Corporate volunteering survives the crisis

The percentage of companies that engage in corporate volunteer work in Spain went up 12% from 2011 to 2013, according to a new report in Spain.

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A quarter of companies with corporate volunteer programs have implemented them in the past three years, and the percentage of companies with these programs rose 12% between 2011 and 2013.

These findings are from the 2013 edition of an annual report on corporate volunteer work in Spain, sponsored by the Corporate Volunteer Work Observatory, a joint initiative of IESE and the NGO Cooperación Internacional.

Based on responses to questionnaires sent to 2,500 companies, the report examines the situation of corporate volunteering in Spain. Greater social needs have made companies more aware of their corporate social responsibilities (CSR), causing them to be more proactive in their promotion of corporate volunteering.

The report includes analysis on the evolution of corporate volunteering in Spain from 2009 to 2013, coinciding with the five years of existence of the Corporate Volunteer Work Observatory.

Drivers of corporate volunteering

The report shows that the primary motivation for companies to engage in this activity is the social benefit that comes along with it.

Companies noted the impact that volunteering has on employees' motivational levels and on the corporate image, both internally as well as externally.

One driver of the growth experienced over the past few years is the declaration of 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering, leading to the implementation of awareness-raising strategies.

Define the goals, targeting social needs

When it comes to launching volunteering initiatives, the first thing one should do is clearly define the goals, and then design a plan, choose a structure and decide on a budget.

In the case of Spanish companies, corporate volunteer projects tend to involve group efforts at the local level rather than internationally, targeting social needs and, in some cases, environmental issues.

Most corporate volunteer projects do not require much time commitment from employees: 71% of the time, employees spend less than seven hours per year.

The main groups benefiting are children and youth, and people with disabilities.

Initiatives tend to come from the managers or employees responsible for CSR efforts, usually in coordination with NGOs or charities.

Programs often depend on the CSR or HR department, and the allocated budget tends to be less than 30,000 euros.

Only 1 in 10 uses some type of metric to measure the return on investment (ROI) of corporate volunteer work. The ROI is partly economic, but mostly in terms of the fulfillment of social objectives or those related to internal cohesion.

Future challenges: resources, measurable outcomes

The managers responsible for these efforts express concern over the limited resources and the lack of employee involvement with these activities.

Employee involvement can be encouraged by making sure such initiatives are aligned with the corporate values and culture.

This requires having clearer objectives and improving the management of these activities, so that there are measurable outcomes.