



# Employee Volunteering Guide

7 Strategies for Turning Your Volunteering Program into a Cultural Driver



# Strategies Leading Brands Are Using to Drive Big Impact

Volunteering is a great way to engage your employees and unify them around a shared desire to do good. Data from the **2017 Deloitte Volunteerism survey** shows that 89% of Americans believe that companies who sponsor volunteer activities offer a better overall working environment than those who don't, and 70% believe that volunteer activities are more likely to boost employee morale than company-sponsored happy hours—now that's food for thought!

Today's leading corporate volunteer programs have one thing in common—they're flexible and inclusive. Why? The benefits go deeper than you might think. When people can volunteer in a way that resonates with (and works for!) them, they're more likely to participate. And that first interaction opens the opportunity to engage them in doing good year-round. This is when a company's culture begins to shift—imagine being able to infuse Goodness into the fabric of your company and empower employees to make the world a better place through your programs. Build a purpose-driven culture like this and you're making a big difference for your people, your company and the communities you support. How's that for impact?

So, here are 7 strategies for creating a more flexible, inclusive volunteer program!



# 1. Remove thresholds

Thresholds in volunteering programs are often standard practice, where employees need to track a certain number of volunteer hours before they can receive a company reward such as Goodness credits. And historically that made a lot of sense, when processes were highly manual and employee engagement wasn't the goal. But it's a practice we need to reconsider in a landscape where employee engagement is a larger goal of most Goodness programs (and there's technology to automate the process!). By having thresholds, it limits opportunity to only those employees who can give a certain amount of time.

How can you transition towards a more inclusive volunteer experience that engages more people? When impact is the goal, make every hour count. That doesn't mean thresholds need to go totally out the window! Think of them as milestones (e.g. double rewards after logging 50 hours) to drive even better results for your whole program. Data from our client community shows that 70% of volunteers also donate money, with volunteers giving almost double what non-volunteers give. While you may have to make adjustments to your budget, you'll reap the benefits of having a program where everyone is included.

**PRO-TIP:**

Consider removing thresholds for a week or a month (or forever!) to encourage more people to try volunteering.





#### PRO-TIP

Many hands make light work—and a whole lot of impact! Offer Volunteer Opportunities that can be completed in one hour or less, right in your office (and can be tracked right there, too!)

## 2. Make a BIG impact with micro-volunteering

Micro-volunteering is the perfect way to make a big impact in a small amount of time and (bonus!) it can usually be done right in your office.

“Not enough free time” is one of the most commonly cited reasons people don’t volunteer more, so in-office volunteering breaks down that barrier and brings more people in. It also builds an inclusive team environment, offers breaks during the workday and connects colleagues from across different groups in a fun, interactive way. This is why

companies like **Microsoft** have transformed their workplace giving and volunteering programs into impactful employee engagement strategies that embed Goodness into their everyday culture (and the world!). To ensure all of their people can take part, Microsoft focused on removing thresholds and barriers to participation due to ability or lifestyle. As a result, Microsoft employees participated in 117 micro-volunteering events in just one month and were able to track their time down to the minute—and be rewarded!

