
WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume III, Issue 3 | May 30, 2007

"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.

Giving back is the surest and most hopeful expression of gratitude. It's the recognition that success is a team effort, opportunities emerge with help, and getting ahead takes support and encouragement from others.

Much like a rising tide, giving back lifts others up – inspiring hope and possibility where neither might otherwise exist. Giving back isn't about changing the world, but it is about making someone's world a little better. Whether sharing your talent, time or money, when you give from the heart you invariably make a difference.

That's a lesson John learned directly through a company-sponsored volunteer experience.

A chemist for a pharmaceutical company, John spent his days interacting with test tubes and beakers. Although he loved science, he often wished he could experience the difference he was making in the lives of others.

John decided to participate in the company-sponsored youth mentoring program. He spent five hours each month sharing his love for math and science with struggling students, offering one-on-one assistance to help the students keep up with their class.

John's dedication soon produced results. The students' grades improved. They were more open. They became more confident and better behaved. An 8th grader named Aaron even thanked John for sticking with him even when he had a hard time "getting it." He said knowing someone "had his back" made him want to try harder in school.

John was making a meaningful difference in the students' lives and he appreciated that his company offered the opportunity. By giving back, John's morale improved as he rekindled his passion for his profession.

Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." John learned that first hand. And, the generation now entering the workforce may already know it.

A Deloitte & Touche USA survey of 18-26 year olds released last month shows that companies that help employees volunteer professional skills to nonprofit organizations could have a leg up in recruiting Gen Y talent. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (62 percent) in the 2007 Volunteer IMPACT survey said they would prefer to work for companies that give them opportunities to contribute their talents to nonprofit organizations.

About the findings, CEO James H. Quigley said companies that "encourage their people to contribute knowledge and experience to nonprofits, will make a difference by giving back to the community – and at the same time build the skills and morale of their people."

What's important is that giving back is a visible, active expression of gratitude, one often met with even greater reward.

Email me at chuck@durakis.com to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck