

Extending Corporate Responsibility To Out of Hours

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Last Friday evening (9th October) I attended the Slough Business Community Partnership (SBCP) Conference to gain knowledge of the organisation, meet some of its members and learn how I can get involved. They work with a number of businesses to better serve local communities by actively improving the social and economic climate. In truth it's a mutual relationship between both industry and the community.

The SBCP has an impressive portfolio of members from both global and local enterprises participating in corporate responsibility events to support local charities and non-profit businesses. I was thoroughly impressed at the work being done by O2 Think Big project (Speaker, Abi Todd Head of HR Business Partnering) and Heathrow's Responsible Heathrow project (Speaker, John Holland-Kaye CEO Heathrow). Both programmes are built on philosophies which focus on creating sustainable and inclusive environments for the betterment of education, employment, environmental impacts and economic growth. In addition to the good work their businesses are doing they have built corporate responsibility into the development plans of their staff, which in turn encourage and promote the advancement of their set competencies. These skills are then measured back in the work place during regular evaluations and appraisals. The conference was also attended by many of the local charitable organisations, non-profit businesses and new non-profit start-ups looking for support and help in the future.

During the Q&A session, one of the charity leaders asked whether it was possible for employees to give support outside of working hours, as most of the help they received seem to be nine to five. Even though some companies have different shift patterns, it is true that most events will take place during standard working hours because the events are easier to organise. I have to confess I wasn't convinced that corporate businesses should or could go beyond a certain remit outside of working hours regardless of shift patterns; as they have a business to run. Even so, I do believe there is something they can do to support charitable organisations by sharing the significance of volunteering by engaging employees into the concepts of the mutual relationship.

My volunteer work started with hospital radio because I really wanted to do something fun and interactive as well as helping others. When I was younger I was extremely shy and always felt a bit silly when asked to contribute. These feelings are one of the most frustrating in the world. For some reason your body refuses to work with your mouth, your are desperate to say something but can't because your mouth just doesn't allow the words to come out. I was yearning to step outside of my comfort zone. I felt volunteering was my only option and I am glad I did because it was one of the best things I have ever done. I made friends easily, learnt new skills and without even thinking about it my shyness and feelings of looking silly vanished. I also learnt that people liked me and the feeling was mutual. My volunteer work helped me to excel in my employment too. I discovered a knack at sorting out timesheets, working out budgets, assisting new starters and delegating workloads. These skills all helped me to move quickly on to Management roles within the company I was with. Even though these skills were not needed in my customer service role this experience helped me feel more confident at applying for different jobs in the organisation and I was able to share my experience in my interviews.



Volunteering can enhance your life in so many ways, not just the social aspects but research by the Carnegie Mellon Study (recorded by Harvard Health Publications) has shown it to have an array of health benefits from lowering blood pressure, maintaining memory, improving thinking skills and an improvement in cardiovascular health for the more physical activities. In the working world it can help with confidence, learning new skills like leadership,

