's needed now more than ever.

We're excited to let you know about changes in our program that will help you make an impact from wherever you are, whenever you can. We've created virtual, remote and skills-based volunteer opportunities that you can participate in so that you can keep making a difference.

Check it all out in our giving site here:

[Link to news item or giving site login]

Program "relaunch" email

Subject:

Our New Virtual Volunteer Program

Body:

We're living in a new world where we want to make a difference, but can't get together to do it. So, we've designed a new program for you to participate in that allows you to make an impact in our communities across the globe/country through virtual or remote volunteering.

Here are the exciting changes we've made in the program:

[Detail changes here. For example:]

- Go here to check out all of the new virtual volunteer opportunities we've created and sign up *[Link to giving site, news item or right to a volunteer opportunity]*

- You can now be rewarded for small acts of goodness that you're doing in your community *[include hourly/flat rate rewards and examples of Acts of Goodness]*

- New causes that we are supporting *[link to cause profiles or news item]*

We're all in this together, even if we're apart.

Invitation to cause partners

Subject:

[Company Name] Volunteering Program COVID-19 Response

Body:

COVID-19 has undoubtedly created a challenging and uncertain time for your organization as you begin to understand the impact to upcoming programming and funding. As one of our partner causes, we're dedicated to providing continued support through this time, so you can keep moving the needle on social issues facing our community.

So, we're reaching out today to encourage you take action that will help us and our people continue to support you. While in-person volunteering isn't possible right now, virtual volunteering is! So, we want to get creative and help you from a distance, however we can.

[Information about how your volunteer program is changing in light of COVID-19, if applicable]

Here's how you can create a virtual volunteer opportunity with *[company name]*:

- Register or sign into your profile on the **Benevity Causes Portal**.

- Click the Create New Volunteer Opportunity button.

- Fill out the required fields marked with a red asterisk.

- Outline the tasks volunteers will be involved in under the Opportunity Description and be sure to include the keywords COVID or COVID-19 to help us find your opportunity.

- Be sure to tag the opportunity as #virtual, as this is what we will be using to filter virtual volunteer opportunities.

- Ensure Published is checked off and click Save.

Thank you for all that you do.

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade for the senior next door

COVID-19 has challenged all of us to think differently about how we can make an impact for our people, our businesses and our communities. While volunteering may look a little different these days, it's also more important than ever in helping address some of the challenges we're all facing — team connection, employee engagement, maintaining our mental and physical health, and supporting the nonprofits who rely on us for support. For corporate volunteer leaders, this is certainly no small feat, but we hope this guide makes it a little bit easier.

For more resources to support your COVID-19 response, visit our **Resource Hub**.

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