



Volunteerism Study: 2019

Volunteering benefits employees—here’s the proof.

This CSAA Insurance Group/VeraWorks research helps establish a long-suspected but unproven benefit of employee volunteering. Several companies—including Aetna, HP, Toyota and Western Digital—have data showing that employees who participate in company-organized volunteering events have higher engagement. However, CSAA Insurance Group is the only known company in the United States to conduct experimental-design research that addresses whether or not volunteering appears to drive employee engagement or if earlier findings simply suggest that engaged employees are more likely to volunteer.

Background



CSAA Insurance group recorded an employee volunteerism rate of 100% in 2018 and 2019, the highest employee volunteer participation rate in the U.S. by a company with 3,000 or more employees for the fifth consecutive year. To further study the impact of its corporate volunteerism program, the company partnered with VeraWorks—a global consulting firm that helps companies incorporate societal good into their business strategies—to help determine to what extent CSAA Insurance Group’s employee volunteer program improves employee engagement, well-being, sense of purpose, workplace culture and other HR outcomes.

Study design



Experimental-design pre- and post-surveys were administered six months apart to CSAA Insurance Group employees. The lead researcher, Bea Bocalandro from VeraWorks, also participated in two volunteer events and conducted three focus groups. Results are based on 210 employees who completed both surveys, or 20% of the original sample of one-third of employees. Representation appears adequate across most demographic groups, including ethnicity, gender and age.

Key findings and results

This study suggests that CSAA Insurance Group continually benefits from a 5.5% uptick in engagement generated by the AAA Volunteers program. Since 100% of employees participate, this uptick applies to the full workforce.

- Survey respondents who participated in AAA Volunteers activities over a six-month period experienced a 1.9% uptick in engagement.
- A randomly selected control group that didn't participate in AAA Volunteers experienced a 3.6% decrease in engagement.

Engagement among subgroups

The program appears to be especially effective in driving engagement among male and IT employees.

Intrinsically rewarding

Employees participate because they find it intrinsically rewarding, and not because they feel obligated or expect extrinsic rewards.

Highly satisfying

97% of employees are "satisfied" or better, and 83% are "very satisfied" with the volunteer program.

First-time volunteers

One out of six participants volunteered for their first time through the program.

Taking a stand on social issues

84% of employees want the company to take a public stand on social issues.

Supportive company culture

The company's culture is overwhelmingly supportive of the volunteer program, setting it apart from others.

In employees' own words

"Very inspiring, and really makes you feel good about working for the company."

"Always a good feeling afterwards, and good for team building."

"[Volunteering] is one of the most important reasons I continue to work at CSAA."

Key recommendations

Continue investing in AAA Volunteers.

1

In addition to highlighting what's working well, this study presents opportunities for the company to increase the impact of its volunteer program and its overall efforts related to social causes.

This study suggests the program is well-liked, has no serious weaknesses and boosts employee engagement.

Expand the bright spots.

2

Replicate what the IT department does well, and find ways for the program to be as effective for female employees as it is for male employees.

Conduct job purposing.

3

Job purposing—broadening the social mission of jobs—could boost employees' senses of purpose. (The company's pro-bono program is an effective step in this direction.)

Do social activism.

4

Take social stands on social causes close to the company, such as national parks or traffic safety.

Share the story.

5

The findings this study uncovered about the AAA Volunteers program, including its popularity across the enterprise and demonstrated engagement boost, make CSAA Insurance group a corporate social responsibility leader.