

# Employee Volunteerism: What Supports Do Companies Provide?

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Companies operating in Canada support the volunteer efforts of their employees in many ways. Some companies allow employees to take time off work to volunteer. Others allow employees to adjust their work schedules to accommodate volunteer activities or allow them access to company facilities or equipment. Still others provide information about volunteer opportunities and maintain records on employees who are interested in volunteering.

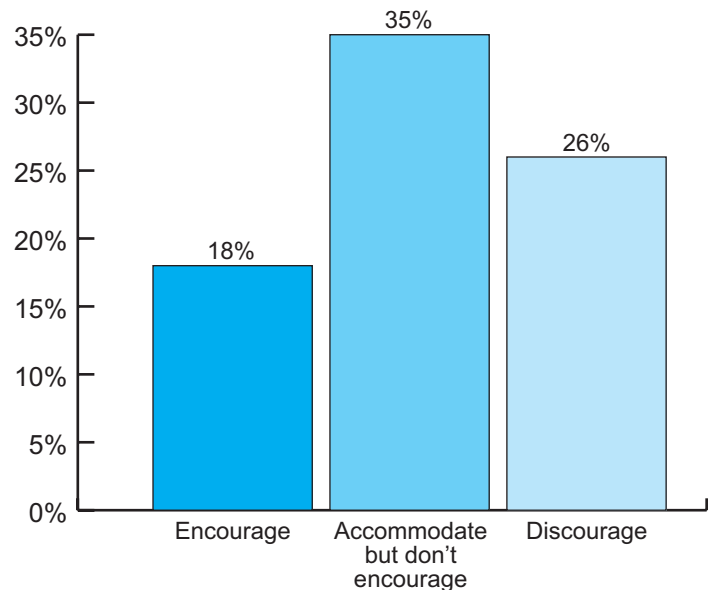
This fact sheet explores the various types of support that businesses operating in Canada offer to employee volunteers. The findings are based on a survey conducted by Imagine Canada and the University of Lethbridge in the fall of 2005. A total of 990 randomly selected businesses responded to the survey. Results are accurate within +/- 4% nineteen times out of twenty.<sup>1</sup>

## Volunteering during and outside working hours

Almost half (49%) of companies operating in Canada encourage their employees to volunteer on their own time, but only 18% encourage them to volunteer during working hours. Another 35% of companies accommodate employee volunteering during working hours, but do not encourage it (see Figure 1). About a quarter of companies (26%) discourage employee volunteering during working hours.<sup>2</sup> Large businesses (those with 500 or more employees) are more likely than small businesses (those with fewer than 100 employees) to encourage employees to volunteer on their own time. They are also more likely to

accommodate or encourage employee volunteering during working hours.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1. Companies' views on volunteering during working hours



## Time off to volunteer

One of the most significant supports that businesses can provide to employee volunteers is time off work. Among companies that support employee volunteering,<sup>4</sup> less than a third (29%) provide employees with paid time off to volunteer (see Figure 2). However, almost three quarters (71%) allow employees to take time off without pay and over three quarters (78%) allow employees to adjust their work schedules to accommodate volunteer activities.

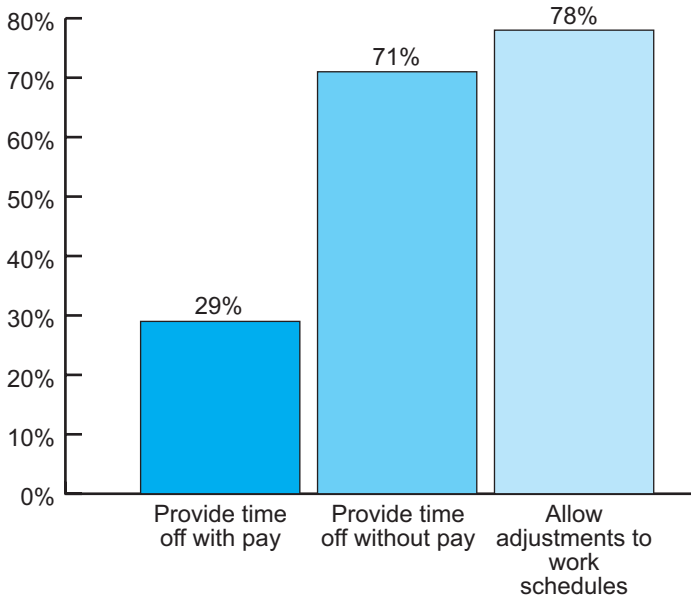
<sup>1</sup> The full results of the study can be found in M. Easwaramoorthy, C. Barr, M. Runte, & D. Basil. (2006). *Business support for employee volunteers in Canada: Results of a national survey*. Toronto: Knowledge Development Centre.

<sup>2</sup> The remaining respondents didn't know their company's position on volunteering during working hours.

<sup>3</sup> Comparisons with medium-sized businesses cannot be made because observed differences are not statistically significant.

<sup>4</sup> Companies that did not accommodate or encourage employee volunteering during working hours or encourage employees to volunteer on their own time were not queried further about their support for employee volunteering.

**Figure 2. Companies' policies regarding time off to volunteer**



### Other forms of support for employee volunteers

There are many ways for companies to support employee volunteers beyond providing time off or allowing adjustments to work schedules. For example, 70% of companies that support employee volunteering allow employees to use company

facilities and equipment (e.g., computers, fax machines, rooms, etc.) for their volunteer activities (see Figure 3).

About one in three businesses recognize employee volunteers (35%) and/or make information about volunteer opportunities available to employees (31%). In contrast, only about one in five companies provide education on the importance of volunteering (20%) and/or maintain records of the skills and experience of employees who are interested in volunteering (18%). Large companies are more likely than small ones to be actively engaged in recognizing and facilitating employee volunteering in these ways.

### Conclusion

The survey results suggest that businesses in Canada are beginning to understand the value of volunteering. The supports that most businesses provide to employee volunteers are, however, quite limited. This makes it difficult for both businesses and nonprofits to reap the full benefits of employee volunteerism. Clearly, much more needs to be done to educate businesses about the importance of volunteerism and the benefits that accrue to businesses that actively support it.

**Figure 3. Other forms of support for employee volunteers**