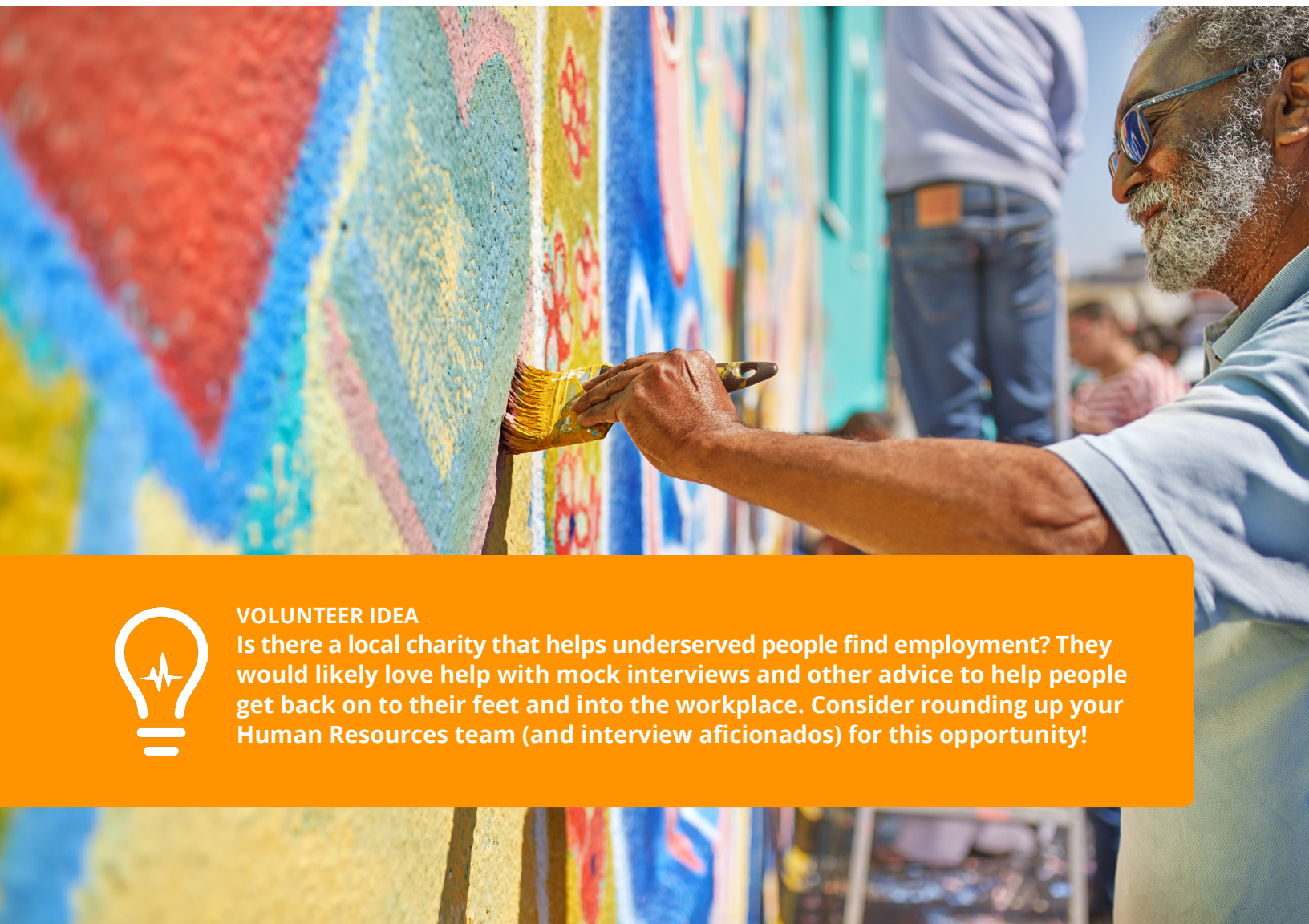
### 3. Tap into your people's talents with skills-based volunteering

Skills-based volunteering is gaining huge traction. According to the **2016 CECF Giving in Numbers** report, this is currently the fastest growing type of corporate volunteer program. The benefits of skills-based volunteering are widespread: it enables people to use their unique skills to help causes they care about, while also helping them to develop skills that will benefit them (and your company!) like leadership, autonomy, cross-functional collaboration and problem-solving.

Forward-thinking companies like **Charles Schwab** are embracing skills-based volunteering and taking it one step further. Their new Pro Bono Challenge evolved from listening to nonprofits, and invites employees with specific skills (marketing,

“92% of respondents agree that volunteering is an effective way to improve leadership skills”  
— 2016 Deloitte Impact Survey

HR, finance, etc.) to help nonprofits solve specific goals and advance their mission. The program is now used as a leadership development tool for the business and has quickly grown to serve over \$2 million in nonprofit consulting.



#### VOLUNTEER IDEA

Is there a local charity that helps underserved people find employment? They would likely love help with mock interviews and other advice to help people get back on their feet and into the workplace. Consider rounding up your Human Resources team (and interview aficionados) for this opportunity!



## 4. Make it social and fun

We've always thought that doing good feels great, and now science is **proving it!** Neuroscientists have discovered that prosocial behaviors like donating money, volunteering or even taking small actions that have a positive impact on others can boost our oxytocin levels by up to 50%. And when colleagues are able to volunteer and make a positive impact in their community together, they build stronger bonds—which can translate to big business impact. According to Gallup, employees who report having a best friend at work are 35% more likely to report co-worker commitment to quality and 27% more likely to report that the mission of their company makes them feel their job is important.

