



How a Volunteer Program Could Boost Your Team's Performance

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In July, Atlanta-based [Hodges-Mace LLC](#) was named [One of the Best Places to Work in Georgia in 2016](#). The award was created by Georgia Trend Magazine, Best Companies Group, and SHRM and is based 100% on employee feedback. Almost 70% of Hodges-Mace employees participated in the survey, citing corporate culture, charitable activities, and employer gratitude as major reasons why they love working at Hodges-Mace. Founded in 2004 by Greg Hodges and Peter Mace, the company provides employee benefit management solutions to clients across the U.S. Since its inception, Hodges-Mace has taken great pride in building a business where people want to come to work and where employees enjoy being part of a great team.

Volunteering is at the central core of the Hodges-Mace Mission, and proof that volunteer programs can improve employee morale and engagement, develop a strong corporate culture, and boost employee performance.

“Employees today are not only looking for a challenging job where they are rewarded for their hard work and performance, they also have a keen sense of organizational culture and values, and seek an environment with a sense of greater purpose,” says Suzanne Hough, Chief HR Officer, for Hodges-Mace.

New York Cares is New York City’s largest volunteer organization. The non-profit mobilizes 63,000 volunteers every year to help 400,000 disadvantaged New Yorkers. The New York Cares web site provided this additional insight to why businesses volunteer – and how they can benefit from a volunteer program:

- 73% of employees **wish their companies would do more** to support a social or environmental cause or issue.
- Three out of four employees **want to get involved with their company’s cause-related efforts** through company-sponsored days of service.
- The second most important driver of employee engagement in the United States is an **organization’s reputation in the community**.
- Companies with the highest levels of employee engagement see more than a 19% average annual **increase in their operating income**.

So far in 2016 Hodges-Mace employees have dedicated over 2,500 hours of volunteer time to local charities with over 70% of the employees participating. Hodges-Mace launched their Summer of Service project this summer, working with 8 local charities including Meals on Wheels in Atlanta, Camp Twin Lakes, Georgia Special Olympics and Atlanta Youth Academy, among others. The company has helped raise over \$250,000 for six Atlanta charities.

“Allowing employees to volunteer together, at non-profits that are meaningful to them individually and as a company, fosters collaboration, teamwork, and comradery.”

Timothy Chaplin is Director of Human Resources and Leadership Development for **Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Orange County and the Inland Empire**. The BBBS **Beyond School Walls** program matches employee “Bigs” one-to-one with a student “Little” and meet in a group setting monthly at company’s offices. The result? Meaningful relationships for employees with local youth that last a lifetime, and opportunities for career exploration, relationship building and college readiness for youth facing adversity.

“Employee volunteer programs such as **Big Brothers Big Sisters’ Beyond School Walls** provide team members within an organization the opportunity to share their experiences and successes with the next generation workforce,” says Chaplin. “Mentors who live in the community can have such an amazing impact on children within that community, fostering a profound sense of accomplishment in both the volunteers and the children. This feeling of service will undoubtedly transfer back to the corporate culture and create some amazing bonds amongst coworkers. The corporate culture can also spread to employees’ social networks, increasing the brand awareness within the larger community.”

Volunteering can also help support recruiting efforts.

“There have been countless studies and literature written about the value that the contemporary workforce puts on giving back to the community,” says Chaplin. “Supporting local nonprofits can demonstrate a corporate commitment to giving back to the community and helping future generations succeed.”

Each year Hodges-Mace offers two days paid time off to employees to volunteer at a charity of their choosing.

“Volunteering is fun, it helps our community, and ultimately it re-energizes people and relationships,” says Hough. “Back in the office, that translates into greater collaboration, creative problem solving and happy employees. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

