

New research shows SA employees care more than ever about CSI

According to Sage Foundation's People Powering Change research, nearly half (48%) of South African employees cite their employer's commitment to corporate philanthropy as a major driver for working for the organisation, a number that rises to 54% among employees aged below 45 years. The research surveyed employees worldwide, including 1,000 in South Africa to get their view on corporate philanthropy and volunteering.



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The research highlights the important role a coherent corporate social investment (CSI) strategy has to play in driving talent acquisition, retention and engagement. Around three quarters (76%) of employees worldwide agreed that a commitment to social philanthropy makes their organisation a more attractive place to work, and as many said it was a reason to continue working for their employer.

Says Joanne van der Walt, Sage Foundation promotions director: “Employees today increasingly want to feel that they’re working for an organisation motivated by a purpose that goes beyond profit. South Africans, and especially the younger members of the population, are looking for a rewarding and meaningful workplace that gives them the opportunity to give something back.”



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Deeper need at a time of reduced budget

The research also explored how the pandemic has changed philanthropy budgets and approaches around the world. On the upside, 43% of South African respondents said their employer plans to increase its support to the local communities in which it operates in the wake of the virus outbreak. However, Covid will take a toll on CSI budgets at a time they’re needed the most.

Almost seven in ten (69%) survey respondents said their organisation had reduced its CSI budget after the pandemic and only 5% reported that employers increased their CSI budget in response to Covid-19. Two thirds (67%) said progress that has already been made by businesses to embed corporate philanthropy will become slower because of Covid-19.

At a time when the need in local communities is greater than ever, South African businesses can make a real difference by pledging to increase their volunteering offer to employees. There is a willingness to volunteer more often among South African employees who stand ready to help their organisations address the many new challenges communities face in the wake of Covid-19.



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Volunteerism – philanthropy in action

“Volunteerism is today a cornerstone of corporate philanthropy in South Africa, with most companies giving employees the opportunity to invest some of their working time into causes they care about. This is not only about giving back to the community – it’s a way for companies to help teams bond, deliver a meaningful employee experience, and improve their employer brand,” says Van der Walt.

Around 76% of respondents said their companies give employees an opportunity to give back through volunteering. Of those, 90% agreed that these volunteering programmes make a difference to their local communities. Some 60% of those working for companies without volunteering programmes said they would like to see their organisations start one.

“Employees at companies with volunteer days are proud to tell others where they work,” says Van der Walt. “What’s more, letting employees guide charitable efforts and get hands-on with volunteering empowers teams and helps people feel more engaged and connected to the workplace.”

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