

Case study

“Business Community Action Day”

Overview

Driver	Local Brokers, e.g. City of Wiesbaden, Community Foundations in Braunschweig and Salzgitter, BDKJ – Bund Der Katholischen Jugend (“alliance of catholic youth”) in Mainz
Country	Germany (Braunschweig, Gifhorn, Hannover, Mainz, Salzgitter, Wiesbaden)
Societal issue addressed	Entire range of societal issues, depending on the partner the businesses, involved in the action day, decide to partner with
Partners	Brokers, community organisations, Nonprofit organisations (NPO’s), businesses from single person business to very large companies, local public administrations, chambers of commerce and crafts
Status	The programme started in 2005 in the city of Wiesbaden
Impact	Participation in 2009: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ e.g. Wiesbaden: 70 companies, 51 projects, 47 community organisations ▪ e.g. Braunschweig/Gifhorn/Salzgitter: 60 companies, 59 projects
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One challenge is to get it started with a cross-sectoral committee (broker, business, network of community organizations, city council, chamber etc) organizing and driving the action day ▪ The most challenging task is then to create a follow up mechanism and infrastructure to satisfy the growing demand for brokerage caused by the action day.

Executive Summary

The Business Community Action Day is an easy method to initiate cross sectoral projects. Employees of a number of businesses engage at a certain day in a certain town or region in community projects.

The business community action day aims

- At publically stimulating corporate community engagement and cross sectoral co-operation including business,
- By providing a realm of experience for actors from all sectors,
- Activating as many local businesses as possible
- To give as many employees as possible the opportunity to volunteer

1. Situation and societal issue

The action day is not addressing a certain social problem in the community but is meant to be an impulse and catalyst of a new way of tackling societal problems and fostering social cohesion on the local level by activating businesses to contribute their means towards new solutions in cross-sectoral partnerships with community organisations and public authorities. The business community action day is a low threshold trial for business to “try-out” such social co-operation across sectors.

2. Partners

The action days target at business providing them with an easy to step in programme towards employee engagement in local communities and community organisations.

Ideally a local broker organisation like a volunteer centre, community foundation, a community organisation or a municipality initiates and drives the project and starts to set up a cross-sectoral preparing committee with the following members:

- The broker organisation itself
- Business representative(s) well known and well connected to the local business community to successfully approach other businesses.
- Representative(s) of community umbrella organisation(s) to approach successfully local community organisations
- Representative(s) of local public authority(ies) to secure buy in of municipality(ies) and public agencies
- An organisation specialised in communication and public relations doing pro bono the communications of the action day
- An organisation specialised in media design producing pro bono the website and other means of communication

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a. Driver

Ideally an organisation experienced as intermediary is in the driver’s seat. Those intermediaries range from Volunteering centers, community foundations to departments of local authorities and even business associations. The role of the intermediary organization is to

- Identify the right persons and organizations from business, civil society, public authorities and the local media to form a group jointly preparing, carrying out and evaluating the action day,
- Moderating the group and
- Coordinating the steps necessary.

b. Businesses

Participating in partnerships during the action day businesses of all size and sectors and their employees engage with different means. They

- Muck in practical work like renovating or building facilities of community organisations,
- Encounter with people doing e.g. outings with kids, youngsters from disadvantaged neighborhoods, old aged people or people with special needs
- Transfer competencies or do pro bono work to improve the capacities of NPO's

c. Community organizations

Community organisations involve themselves as partners of businesses engaging in the course of the action day because

- They get practical support by business during the action day
- They get an initial contact with business which can become the start of a mid or long-term partnership
- Their work and the cause they are working for is acknowledged by business and the public

d. Broker/ intermediary organisations

Through the business action day the broker

- Has a good opportunity to engage a larger number of business to engage in the community
- Can initiate a “culture” of business community engagement in the locality
- Distinguishes itself as a relevant contact for business
- Lifts up its public profile

For the brokers' role please see the drivers' role.

e. Public administration and government

Representatives of local public administrations and politics should be part of the preparing committee to leverage the potentials of the public authorities. Somebody from the public authority, ideally the mayor, should become the patron to put the action into the political context as an initiative to further local social cohesion and citizens' participation. In all the locations of the programme, this was achieved.

