NEUROSCIENCE AND TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEERING: HOW CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CHANGES OUR BRAINS

When human beings have new experiences, new synaptic pathways forge in our brains. We become alert to new ideas and we can be guided to new understandings and different behavior.

By integrating a few basic concepts into corporate citizenship programs, we can guide employees to challenge assumptions, become alert to new ideas, orient to what those ideas mean for them, and take action toward new behaviors rooted in inclusivity, compassion, and empathy – resulting in better employees, better companies, and better communities.

BIG ORGANIZING AND TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEERING: WHY MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE MATTERS

What does it take to make employee volunteering valuable? How can organizations build programs that are meaningful – transformative – for the employee volunteer, beneficial for the company, and impactful for the community? By increasing the ROI and SROI of your employee volunteering program by better understanding the neuroscience behind prosocial behavior.

Transformative Volunteering equips volunteer leaders to create a shared sense of belonging between volunteers and beneficiaries. Volunteer leaders can learn to guide others who take part in community projects to accept differences and to challenge implicit biases – and to overcome them.

Together, we explore the difference between Transactional Volunteering and Transformative Volunteering by reviewing recent scientific research. This helps us understand how corporate volunteering programs are an effective, perhaps inevitable, way for us to address the most serious social and environmental issues facing humanity today.
WORKSHOPS

1 BUILD THE SHIP: ADVANCE YOUR VOLUNTEER STRATEGY
Convene key volunteerism advocates and decision-makers to provide input into the organization’s volunteerism strategy. This workshop is suitable for corporate and nonprofit organizations.

Throughout the workshop, participants:
• Gain an understanding and appreciation for the importance and impact of Transformative Volunteerism on overall citizenship strategy
• Outline resources, tools and processes that provide volunteers with a clear invitation, accessible opportunity, meaningful experience, and that allow them to actively share their experience
• Brainstorm an ideal future state
• Outline resources necessary for implementation and assign strategic action steps

2 NAVIGATE THE JOURNEY: VOLUNTEER ACTIVATION
Attendees walk through an overview of Transformative Volunteering and how it compares with the standard volunteer experience. The focus is on the employee and how to empower them to take action in their communities in a meaningful, impactful way.

PART I: WHY DOES TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEERING MATTER?
An overview of Transformative Volunteering and how it compares with the standard volunteer experience
A clear understanding of the elements required to engage employees and consumers in transformative volunteer experiences that are beneficial for the business and impactful for the community.

PART II: WORKING IT OUT
Throughout the day, our goal is to effectively discuss, analyze and create measurable goals on how to:
• Leverage under-utilized resources
• Provide a sense of agency to employees to take action in communities where they live, play and work
• Outline a methodology that aligns systems and processes to increase participation and impact
• Develop strategies to increase awareness, both internally and externally, of the work and success of the employee volunteering investments
• Create consensus on the value proposition of employee volunteering programs for the company, community and employees
THE VOYAGE: VOLUNTEER PROGRAM DESIGN & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

A thirty-minute presentation kicks off the session, closely examining foundational frameworks required to lead Transformative Volunteering experiences. The presentation includes examples of typical corporate volunteering programs and a brief analysis towards a comparison of the failures and successes of each. We explore how corporate volunteering programs may represent the most effective tool available to address the most serious social and environmental issues facing humanity today. The workshop guides participants through an interactive series of activities that result in actionable next steps for program development and evolution.

PART I: VISION & DESIGN

During the workshop session, work groups receive insight, information and best practice comparisons on the following topics:

- An understanding of the transformative employee volunteering model (versus the typical transactional volunteering model) as well as the foundational frameworks that can be adapted to any employee volunteering program as required
- How to focus on Signature Partners while encouraging employee choice
- How to grow and scale the program by empowering leaders
- How to connect volunteers with who they’re benefitting and why it matters
- The Three Stages of the Journey of the Volunteer
- The 18-Month Cycle of Program Leadership
- Methodologies to optimize employee volunteering programmatic elements (such as dollar for doers, paid time off, policies, toolkits, recognition strategies, etc.) based on each brand’s priorities and objectives.
- The Four Factors of program measurement: program capacity, competency of volunteer leaders, engagement of employees, and results of the program

PART II: ACTIVATE

Workshop participants meet in-person at a local nonprofit and conduct a volunteer event while roleplaying as the different stages of the volunteer journey. This guided experience shows participants what it’s like to play the role of a volunteer leader practicing Transformative Volunteering. It also demonstrates what keystone behaviors and foundational principles look like in practice. This gamified training consists of:

SET UP
Onsite at the event, Realized Worth reviews the elements that make a volunteering experience transformative. This includes a discussion around the keystone behaviors that aim to engage volunteers in a meaningful way, and an overview of the different stages of the volunteer journey (tourist, traveler and guide). These concepts are introduced in the VISION & DESIGN session.

VOLUNTEER
Each participant has a specific role to play during the volunteer activity, working from the role description provided during set up.

DEBRIEF & REFLECT
As the volunteer activity wraps up, the group gathers to discuss the training and to identify who was playing what role. The group then takes a few minutes to debrief and reflect on their experience.