



Volunteering for a cause



Companies have different approaches to Corporate Social Responsibility. Yet, what is common to all the endeavours made by various companies is that they engage people to help people. CSR stands for prospering through people. Without individual volunteers, the frontline of the CSR mission army, the entire process would crumble down to nothing but a sham. Volunteering for a good cause revitalises an individual and reaffirms his beliefs in the core values of the organisation.

Padmaja Sriram, Senior Manager-HR, Virtusa comments, “Through volunteering, employees get an opportunity to expand their horizons using their skills, and knowledge to not just improve their mental and physical health and evolve as individuals but to help others and make an impact on the community and environment. Moreover, employees develop team skills; enhance their leadership abilities, become empathetic towards team members and broaden their perspective while balancing their work life by getting involved in something they want to do.”

Benefits to volunteering employees

Engaging in community activities not only enables the employees to approach the work with renewed energy, but it also renders their life more meaningful. Sharing his experience, Rajini Kanth Kulkarni, Volunteer, Virtusa explains, “My experience working as a volunteer for Virtusa’s CSR activities has enhanced and broadened my perspective towards life and has helped me become more mature, understanding and sensitive to people. It gives me lot of personal satisfaction and happiness. As part of the team, I offered to work for orphanages and old age homes. It makes me feel proud and happy to think that I have properly utilized my time for helping the needy. The love and affection that I receive in return has been inexpressible. The small things like talking to them, caring about them and spending some time would make orphans and needy people feel better psychologically and help them lead a better life. I believe sharing and caring is what makes life worth living.”

Take the case of Sayantan Sinha. A fulltime Director at BPPL, Sinha started off with the Parsvnath Group in 1997. Six years ago, one of his colleagues at Parsvnath introduced him to the Rotary. “I remember he took me to a dinner with old people. I was uncomfortable and felt that I would not fit in. When I entered the room, they all left their plates and came to greet me. There was so much warmth in the room. Through the years, I have realised that these people volunteering for Rotary have different vocations yet share the common spirit of extending help. At Rotary, voluntary work gives you the opportunity to meet over fellowships, make friends, get involved and also come forward with your families,” he explains.

Sinha is currently the President at RCD South metropolitan for 2009-2010 at the Rotary International. “More than 55 per cent of the members in my Rotary club are corporate employees. Working for the community provides them an enriching, more meaningful experience. It adds meaning to life. For any project, we do not need just the financial push but also

contribution in terms of time and effort. The greatest benefit to Rotarians in return is the happiness and satisfaction. I enjoy my profession but by being involved with Rotary, every single moment of my day is a transforming one. For instance, every morning I check for birthdays and anniversaries of fellow Rotarians and wish them. I am not bound to do it, but it gives me a sense of oneness with my contribution to Rotary.”

Charity begins at home

Ask Dinesh Divekar, an independent HR Professional about his views on CSR. He is quick to point out, “There is no individual CSR. It is all about going out in teams with the objective of sharing the profits of the company for the benefit of the society. Definitely, voluntary work under CSR provides great satisfaction to employees, but the primary concern for companies pursuing CSR should be to first take care of their employees. Are the working hours appropriate? Is the employee receiving due care? If yes, then looking outside to help is justified.”

Clearly there are two sides to CSR. One is to take care of your own people and the other is to serve the society. For Kulkarni, the latter has reinforced the former, “The voluntary work gives me a personal sense of satisfaction. It has simplified the task of balancing my work and life. It has made me more conscious while dealing with my subordinates and family members, because I have learnt to be considerate about others and their feelings.”

Good intentions

Ranjana Kanti, Founder, India Redefined Movement is involved in CSR activities at E-dutainment Unlimited, Clay n’ Color Communications and Redstreet Productions. She found her calling at an early age. She has come a long way from her first few gestures of sharing school tiffin with and tutoring kids from the slums. Talking from decades of experience, she explains, “You don’t initially need to have an altruistic intention to do something philanthropic. Just do it for yourself. We may initially do it for self-gratification but by doing it again and again, we shall find ourselves in a place where this self-gratification shall become irrelevant and the goodness that comes out of our actions will become a motivator itself. I am now using this mantra in my ‘I Care’ project within the movement ‘India Redefined’. The point is to get people motivated by executing simple activities successfully, which anyone is free to do. For example, each member will make two people computer literate or each member will plant ten trees and take care of them and ignite ten people to do the same.”

They say happiness is contagious. Voluntary work can be the best vehicle of transporting happiness in the society through good deeds. In the process, the giver is himself the receiver of all good things!