

Going Pro Social Program At Your Work Place



Over time employee expectations remain amazingly similar; Employees want a good and appropriate wage, to be treated fairly, an opportunity for growth, work they enjoy and can perform with skill, people with whom they enjoy working and a recognition for their efforts. They also frequently want a feeling of community and the ability to make a contribution. What does changes over time are the details of how these are balanced and delivered.

Today's Millennial employees have tipped the scale of expectations towards combining work with having a social impact. This has lead to the growth of Pro Social programs used to both attract and retain Millennial employees.

Crowd-Contributions To Meaningful Causes

What exactly is this Pro Social program? Traditionally employees volunteer to raise money and then write a cheque. Today's Millennial employees want to be in the thick of things where they can see the ongoing impact of their contributions and they want this social contract as a component of their employment contract.

The key component of the Pro Social programs is that the time employees contribute to these endeavours are not extra hours on top of their current working hours but integrated into their commitment to work. In other words, pro social programs activities are part of the 40 hour work week, usually for a pre-defined and limited period of time such as over several months.

The types of contributions employees make can vary from physically showing up to improve a local playground to developing a social media marketing campaign. Usually, though not always, these projects are specific with a clear time frame and objective.

Challenges of Pro Social Programs for Non-Millennial Employees

Although Millennials have been a catalyst for the growth of pro social programs all employees can gain a sense of contribution and benefit by taking part. The challenge many non-millennial employees face is they feel time crunched as their time is much less their own compared to Millennials. Non-millennials often have obligations to spouses, children, even elderly relatives and existing 'volunteer' commitments that may be long standing. To engage non-millennials in Pro Social programs an organization needs to educate older employees that these programs are not in addition to their full time job but a part of. They may also need to help them create balance in their working lives so they do not find themselves taking their work home with them because they spent half a day in a given week on their Pro Social program commitment.

Buy In At All Levels Is Critical

Organization Buy in has to involve leadership and managers recognizing that working time must be donated for the project to work. Establishing an amount of time, say 20 hours over 3 months or 5 hours a week for 3 months and effective tracking will be imperative to keep leadership on board.

Employee Buy In is vital. You cannot compel involvement. It is important to match the role and type of contribution to the individual, or, let the individual make the match him/herself. Provide a wide range of roles that can contribute to the goal of the program. Many Millennials will be happy to be slotted in as needed and your non-Millennials may prefer to select a role.

Cause/Issue Buy in is imperative and regardless of where the idea originates the issue or cause has to have high-level leadership buy in. Millennial employees may bring ideas for issues to the table but without leadership on board the programs can flop.

Social Agency/Community Buy In needs to be in place and the organization/group must clearly see the limitations, goals and benefits to create an experience that benefits employees, the organization and of course their own members. Often it can be useful to identify an intermediary, such as an umbrella organization like the United Way or an individual outside of the organization as a key connection or liaison.

Return on Investment

Although there can be a marketing value in involvement in a Pro Social Program for an organization generally the ROI is tied to the non-tangible benefit of happy, engaged employees who work hard, feel positive about their contribution and are more likely to stick because of the experience.