How to Gain Executive Buy-in for Global Pro Bono

A Guide to Securing Executive Level Buy-in for Your Company’s Global Pro Bono Program
Summary

To truly be a purpose-driven company, 71 percent of U.S. business executives say that a company must be willing to take risks to address social justice issues.

Global Pro Bono is a tangible way to address social issues because it offers the opportunity to advance the work of organizations on the frontlines of these issues. Participating employees leverage their professional skills to assist social mission-driven organizations including non-profits, social enterprises, and government entities. Projects are time-bound and deliverable based.

In the last year alone, SAP launched a new program focused on racial economic equity, Johnson & Johnson and 3M launched health equity-focused programs and Mastercard launched a racial justice-focused program. Executive support has been critical for the success of these purpose-driven Global Pro Bono programs because it offers the cultural, financial, and promotional backing that is needed to deliver a program that lives out a company’s purpose and social priorities.

For corporate professionals who are exploring Global Pro Bono as an approach to drive their company’s purpose or for professionals with existing programs that are trying to maintain visibility of their programs, gaining executives’ buy-in for Global Pro Bono programs requires being strategic and intentional. Executives are often juggling several priorities and in a virtual working environment somewhat less accessible in terms of a lower likelihood of casual run-ins. Therefore, it will be necessary to continuously demonstrate how a Global Pro Bono program can advance executives’ goals, otherwise it will be deprioritized.

This guide offers corporate social impact managers with:

- Insights on the benefits of executive support of Global Pro Bono programs;
- Best practices on how to gain and maintain executive buy-in; and
- Tips to harness technology and the virtual working environment to better connect executives to programs.

To truly be a purpose-driven company, 71 percent of U.S. business executives say that a company must be willing to take risks to address social justice issues.
The Value of Executive Support

The Benefits of Executive Buy-in

To achieve a Global Pro Bono program that is in line with a company’s purpose and social priorities, securing executives’ support is key. The three areas where executives’ support is especially valuable for a Global Pro Bono program include *cultural, financial* and *promotional support*.

- **Cultural support:** Leadership influences whether a Global Pro Bono program is integrated into the corporate culture and isn’t simply considered by employees as additional work. Executive support fosters the belief that skills-based volunteering is part of being an employee at a purpose-driven company.

- **Financial support:** Leadership buy-in often authorizes the availability of resources that are needed to get programs staffed and funded.

- **Promotional support:** Leadership’s communication about the program, including its link to company purpose, mission and objectives, can be a powerful way to gain employee buy-in and attract talent to the company.

Purpose Enhances Employee Engagement

According to LinkedIn’s *Purpose at Work Global Report*, **73 percent** of professionals who identify as purpose-driven are satisfied with their jobs.

The Risks of Not Securing Executive Buy-in

Senior leadership often has significant influence over a company’s culture and finances, making them a key internal stakeholder to engage with. JPMorgan Chase & Co.’s Amanda Eversole, Head of Public Affairs and Managing Director of Corporate Responsibility, *spoke to the* significant influence that senior leadership has over an organization’s culture stating, “It is absolutely essential that the CEO and C-Suite be involved. These individuals serve as a company’s cultural centre and have great influence over the entire employee base’s attitude toward the importance of corporate responsibility.”

To further this point, employees may even be less likely to engage in a Global Pro Bono program if senior leadership is not onboard and the program could fail. The *American Charities Snapshot Employee Research* found that **57 percent** of those surveyed say having opportunities to engage with senior leaders is imperative or very important in motivating them to give or volunteer in the workplace. Additionally, many ideas or initiatives fail if they do not secure executive support.
How to Gain and Maintain Executive Support for Global Pro Bono

Summary

Many business executives already feel empowered to use their role to advance their company’s purpose. **72 percent of business executives** feel more empowered than ever to use their role to address pressing issues in the world.

So how can CSR professionals harness this existing appetite amongst executives to advance their companies purpose? The answer is to gain and maintain buy-in of their executives through engaging them at various stages of their Global Pro Bono program’s journey from initiation to implementation and evaluation.

To the right is a summary of steps outlined in this guide that PYXERA Global recommends corporate social impact leaders take to gain and maintain executive level buy-in of Global Pro Bono programs. Several of the steps are now even more accessible to executives because of new technologies and remote access.

### STEPS TO SECURE EXECUTIVE BUY-IN FOR:

**Companies New to Global Pro Bono**

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1. Determine How Your Global Pro Bono Program will Drive Your Company’s Purpose
2. Identify Key Stakeholders and the Leaders You Want to Engage
3. Introduce Executives to Global Pro Bono and a Program’s Value Proposition

**Companies with Existing Programs**

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1. Engage Executives in Your Program to Maintain Visibility
2. Leverage Your Executive’s Influence Over Your Corporate Culture
3. Show Executives Your Program’s Results and How it’s Delivering on Your Purpose-driven Goals
Steps to Secure Executive Buy-in for Companies New to Global Pro Bono

1. Determine how your Global Pro Bono program will drive your company’s purpose

   - Identify your company’s purpose by reading about your company’s strategy and confirming it with your leadership team
   - Learn about the benefits of Global Pro Bono
     - Meet with an industry peer through Global Pro Bono LEAD, a network of nearly 40 companies implementing Global Pro Bono programs
     - Read PYXERA Global’s State of the Practice report on industry trends
   - Determine the opportunities that a program would address at your company. For example, would it fulfill commitments to social justice priorities, ESGs, community and employee engagement targets, and/or talent development needs?
   - Create a value proposition on how a Global Pro Bono program will drive your company’s purpose