Volunteering doesn't have to be an arm-twisting exercise. It can be fun! What if giving back through your program looked like cuddling puppies at your

local pet shelter, making cards for remote team members or being lead magician at a magic show for your local Children's Hospital? It can!

Accenture Canada combined the powerful benefits of skills-based volunteering with a fun, social twist and plenty of options. Last year alone, their Skills To Succeed volunteer initiative saw 2,200 employee volunteers help at-risk women, people with disabilities, indigenous people, young adults, newcomers to Canada and others develop the skills needed to secure jobs in a digital economy.

There are so many ways to do good, and the key is finding out what your people want to do and having a program that supports that. These things could be connected to your company's causes, your people's own favorite causes—or both!

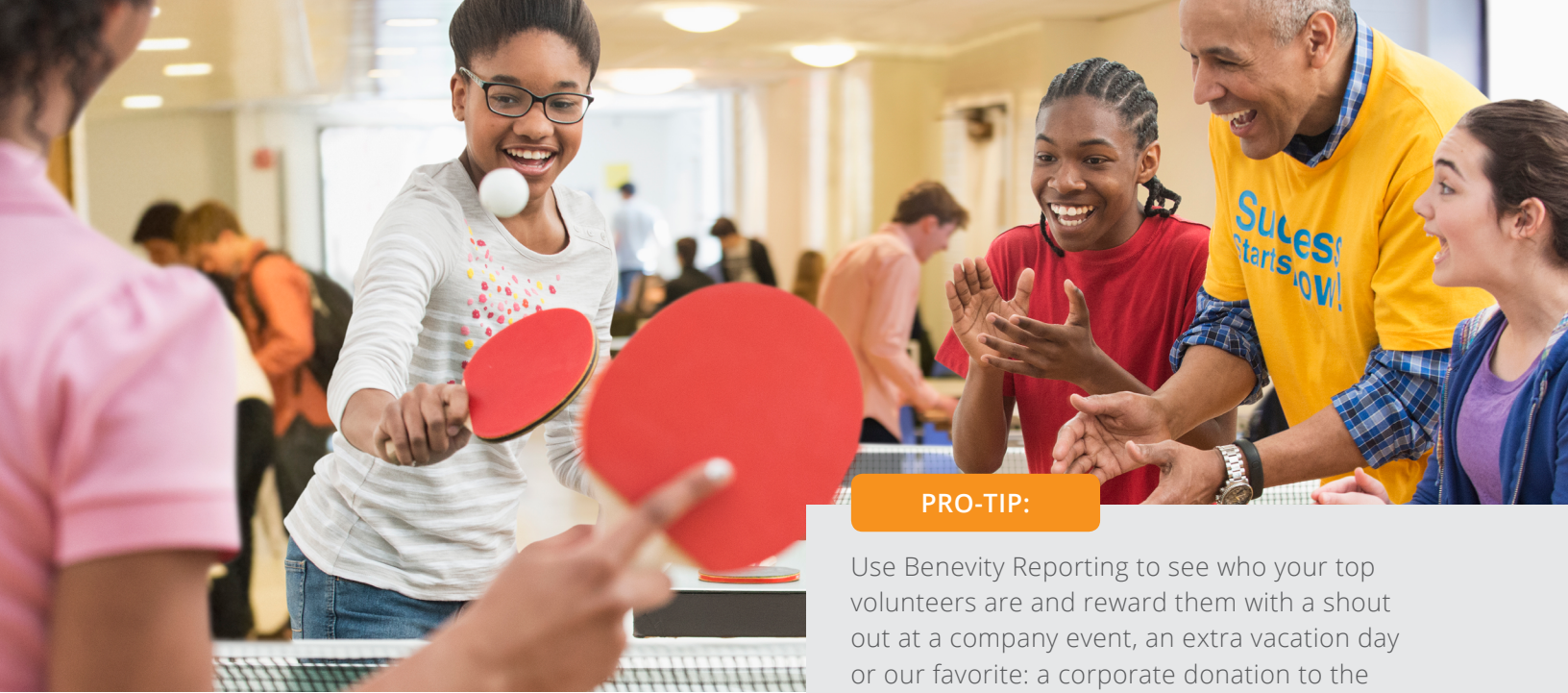
## 5. Make it relevant

For volunteering to matter, it has to matter to your people. More companies are understanding the value of a flexible, inclusive volunteer program that provides their people the time and technology needed to support the causes of their choice with opportunities that are relevant to where they work and live.

