Corporate Peer Discussions Technology Industry Response During COVID-19
Summary of Best Practices on Corporate Response

Virtual convening held on April 23, 2020
Convening Organizations: ACCP, CECP, COF, and POL
Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP), Council on Foundations (COF), Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (CECP), and Points of Light (POL), which collectively represent more than 400 of the most socially and environmentally responsible global companies, are joining forces to support leaders of corporate purpose and to advocate for the field by convening dialogue on relevant solutions and to share best practices. While some companies are still assessing their response, we have already seen hundreds of corporations respond to the COVID-19 crisis with courage and determination. Their leadership sets an example for the sector to follow. In the sessions on the Technology Industry's Response During COVID-19, 10 member companies participated.

Key Themes and Best Practices

Technology companies participating on the COVID-19 Relief peer-to-peer calls discussed ways that their companies and industry can step up during this time of crisis to apply their unique resources, expertise, and people to address challenges and find solutions.

Employee Wellness

- As with other industries, tech companies expressed a first priority to care for the safety and wellbeing of their workforce. Emphasis is on the remote work transition, real life struggles, and mental health.

Virtual Transition

- As tech companies, the switch to a virtual workplace was seamless for many companies, but investments to equip their workforce with the equipment and security authentication needed are being made.
- Cloud based virtual solutions for clients have been in-demand, especially nonprofit partners.

Customer Support

- Tech companies are also supporting their customers and partners by in some cases deferring payments, extending offerings of tech platforms for existing customers, setting up fundraising campaigns, etc.

Philanthropic Response

- The tech industry peer conversation indicated that companies are responding with grants to address immediate needs of food insecurity, homelessness, and the digital divide in virtual education as well as providing in-kind support of technology equipment.
- Companies are providing increased corporate matching funds to employee donations for COVID-19 and shifting current grantmaking to remove restrictions so that funds can go to general operating support.
- Companies are being flexible with their current partners and helping them to meet new and emerging needs and rapidly scale (examples include demand for online math programs as well as translation services between teachers, students, and parents in families where English is not the first language)

Tech Solutions

- Specific examples of ways that companies are leveraging technology for COVID-19 response include:
    - Using technology to connect needy people with others wanting to help (Samaritan supply chain, Uber platform for community needs).
    - Leveraging their data science expertise to help community partners to see around corners and understand issues facing their supply chain and customers / community stakeholders.
    - Mobilizing their employees and expertise pro bono to assist local governments with updating legacy systems that are inundated (i.e. with unemployment filings).
    - Researching how volunteer organizations could use blockchain technology to enable a chain of trust with volunteers who move from one organization or geography to another.
    - Setting up a virtual IT helpdesk accessible to educators needing assistance with remote learning technology platforms.
    - Addressing the digital divide. Some companies and small businesses have put their routers by the window to provide internet access for students to be able to download their work.
    - Donating technology equipment to hospitals and other organizations.
    - Providing free access to tele-health platforms.
    - Transitioning CSR programs in STEM education and computational thinking / data to online learning for students and educators are.

Volunteerism:

- This is a time of year when many companies ramp up their service events. Employees have a passion to respond to the crisis by using their innovation and passion for good; some are asking for virtual opportunities and others are self-mobilizing, such as using 3D printers to make masks. The mental and emotional benefits of volunteerism are powerful in this time of social distancing.
- It is also Earth Day, which lends itself to big hands-on volunteer events which are now canceled. Providing kid-friendly projects are especially popular with so many families with children home from school.
- Virtual volunteerism can provide safe opportunities to volunteer in areas such as capacity building, financial capability work, thanking donors, fundraising, digital transformation, tech infrastructure, mobile resources, visiting with elderly virtually, etc. IT workers can help nonprofits and educators adjust to virtual learning.
- Many companies are providing employees with lists of curated virtual volunteer opportunities, drawing from resources such as Points of Light's list of resources for virtual volunteer opportunities.
- While virtual volunteerism isn't new, it is a dynamic area that is developing rapidly. Local volunteer opportunities have been well-received as a meaningful opportunity to make an impact. To that end, corporate volunteer teams across regions are sharing knowledge and best practices with each other.

Flexible Definitions of Volunteerism

- Some companies are using social media campaigns like "#LocalLight" (from Points of Light), "#CreateChangefromHome" or "#1000ActsofKindness" or "#COVIDkindness" to capture kind acts, such as shopping for a neighbor or reading a story over facetime, and sharing those uplifting stories internally.
- Many employees, working from home and seeing immediate needs in their community, have a desire to help neighbors, family, or their local community; in response, some companies are removing the 501c3 requirement for service time so that employees could use their Volunteer Time Off (VTO) time flexibly.
- Employees can even volunteer within the company with developing COVID relief programs. For example, at one company, corporate responsibility and foundation employees stepped up to serve as call center representatives to help employees navigate changes in benefits and apply for relief funds.

- Tracking volunteer hours will remain important for YOY comparisons, and software platforms like WeSpire, Cybergrants, YourCause, Benevity and others are starting to track these more flexible volunteer actions within their platforms by adding COVID-19 tags and categories for non-traditional volunteering.
- Companies are also focusing more on tracking metrics like employee satisfaction, engagement, and pride.

Decision-Making Internally

- CSR leaders on the peer-to-peer calls discussed their role as a sounding board for employees and the need to be receptive to well-intentioned ideas, even if they are not in the end practical to implement.
- Innovation requires agility and nimbleness to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.
- They discussed the challenge of needing to move swiftly but also be inclusive in decision-making.
- Company leaders at many companies are holding conversations (or sending video messages) with employees to connect, hear struggles, and discuss what the company is doing in response. This provides transparency and psychological safety. Some companies have included medical experts in these briefings.

COVID-19 Resources from each partnering organization:

- ACCP: COVID-19 Resources for Corporate Citizenship Professionals
- CECP: COVID-19 Resources Recap for CEOs and Recap for CR Leaders
- COF: COVID-19 Resource Hub
- POL: COVID-19 Action Plan