

OUTLOOK

As in the case of national CSR initiatives, corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago faces the fundamental challenge of increasing managerial understanding of its conceptual relevance as a corporate development tool particularly among SMEs. Furthermore, the idea of voluntary employee contributions to social and environmental causes often lacks any meaningful and thorough integration into corporation's overall business plans and strategic framework.

While many companies mobilize staff for the almost proverbial beach-cleaning campaign on a more or less regular basis, they rarely seek to draw on the specific skills employees bring to the workplace in order to maximize on the effectiveness of their voluntary engagements. A more professional approach towards corporate volunteerism would also entail the preparedness of senior managers to train staff volunteers for specific projects as well as to take steps towards fostering a culture of volunteerism within corporations that reflects the willingness of managers and staff to embrace voluntary activities as a priority issue in the workplace.

Securing buy-in for voluntary commitment by employees requires the determination to take staff suggestions, ideas and feedback seriously and to put corporate volunteers effectively into the driver's seat of project development and execution.

New pathways for cooperation and organizational learning can cut across different markets and can be established from company to company. By exchanging knowledge on societal engagement between corporate actors, the benefits of conceptual cross-fertilization can be multiplied with local experiences informing corporate planning of volunteerism initiatives across companies.

While purists may argue that volunteerism as a quintessential expression of altruism should not need any rewards or perks in order to flourish, the question of incentive management remains one of the more important issues and may well be an appropriate tool to encourage more staff to join corporate efforts at volunteering.