To get started, you can dive into your Goodness program's reporting tool to identify the causes that matter most to your people. You might even find some other interesting nuggets of information that will change the way you approach engagement! **Prudential Financial** used Benevity Reporting to identify that middle management wasn't as involved as other employee groups. This gap in participation could start a domino effect—when managers volunteer less, their teams might too. Their solution? Prudential got ahead of the trend by surveying their middle managers and finding out how they could make volunteering more accessible. Using that data, they created short events, offered at convenient times, and saw a drastic increase in middle manager participation from 2015 to 2016. The results? A boost in awareness of future volunteer events, more dollars going to causes and a sense of connectedness between employees, the company and the community.

Volunteering time is also deeply personal, and virtually every employee in your company has a cause they care about! What's great about this is it means your company has the opportunity to engage the majority of your employees in a meaningful way, by helping them give their time to a cause they care about. Leading companies are even enabling their people to set up their own Volunteer Opportunities, so they can rally their co-workers to volunteer with them. And they're doing it globally to make Opportunities locally relevant, too! By partnering with the right vendor, you can ensure that the organizations your employees work with globally are available in the platform so employees from all over the world are able to participate in a truly inclusive global program.





**PRO-TIP:**

Use Benevity Reporting to see who your top volunteers are and reward them with a shout out at a company event, an extra vacation day or our favorite: a corporate donation to the cause of their choice.

## 6. Reward your people

Offering volunteer rewards is a great way to make your program more inclusive. You likely have employees who want to donate more, but don't have a lot of money to give. By rewarding volunteers with donation currency, you're empowering them to give time to organizations in the community and giving them funds to amplify their impact (whether they donate to that same charity or another one).

When **Nike** started their community ambassador program they also offered their employees volunteer rewards of \$10 per hour and saw an impressive shift. Volunteer hours increased by over 7 times, and donations nearly doubled, with many people donating money back to the nonprofits they volunteered for.

What works for some companies may not work for others, so here are a few ways you can reward your passionate volunteers:

- Donation currency: reward your people and amplify their impact with donation currency for each hour of volunteer time they track.

**PRO-TIP:**

Find out if your vendor allows you to deposit rewards directly into employees' Giving Accounts!

- Volunteer points: award your people volunteer points whenever they track their hours (e.g. 5 points per hour) and allow them to cash in their points in a reward system you create, or even at an event like a bake sale.
- Volunteer time off: allow employees to volunteer during working hours, either onsite or off. This, along with the volunteer points above, are great ways to reward volunteers without adjusting your budget.
- Volunteer grants: as part of your community investment efforts, give a grant to a cause after a team of employees volunteers with them.

**On average, when volunteer rewards are offered by companies, 50% more of their employees volunteer and their volunteers serve an extra 15 hours per year, compared to companies who don't offer volunteer rewards.**

Rewards are also the best way to encourage employees to track their volunteerism—whether they're taking part in company-led initiatives or volunteering on their own time. And when they track their time, you'll get a more accurate picture of all the good your people are doing, and you'll have a more compelling story to tell about your company's social impact!



## 7. Create scale with a volunteer ambassador community

As you're probably well aware, it can be extremely difficult to coordinate engaging, relevant events or campaigns from one central location—especially when you have a small team, or in some cases one individual, leading the charge for your programs. The good news is, people want to help!

Ambassadors are a group of dedicated volunteers at your company who are passionate about making a difference in their local communities and will take on the additional responsibility of ensuring your Goodness program is successfully engaging more people and helping your company meet its social impact goals.

Developing volunteer ambassadors is a great opportunity to cultivate employee leadership skills and help you get the word out in an authentic way. And, more people are likely to get involved in your

