



A hands-on approach to CSR with HSBC

A group from HSBC bank's Northern Division assisted with the post-tsunami clear-up operation in Sri Lanka in February 2005.

"Volunteering with i-to-i and helping on tsunami relief projects in Sri Lanka was a great experience. It makes you realise that the difficulties and stresses in Western-style business life are really not all we perceive them to be, and are simply challenges to be overcome. I saw my team of co-volunteers from the bank grow as people and demonstrated skills that I didn't know they had and that they probably didn't know they had."

Bruce Tyler, Area Commercial Manager, HSBC.



The challenge

Like millions of others around the world, employees at the HSBC bank Northern Division were distressed and moved by the tragic events of the Asian tsunami in December 2004. The natural outcome was that the bank and its workers wanted to do something to help – preferably something more than just pledging money to a general assistance fund.

Meanwhile the bank had introduced a division-wide internal initiative called 'My HSBC' designed to engage staff and get the most from its employees. The challenge was to find a way to meet the objectives of this scheme whilst giving practical help in an affected country.

The approach

After learning that i-to-i had launched an emergency tsunami relief programme in Sri Lanka, HSBC saw an opportunity to provide hands-on support whilst also meeting its CSR objectives and motivating its staff.

The bank decided to send a team of people to help with a beach clearance project in February 2005. For two weeks the team would clean debris off coastlines in the Moratuwa region of Sri Lanka.

To ensure that volunteers came from a range of regional areas, senior managers from each of the 13 areas of the Northern Division of were asked to nominate one employee to be considered for the trip. This provided a solid platform for building relationships and improving inter-departmental communications across the region.

The benefits

As well as providing clear benefits to those who actually volunteered, the project had many far-reaching advantages for other bank employees.

Following the project, the team of volunteers took part in a series of motivational evenings as part of the 'My HSBC' initiative. They attended six events across Northern Division region, speaking about their time in Sri Lanka and what it had meant to them.

In addition, these events were filmed and DVDs were sent out to all HSBC branches as part of a 12-week programme to further inspire staff and to reach any workers who were unable to attend the evening events.

The results

The team of volunteers were able to share their experiences and in doing so, help to develop the skills of other workers throughout the company.

In addition to learning about specific capabilities such as decision-making, initiative, flexibility and creativity, staff were encouraged to have pride in their company. Workers were enthused by the fact that their employer took action and actually sent people abroad, rather than simply making donations as many other organisations did.

Furthermore, one member of the Sri Lanka team has since been promoted to become a manager after developing her skills on the placement.

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