2. Identify Key Stakeholders and the Leaders You Want to Engage

   - Examine the structure of your leadership and identify leaders with the greatest potential impact on the three support areas: cultural, financial and promotional support
   - Learn about social issues in your community and the issues that your leaders care about
   - Prioritize the leaders you seek to present the Global Pro Bono opportunity
   - Conduct an assessment to identify impacts and opportunities on potential stakeholders including employees, managers, shareholders, customers, communities and more

Use Templates to Create a Pro Bono Value Proposition

Contact Gavin Cepelak, gcepelak@pyxeraglobal.org, at PYXERA Global for a consultation to support in creating your value proposition.
Steps to Secure Executive Buy-in for Companies New to Global Pro Bono

Introduce executives to Global Pro Bono and a Program’s Value Proposition

- Meet with executives to discuss how a Global Pro Bono program might be aligned to the company’s purpose by sharing a value proposition and examples of programs (pro bono examples can be found on PYXERA Global’s Global Engagement Forum Online). In doing so, simultaneously seek their support for the initiative in a capacity like an executive sponsor
- Try something and start small! Join a low barrier to entry multi-company program to begin your journey and build more employee allies. For example, refer to the Impact Champions for International Development program or the Reimagining Economic Growth in NYC initiative
- Connect your executives to industry peers who have their own Global Pro Bono program, or internal advocates at your company who are passionate about skills-based volunteering and understand the value of such initiatives
- Share industry trends such as the upcoming 9th Global Pro Bono State of the Practice report or various company sustainability reports that show their success and use of pro bono (SAP, 3M, and more)
- Create the opportunity for the executive to join a discovery workshop with you and your possible implementing partner so they are involved from the beginning

Connect with Industry Peers

Ask industry peers if you and your executives can join one of their Global Pro Bono events virtually.

This will allow your executive to see what Global Pro Bono is all about without needing to travel or make an investment first.

Be sure to select an event that will highlight the aspects of pro bono your executive would be most interested in or surprised by.
Steps to Secure Executive Buy-in for Companies with Existing Programs

1. Engage Executives in Your Program to Maintain Visibility
   - Send updates to executives at various critical points in the program (beginning/middle/end) with program highlights that include relevant quotes from participants and organizations
   - Include executives in the ongoing program advisory committee that helps with strategy
   - Engage executives in the participant nomination process
   - Match your executives to program participants as mentors to provide guidance on their approach to projects
   - Invite your executives to be a program participant

2. Leverage Your Executive’s Influence Over Your Corporate Culture
   - Request executives to frame and deliver key messaging about the program and promote it company-wide
   - Invite executives to join your program’s kick-off and closing events to give opening/closing remarks to acknowledge the team’s important work and share an inspiring message about why the team’s effort is driving the company’s purpose
   - Organize webinars for your executives to speak with different business units about how the program is relevant to those different functions

Use Asynchronous Communication

Send pre-recorded videos or audio to your executives with updates about the program. Consider including different voices like participants and organizations. This type of asynchronous communication can keep your executive informed about your program while being mindful of their time.
Steps to Secure Executive Buy-in for Companies with Existing Programs

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Show Executives Your Program’s Results and How it’s Delivering on Your Purpose-driven Goals

- Present executives with a summary report that includes qualitative and quantitative survey results and ensure it explains how the program is driving the company’s purpose and social priorities.
- In your report include a ‘stand-out stats’ page or executive summary with data most important for your executive to see. This allows your executive several options to view the report depending on the time they have available. Consider setting up a meeting to discuss the results and solicit feedback on anything that’s missing or could be improved upon for future iterations of the program.
- Use case studies and apply for industry awards to show executives specific stories of success and impact.
- Invite executives to a webinar where program alumni and organizations share stories about their experience.

Invite Executives to Virtual Events

Utilize the new virtual environment to connect executives to your program. Invite them to your virtual kick-off and closing events to give keynote messages or in a less formal role as an audience member to listen in.
Global Pro Bono Can Drive Purpose and Move the Needle on Social Issues

Securing executive support through the best practices mentioned above will help to ensure that Global Pro Bono programming is driving a company’s purpose while addressing social issues strategic to the company. There is a wealth of opportunity for companies to live out their purpose-driven goals by supporting and learning from community-based organizations that are key drivers of social issues in their communities.

There are many non-profit organizations and social enterprises that are working on social justice issues related to education, health, voting rights, economic justice, environmental and criminal justice. In the U.S. alone, there are about 13,196 civil rights organizations, some of which include familiar organizations like the National Urban League, the Vera Institute of Justice, Equal Justice Initiative, the YWCA and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

A Global Pro Bono program can be specifically designed to focus on one or more of the mentioned social issues that are important to a company. With an issue area in mind a company has the direction needed to then explore potential organizations and projects that could benefit from their employees’ business acumen.

With executive support and social priorities identified, Global Pro Bono programs are a powerful way for companies to engage their employees in living out their company’s purpose.
Join Global Pro Bono LEAD
Become a member of Global Pro Bono LEAD, an exclusive community advancing the field of Global Pro Bono that will consistently empower you with knowledge and tools to advance Global Pro Bono within your company and communicate its impact both internally and externally.

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