### PRO-TIP:

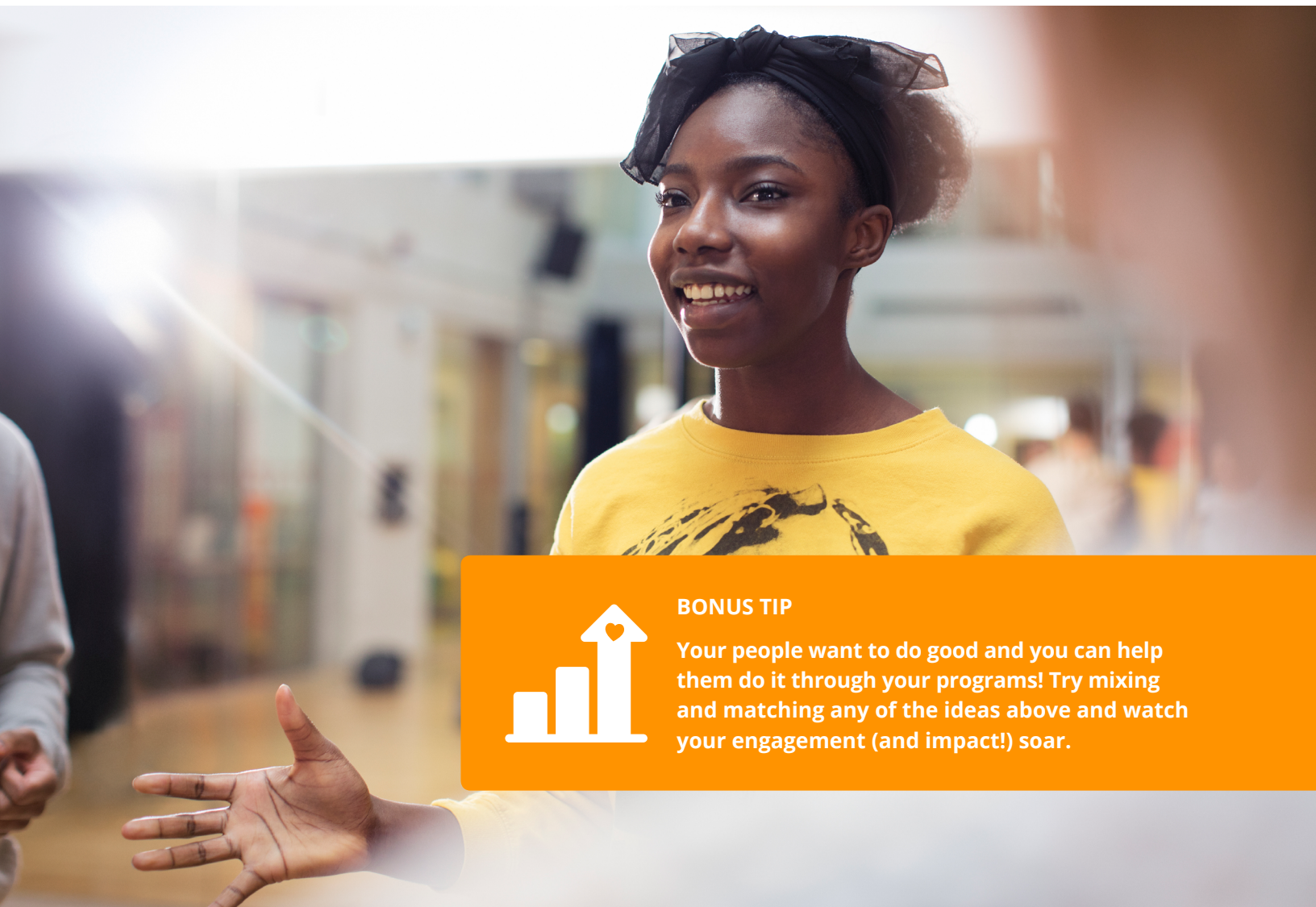
Already have volunteer ambassadors? Get their help to gather the supplies you need to make your micro-volunteering events a micro-effort for you. Enlist your regional ambassadors to create their own customized local events. Using technology, you can even target the relevant local opportunity directly to employees in that office!

Goodness programs when their peers invite them, and they can understand how the opportunity is locally relevant. That's why volunteer ambassadors are vital if you are looking to scale your program and support the communities where you live and work.



### BONUS TIP

Your people want to do good and you can help them do it through your programs! Try mixing and matching any of the ideas above and watch your engagement (and impact!) soar.



**Request a demo** to learn more about how you can power an inclusive corporate culture with your CSR program.

#### ABOUT BENEVITY

**Benevity, Inc.**, a certified B Corporation, is the global leader in corporate social responsibility and employee engagement software, including online giving, matching, volunteering and community investment. Many of the world's most iconic brands rely on Benevity's award-winning cloud solutions to power corporate "Goodness" programs that attract, retain and engage today's diverse workforce by connecting people to the causes that matter to them. With software that is available in 17 languages, to an employee base of 10 million users around the world, Benevity has processed nearly 3 billion dollars in donations and 17 million hours of volunteering time this year to 200,000 charities worldwide.



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