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## **CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM BORN OF WAR: THE CASE OF UKRAINE**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this work is the theoretical and practical substantiation of the concept and phenomenon of corporate volunteering, factors and directions of its activation during the war, optimization of its positive impact on society and in the aspect of approaching Victory, and from the point of view of the post-war recovery of Ukraine.

**Key words:** *corporate volunteering, war, policy of corporate volunteering, corporate social responsibility, corporate culture.*

Developed volunteer activity is an indicator of a highly moral society that strives to improve its country with the help of conscious, purposeful, active actions. Currently, the share of the population involved in volunteering is growing in many countries and in the world in general. Together, volunteers improve the quality of life on the planet. Also, many studies show that countries with a higher level of citizen involvement in volunteering have more successful economies [1; 2]. According to the UN Volunteers program, which takes care of the development of volunteerism and the organization of volunteer activities, approximately one in seven people in the world is a volunteer – almost a billion (970 million) of them. Their work is the equivalent of 125 million full-time jobs or \$1.348 trillion per year (which is 2.4% of the world economy). These are very different people with different professions, fortunes, interests and goals, but they all have a common value – concern for people, nature and society [3; 4].

In the conditions of a cruel, terrible, protracted war, Ukraine became one of the countries with the most developed volunteer movement. Therefore, in such a multifaceted phenomenon as "volunteering", different directions have emerged. In this work, the authors explore the direction of corporate volunteering. This topic has become very important for Ukraine since 2014,

and has become especially relevant during the last two years of Russia's full-scale war against our people and civilizational values in general.

Using scientific developments [1; 5], as well as the Law of Ukraine "On Volunteering"[6], we formulate the following definition: *Volunteering* is a form of voluntary activity in which a person uses his human resources, namely: his time, talents, strength, skills to help others or to support a specific good cause, organization or initiative without financial compensation for this activity. Volunteers are treated with great respect in Ukraine today. After all, since 2014 and especially after February 24, 2022, our volunteers have demonstrated to the whole world that they are a powerful force capable of organizing, uniting and helping to solve very serious issues. Currently, Ukrainian volunteers are the most important support for the Armed Forces. They find and deliver necessary things, including military supplies, food, help evacuate the wounded, and support the morale of soldiers even in the hottest spots. Volunteers also help affected children and adults, ensure their comfort and safety, take care of abandoned animals, etc.

Volunteerism, which was born and gained popularity as an individual choice of conscious people, nowadays begins to acquire corporate features, because acting unitedly by a familiar team with the support of management means significantly reducing the problems of limited resources, lack of opportunities, lack of important information, etc., and therefore – to significantly increase the results of voluntary work activity.

Corporate volunteering is based on the following main pillars: 1) high-level corporate social responsibility; 2) developed strong corporate culture [7; 8]; 3) respect of enterprise managers and employees for universal human and national civilizational values.

Accordingly, there are various corporate programs aimed at solving social problems: environmental, cultural, sports, technical, educational, career guidance, aimed at the development of 21st century skills (creativity, systemic approach, teamwork), etc. Corporate volunteering programs are expedient events organized by the enterprise to involve internal and external stakeholders in socially useful voluntary free activities. Repetitive and then systematic volunteer programs need to be systematized and over time are formalized into a corporate volunteering policy.

*The policy (concept) of corporate volunteering* is a system of views, a defining idea, a set of principles, methods, evaluation criteria and tools of influence on the processes of organization, improvement and use of corporate volunteer programs of the enterprise. It includes the planning and procedure for conducting volunteer activities, the implementation

of regulatory documents to determine how the company promotes and supports the voluntary participation of its staff in social and charitable initiatives. A social initiative is a specific activity of a person aimed at solving social problems, improving the quality of life of citizens or solving specific challenges in society.

Volunteering encourages people to step out of their comfort zone, see new realities, and challenge themselves to solve an actual social problem [9]. One of the characteristic features of volunteer programs for employees is their connection with training components at work, which demonstrates the interaction of volunteering and corporate involvement of employees, contributing to social development, team cohesion, and corporate responsibility.