3. Programme Description

a. Initiation

In Germany the format was developed and run first about 5 years ago by the German municipality of Wiesbaden, the capital city of Federal State of Hesse. The municipality runs as part of the UPJ-network its own business-community broker office, to create a public arena and framework for local businesses and especially for SMEs to engage with their employees beyond financial gifts and social sponsoring of community organizations. The format was developed by the broker office in order to create a low-threshold, far reaching programme that attracts a large number of businesses to the subject of engagement and initiates a local culture of business community investment.

b. Process

As mentioned the first action day in Germany was run about five years ago in the city of Wiesbaden. Since the first action day in 2005 the action day in Wiesbaden steadily grows up to 70 companies working in 51 projects within 47 community organisations.

In the meantime there is a number of local business action days in Germany e.g. in the cities and regions of Braunschweig, Frankfurt/Oder, Hannover and Mainz. Additional action days are being prepared for the current year (2010) e.g. in Bad Kreuznach and Osnabrück. The numbers of businesses and employees engaged and the number of projects realized is growing annually.

c. Resources

Besides the time invested by the broker and the people in the preparing committee the action day has shown high potentials to activate pro bono support and financial contributions by the local administration, business and foundations, if the actors are involved from the beginning.

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- Media and Communications agencies do the PR and Media pro bono
- Companies, large NPO’s or chambers host of preparatory workshops, the annual launch events, the marketplace for projects and the After Work Party
- Printers do the printing of the documentation at no or low costs
- Businesses act as sponsors
- Foundations and/or the public administration support the action day financially because it is an innovative approach to foster business community involvement

The following chart gives an overview of the tasks of the preparing committee of a Business Community Action Day:

Tasks of the preparing committee			
<p>Win businesses and community organisations to participate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication and PR ▪ Information ▪ Registration 	<p>Public relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the media, through associations ▪ Personal approach ▪ Find an attractive title of the business community action day ▪ Website ▪ Folder ▪ Documentation 	<p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patron ▪ “Ambassadors” ▪ Supporters ▪ Resources: In kind, money 	<p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Launch event ▪ Workshop for community organisations ▪ Marketplace for projects ▪ After Work Party

d. Activities

From setting up the preparatory committee until the evaluation and the publishing of the documentation time needed is about 8 months to one year.

During an initial phase the preparatory committee, the project plan is set up and tasks are allocated.

Preparing the action day businesses and community organizations are addressed through personal communication, through multipliers, public relations and mailings as well as through a public launch event, a workshop helping non profits to identify and design projects in which businesses and their employees can engage in during the action day and a market place for projects, where projects of the NPO's are presented to business representatives.

The action day itself is concluded with an After Work Party of everybody involved during the action day.

The action day is followed up by an evaluation and a publication with all projects and partners involved.

The following chart gives an overview of a rough time table from the initiation till the post processing of a Business Community Action Day:

Time table					
7 month before	6 month before	5 month before	3 month before	Action Day After Work Party	1 month after
Initialise	Prepare	PR	Projects		Post processing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up ▪ Preparing committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning ▪ Budget ▪ Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Akquisition of participating businesses and community organisations ▪ Launch Event ▪ Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community organisations design projects ▪ Marketplace for projects ▪ Community organisations and partner companies prepare the projects 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wrap up by preparing committee ▪ Evaluation

4. Programme Evaluation

The action day is evaluated through a questionnaire sent to the companies and the community organisations involved to measure satisfaction and effects and to detect areas of improvement. The evaluations fed into a how to guide on local business action days in German (www.upj.de/aktionstag).

5. Impact

a. Benefits to the local/ regional community & the community organisations

The local community and community organisations benefit through the hundreds of projects carried out at the action days. But more important is the potential of the action day to be a starting point of mid- and long-term partnerships of businesses with community

organisations. And as well the change of the mindset in all sectors and especially companies that business can make a difference in the community in co-operation with community organisations and local public authorities.

