

# Employee Volunteering

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## 1. The Local Agent

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Cologne is the largest city of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The City Council of Cologne is the central governing body of the cities' one million inhabitants. For the city council, citizen participation is a key political issue. Therefore, in January 2001 the city council decided to establish a special communal agency called FABE ("Förderung und Anerkennung bürgerschaftlichen Engagements") (encouragement and acknowledgment of citizen participation) which is directly responsible to the mayor's office and staffed with two full-time positions. The agency was also established by request of the mayor himself who regards the promotion and recognition of citizen and business participation as an administrations' cross-sectional task. "Here politics, the administration, organisations and citizenship should be interlocked related to all concerns of volunteering." (Lord Mayor Fritz Schramma). The agency's main function is to promote voluntary engagement and its public recognition. Next to citizens participation, a lot of attention is given to encourage the city's businesses to engage themselves in social and environmental projects. In this regard, FABE's activities focus on issues of corporate volunteering.

## 2. The CSR Activities

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The agency is executing several activities to pursue its goals:

- a) Through FABE's first project "StadtAktiv", an internal corporate volunteering programme, the City Council of Cologne fosters the voluntary engagement of its employees. Since November 2002 the city council tries to be a role model for the cities' businesses to elucidate the advantages of corporate volunteering. The goal which the mayor connects with the corporate volunteering programme "StadtAktiv" is to promote and strengthen the social engagement of its employees and thereby to create new potentials. In the meantime, corporate volunteering is deep-seated within the city council and since then forms the framework for a number of voluntary activities of the city's employees.
- b) Furthermore, the FABE agency is responsible for the procurement of business engagement within the city. The agency is bringing together businesses which want to support and partner with non-profit-organisations from the city that need support.
- c) The mayor of Cologne and the Ford Motor Company, the city's biggest employer, have partnered for a common corporate volunteering initiative called "Alliance for Cologne"

("Bündnis für Köln"). Within this initiative, FABE suggests concrete projects to Ford and establishes contact with respective non-profit-organisations. Ford's employees can then support those projects through the company's "Community Involvement"-Programme. For the realisation of the projects each employee can be released from work for sixteen working hours each year. Furthermore, the initiative now tries to address other businesses in Cologne in order to engage themselves in similar initiatives.

- d) Another major task of the agency is to do public relations for corporate volunteering within the city. Next to consultancy and interview activities, firstly, together with the Cologne representation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Industrie- und Handelskammer Köln) and the Boston Consulting Group FABE organised an information event on corporate volunteering for the city's businesses on 12. November 2003. The evening reception "Businesses from Cologne take over Responsibility" ("Kölner Unternehmen engagieren sich") at the City Hall was held in order to inform businesses about the possibilities of corporate volunteering. In addition, best-practice examples were presented to promote businesses' engagement in such activities. For this event a brochure by the same name as the event was published which is still being distributed.

Secondly, under the auspices of the mayor on 12. and 13. September 2003 – organised by the Cologne Agency for Volunteers – the first "Community Service Day of Cologne" (Kölner Freiwilligen-Tag) themed "Together. For Cologne" ("Gemeinsam. Für Köln.") took place. Employees from businesses from the city as well as employees from the City Council of Cologne including the mayor himself engaged themselves in social and ecological project within the city. During the two-day corporate volunteering event businesses and the city council made available not only the manpower but also the know-how of their employees. The second "Community Service Day of Cologne" will take place in autumn of 2004.

- e) Finally, FABE is a member of the working group on CSR ("Arbeitsgruppe Unternehmensengagement im Gemeinwesen") within the Cologne network for volunteering issues ("Kölner Netzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement"). This working group is now – next to corporate volunteering issues – also incorporating CSR issues. The working group focuses on "a new ethics of business leadership and new forms of business culture that can contribute to businesses becoming corporate citizens". The group approves the continuation of the running corporate volunteering activities which however should be amended by "new forms of co-operation between public, non-profit organisations and businesses as well as ethical self-commitments of businesses for the community".

### 3. The Need/The Drivers

The reasons for founding the agency as well as the implemented activities are diverse. The first initiative FABE introduced was the programme "StadtAktiv" in order to act as a role model for the city's businesses. Employees of the city council are encouraged to engage themselves in

community projects. Up to half of the time spent working for a voluntary project employees are allowed to take off while still being paid by the city council. The programme was designed in a common effort by FABE, the employees, the management, the personnel representation and the equal opportunity commissioner. As Ms. Hilgers, the programme's coordinator, outlined the local authority wants "to show that they themselves also are also doing something". Supported by extensive public relations, the goal is that businesses follow their example by making clear the win-win-win situation of such activities: for the city and its inhabitants, for the non-profit-organisations and for the businesses themselves. After several contacts to active businesses have been established, the city council tried to push things forward by founding the programme "Alliance for Cologne". Other stakeholders have been taken on for this public-private-partnership: the Ford Motor Company and several non-profit organisations. Furthermore, for some of the other initiatives mentioned above – especially the working group on CSR within the Cologne network for volunteering issues – FABE partnered with another of the city council's programmes called KABE ("Kölner Arbeitskreis für bürgerschaftliches Engagement") (Cologne working group on citizen participation) and many other organisations, i.e. businesses, banks, social organisations etc.