The main *principles* of corporate volunteering can be summarized as follows: voluntary, free of charge, social utility, high relevance. It is worth highlighting the following main tasks of corporate volunteering: creating social value, supporting important non-profit projects, mobilizing resources, solving/mitigating current problems.

Many Ukrainian enterprises, in our time of unprecedented and terrible challenges, cooperate with a large number of citizens, study their problems, analyze the most common needs and show their concern and respect for society through the prism of various volunteer activities. Corporate volunteering programs demonstrate this interconnectedness between business and society. Noticeable activation of Ukrainian corporate programs began in 2014, after the invasion of Russia on the territory of Ukraine. Many companies started to hold various corporate programs, at most companies employees were the first to express their desire for this type of volunteering.

First of all, these programs include: online fundraising for the needs of defenders, weaving camouflage nets, training in first aid, support for victims, care for animals, etc. During all these years, the companies themselves mainly involved their employees in volunteer activities: cleaning and restoration of territories, collecting essential items for the needy, direct assistance to the victims, etc.

We conducted research on the example of 20 domestic and international companies operating in Ukraine (of various types of activity, scale and level of development of corporate volunteering) using surveys, in-depth interviews with managers and thematic analysis method.

The study showed that in 18 out of 20 organizations, corporate volunteering existed to a greater or lesser extent until 2022, but with the beginning of a large-scale war, it arose in 2 and significantly intensified in all organizations. Almost all employees of the studied organizations take part in

corporate volunteering at various levels. There was a need to spread clear and informative messages about volunteering: different areas of volunteering, opportunities to volunteer with colleagues, friends or family, and tools for this were quickly created in corporate chat. And 14 enterprises have created special chats ("I want to help", "Help us", "For Victory", etc.). Active volunteering in the first months of the full-scale war gave many people the opportunity to find their role in the approach of Victory, to direct noble anger in a constructive direction, to feel like a participant in the national movement of resistance to the aggressors.

Investigating the development of corporate volunteering over time, we noted an interesting fact: a spontaneous, powerful surge in the first months of a full-scale war has been regulated over time and is increasingly based on professional competencies, integrated with the values and internal culture of the organization. Volunteering helps spread corporate values both within and outside the organization. It can also be noted that joint work for the sake of Victory has become one of the most important values at many enterprises.

Such forms of corporate volunteering as events accompanied by the collection of funds for the needs of the army, systematic donation, constant assistance to mobilized employees and their families, etc., are regular at all the investigated enterprises. At the same time, new areas of corporate volunteerism are emerging, related to the reintegration of combatants into civilian life, the creation of jobs for people with special needs, the restoration of de-occupied territories, the support of social enterprises, and the renewal of the competencies of demobilized and internally displaced people to increase competitiveness and effective return to the labor market.

Corporate volunteering, when it is aimed at the implementation of common values and takes into account important aspects of the company's strategy, has a lasting and significant impact on all participants. At the same time, it is important to constantly adapt programs in accordance with changes in the socio-economic environment and internal development of the company.

### **Conclusion.**

In the modern world, volunteering is an indicator of the development of the welfare state and a highly developed, respectable society. Corporate volunteering programs are an indispensable sign of a high level of organizational culture and corporate social responsibility. Corporate volunteering becomes not only socially, but also economically significant if it is aligned with business strategy. The integration of corporate volunteering into the daily activities and tasks of companies reflects the modernization of business development.

The study showed the large-scale spread of corporate volunteering in Ukraine since 2014, and its intensification unprecedented in the world since February 2022. The generalization of forms and methods of corporate volunteering at the most active enterprises provides an opportunity to promote its development and popularization throughout the country among all employees.

Despite the benefits that volunteering brings to all its participants, there is still a lack of strategies for disseminating information and evaluating the results, a scientific approach to determine the impact on society. This will be the subject of our further research.

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