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b. Benefits to the companies

Companies are provided with an easy to step in possibility

- To try out community engagement,
- To experience how to cooperate with community organizations,
- To find community partners
- To be exposed in public as a good corporate citizen contributing in a practical way to the local public good
- To offer employees the possibility to volunteer

6. Challenges

One challenge is to get it started with a cross-sectoral committee (broker, business, network of community organizations, city council, chamber etc) organizing and driving the action day.

The most challenging task is then to create a follow up mechanism and infrastructure to satisfy the growing demand for brokerage caused by the action day.

7. Contact & Further Information

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www.upj.de/aktionstag

www.wiesbaden.de/upj

www.bruecken-bauen-online.de

www.mumm-mainz.de

Further international Business Community Action Days

Give & Gain Day, UK

Give & Gain Day demonstrates how large-scale national employee volunteering programmes can be successfully developed and implemented with a central broker organisation working at the interface between many community organisations and many companies.

Give & Gain Day is Business in the Community's national employee volunteering initiative and has been running since 2008. It is a large-scale action day, taking place across in 36 towns across the UK with widespread media coverage.

Employee volunteers give their time, knowledge and skills to projects in community groups and schools, taking part in a range of team activities organised around the theme of 'Unlocking talent', which encompasses education, economic renewal and employability issues.

Companies register to take part with BITC and pay a fee per volunteer. BITC provides ongoing support to the volunteers. Companies can organise their own activities relevant to unlocking talent, or take part in flagship projects:

- Reading Gardens sees employee volunteers working in schools and libraries to create an environment that will inspire children to read and learn.
- Behind the Scenes provides an opportunity for young people to enter the world of work, with employees showcasing what they do and bridging the gap between young people's aspirations, education and the business environment.
- Further bespoke projects focus on specific regional needs, providing practical engagement between employees and the community where they work.

On 5th June 2009 during Give & Gain Day over 4300 employee volunteers from 208 companies worked with 178 community groups on to support over 59,000 pupils and service users. 40% of employees were new to volunteering. Of the 187 projects taking part, 105 were Reading Gardens and 20 Behind the Scenes.

Employee volunteers gain experience of working in a new environment, new skills and motivation from giving something back to the community where they work.

Employers gain more motivated and loyal employees – a recent survey of volunteers participating in an action day showed that 88% felt more pride in their employer as a result of their support for the day. This is also an opportunity to gain recognition for investing in your local community and your commitment to unlocking talent.

Community groups and schools gain valuable help in achieving their goals. This is also an opportunity to forge cross-sector partnerships in the medium to long term.

Give and Gain Day is sponsored by Eversheds LLP and is Media Partner with ITV, Metro and Grey London.

Contact & Further Information

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Naša Bratislava, Slovakia

Naša Bratislava is an annual city-wide employee volunteering action day organised by Pontis Foundation in Bratislava. It aims to meet the needs of local communities in Slovakia through volunteer employee engagement.

Naša Bratislava ("Our Bratislava") brings together volunteers from various companies with local NGOs to help out on a number of projects in the city. The programme is now in its third year since launching in 2007, and has expanded to other regions in Slovakia.

The third Naša Bratislava day took place on 12-13 June 2009 and saw over 1200 volunteers from 40 companies help 44 community organizations, with employees working in teams or

individually. Activities included environmental protection projects, renovating schools, crisis centres, facilities for homeless people and homes for people with disabilities, and passing on expertise in communications, marketing, IT and legal issues to the community organisations. Overall it added up to 5100 volunteer hours.

Pontis also organised a special activity for the CEOs of 19 of the companies involved and 2 ambassadors in order to promote volunteering and to express greater interest in community needs from the management of the involved companies.

One challenge in the evaluation of the programme is identifying the number of beneficiaries. Because of the variety of projects, some directly beneficial to the community and some indirectly, it is very difficult to estimate.