As FABE is not using a top-down approach but rather regards itself as one partner among others, all those institutions and organisations were encouraged to make contributions to the concept and the realisation of the initiatives. The fact that all partners participated on a voluntary basis and the possibility of influencing the process resulted in everybody being highly motivated to make something happen. FABE very much appreciated those contributions and the impetus they have given. Still, Ms. Hilgers says, if there wouldn't have been FABE doing most of the actual work in the end not much would have happened.

#### 4. Taking Action

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Depending on the respective initiative or programme different steps have been taken to bring them each into effect:

- a) "StadtAktiv" kicked off with an internal working group formulating the general framework. This general framework was then presented to the management, executives and interested employees. After an internal information campaign via emails and the intranet, several pilot areas were defined and since the summer of 2003 eight projects have been realised.
- c) The corporate volunteering programme "Alliance for Cologne" started with a text of cooperation between the mayor and the CEO of Cologne-based Ford Germany. After the initial public relation work first project ideas were proposed and contacts established. During the project phase, FABE supported the adjustment of the project. All projects were completed by common public relation activities.

- d) In the course of the city's public relations efforts regarding the enhancement of the notoriety and the illustration of the advantages of corporate volunteering, one of the main components was the information event "Businesses from Cologne take over Responsibility". For this, the city cooperated with the Cologne representation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. A project group was established to jointly prepare and carry out the event. An accompanying brochure was made and distributed at the event and this brochure is still a key instrument for the follow-up PR work.
- e) Finally, the Cologne network for volunteering issues was planned by a control group within the city council. Several working groups have been installed. After public relations and an information event for the city's businesses, the umbrella organisations of many of the city's non-profit-organisations, banks, churches etc. several stakeholders have been chosen and invited to become a member of one of the working groups. The composition of the working groups – among which one of them is the working group on CSR – is now finished. The working groups will now develop suggestions on how the local authorities and all the other stakeholders in Cologne might act in the near future.

During the course of developing all those activities FABE encountered no problems at all because everybody they worked together with did so on a voluntary basis. As Ms. Hilgers stated, "people like to do things if they do it voluntarily". The cooperation between FABE and all stakeholders went along really well and even if there were any differences of opinion in the end a result or satisfactory compromise was found. So therefore, Ms. Hilgers sees no reason at all for changing the current strategy.

## 5. Looking Back – Key Achievements And Results

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Retrospectively, FABE is highly pleased with what they have achieved up to now. "StadtAktiv" is accepted widely and has reached its goal with now eight voluntary projects. Also, the "Alliance for Cologne" is fulfilling the expectations as many projects have been realised and the cooperation is even being expanded on several occasions, i.e. the "Cologne Day of Voluntary Work 2003" ("Kölner Ehrenamtstag"). Cooperation with the partners was also very positive regarding the information event "Businesses from Cologne take over Responsibility" and the accompanying brochure. In this case, the only downer was that at the evening reception there could have been more participants from the city's businesses. Finally, the first "Community Service Day of Cologne" was very satisfactory as well as employees from the city council and even the mayor himself participated. The experiences that have been made during the implementation of all those activities elucidate that FABE's head Ms. Hilgers is content with the chosen approach and would always chose the same approach again.

## 6. Community Benefits

Talking about the main benefits for the community deriving from FABE's activities, the most important ones are the results and achievements of all the actual projects that have been put into practice. Additionally, all participants got to know different perspectives and new points of view. Aside from that, the community benefits from the public relations work done. The PR effort is especially useful for all the non-profit-organisations that businesses have been cooperating with. Furthermore, public recognition of businesses that are already engaged (for example on the "Cologne Day of Voluntary Work 2003") is stimulating other businesses to get active themselves.

## 7. The Future

Facing the future, FABE plans to continue with all the up and running activities and initiatives. Right now, FABE does not see any demand for further engagement as they are covering all the relevant fields of action and cooperating with more or less all possible stakeholders.

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE LOCAL AGENT

<b>NAME</b>	City Council of Cologne		
<b>LEGAL STATUS</b>	<b>PUBLIC</b>		<b>PRIVATE</b>
	REGIONAL GOVERNMENT		CONSORTIUM c)
	PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT		NETWORK d)
	MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY	X	OTHER e)
	OTHER		
<b>RELEVANT DEPARTMENT/S BODY/IES</b>	office of the lord mayor		
<b>GENERAL DESCRIPTION</b>	a) "StadtAktiv" – internal corporate volunteering programme b) procurement of business engagement within the city c) "Bündnis für Köln" – corporate volunteering programme d) public relations for corporate volunteering e) working group on CSR within the Cologne network for volunteering issues		
<b>HEAD OF</b>	LOCAL AUTHORITY		X
	DEPARTMENT		
	ACTIVITY ADMINISTRATOR		

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