Našsa Bratislava demonstrates how volunteer action days can be readily transferred; the programme has been expanded to Košice in 2008, with 470 volunteers from 13 companies participating, and Žilina in 2009, with 186 volunteers from 9 companies.

Contact & Further Information

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Journey of Opportunity, Hong Kong

The Journey of Opportunity takes place on a smaller scale than the other examples and has a sharper focus on education and school leaver employment.

Organised by Community Business since 2008, Journey of Opportunity takes disadvantaged young people from a deprived area of Hong Kong and gives them an insight into the world outside to motivate and inspire them to take advantage of the opportunities available to them for further education and employment.

Each volunteer is partnered with a student for the day, which provides a basis for ongoing one-on-one mentoring. Together the volunteers and students make visits to local universities, followed by the offices of the participating companies.

On 3 April 2009, 52 employees from 18 leading Hong Kong companies from a wide range of sectors were paired up as mentors with 65 young people from schools in Tin Shui Wai – one of the poorest districts in Hong Kong. This saw a 44% increase in beneficiaries and an 18% increase in volunteers since the inaugural Journey of Opportunity in 2008.

The journey began in Tin Shui Wai, allowing corporate volunteers to understand firsthand the background of the youth, followed by a view into campus life – including the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), the University of Hong Kong, and City University of Hong Kong – and the corporate world with visits to CLP Power Hong Kong Limited, MTR Corporation, Crown Worldwide Group and Leo Paper Group (Hong Kong) Limited.

“As a group we recognise that we have access to valuable resources that can be pooled and applied for the benefit of the local community,” said Catherine Husted, Deputy Chair of the CBLT and Partner at Allen & Overy in Hong Kong. “Working collaboratively, member companies are looking to make a positive impact on the lives of aspiring young people from Tin Shui Wai.”

“We recognise that we cannot change the lives of young people in one day.” said Shaun Bernier, Managing Director of Community Business. “However, the hope is that by giving them access to people and experiences they would not otherwise have, this programme might broaden their vision, inspire them to think about their future job and educational opportunities. Particularly during these difficult economic times, the companies involved should be commended for taking action to make a positive impact on the lives of young people in our local community.

Contact & Further Information

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INCLUDE – Pathways to Community Investment

The European project INCLUDE provides local intermediaries like civil society organisations, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce and public authorities with support that will help them to engage businesses in innovative cross-sectoral partnerships. INCLUDE identifies on a worldwide scale good examples of collaborative business initiatives as well as business engagement in cross-sectoral partnerships, which contribute towards skills development and employability of disadvantaged groups, towards social inclusion and innovation in addressing societal challenges and communicates them.

INCLUDE builds upon the results of the CSR-Laboratory “Skills for Employability enhanced through Employee Engagement” which was carried out as part of the European Alliance for CSR and is run jointly by UPJ and the ENGAGE initiative coordinated by Business in the Community (BITC). Partners of the project are the German Federal Department of Labour and Social Affairs, Citi-Group, Asociata pentru Relatii Comunitare (Romania), Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (Hungary), SMartKolektiv (Serbia), Pontis Foundation (Slovakia) and Özel Sektör Gönüllüler Derneği (Turkey).

The project is supported by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities).

Further information about the project is available at www.bitc.org.uk/global/include.html (in English) www.upj.de/include (in German)

UPJ

UPJ is the German national network of engaged businesses and local non-profit intermediary organizations. Its projects and programmes create new connections between businesses, civil society organizations and public authorities thus contributing to solve societal challenges and to shape sustainable communities. UPJ, a registered charity under German law, provides organizations from the business, community and public sectors with information and consultancy to improve their Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility activities. www.upj.de



ENGAGE

ENGAGE is an international programme that brings together businesses and community organisations around the globe to increase the quality and amount of employee community engagement in their local communities. Its mission is twofold: To inspire, mobilise and support companies to develop sustainable community investment programmes, and to provide community organisations with a network, tools and support that will help them work more effectively with business partners. www.engageyouremployees.org



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