



# Volunteering:

**A catalyst for employee  
engagement and purpose**

**EXECUTIVE BRIEFING**



# Introduction

Having an engaged and motivated workforce delivers clear business benefits, from higher productivity and profitability, to lower staff turnover and reduced absenteeism.

But engagement, job satisfaction and morale continue to challenge organisations, with employees increasingly looking for more meaning in their work.

This briefing presents new research into these workforce trends and highlights the power of an often-overlooked opportunity to address them: employee volunteering. It explores volunteering as a business-critical asset and how organisations can unlock its full potential.



## THE CHALLENGE

# Rising employee disengagement

Challenges with employee engagement and wellbeing continue to hinder productivity and team performance.

New research by Royal Voluntary Service suggests nearly one in three (29%) UK workers now feel disengaged in their jobs, with over a third (34%) less engaged than they were a year ago.<sup>1</sup>

Job satisfaction, productivity and morale are also on a downward trajectory, while stress and burnout are rising.

**29%**

feel disengaged at work

**28%**

feel less productive than a year ago

**35%**

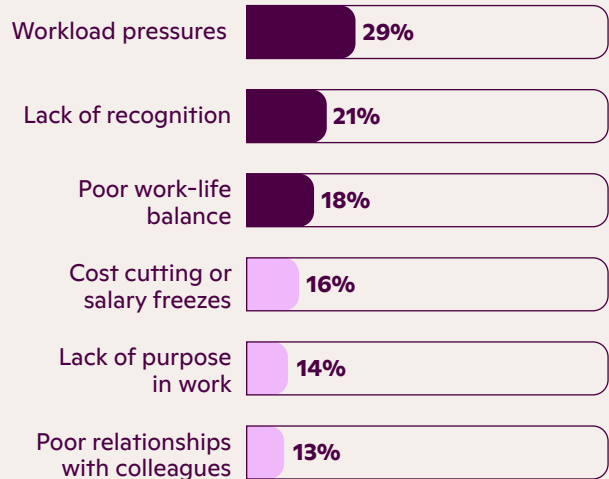
feel less satisfied in their roles

**1 in 3**

affected by stress and burnout

The study reveals a combination of factors are contributing to this workplace malaise.

### FACTORS NEGATIVELY IMPACTING MORALE



The figures indicate a growing sense of detachment is now affecting millions of workers. And with one in five considering quitting in the last year – signal a clear need for strategies to boost engagement, job satisfaction and purpose at work.

**Nearly half of UK workers report morale as 'low' or 'neutral'. Stress and burnout are also rising with 43% of 18-24s now affected.**

<sup>1</sup> Research was conducted by 3Gem with a sample of 2,000 nationally representative respondents age 18+. The survey fieldwork took place between 30.01.2026 - 04.02.2026.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

# A workforce asking for meaning

A notable finding in the research was a desire amongst workers for greater meaning in their jobs, with a lack of purpose being one of the factors negatively impacting morale.

Currently, only 29% say work feels meaningful to them, with a lack of recognition for their efforts (22%), high, task-orientated workloads (22%) and limited opportunities to contribute skills and interests beyond the job role (15%) cited as reasons.

At the same time, a significant share agree that having opportunities to use their time or skills to benefit the community would enhance the employee experience.

Employee volunteering is a powerful way to bring purpose into work, and a growing body of evidence points to how volunteering experiences support improved wellbeing, stronger connection and higher productivity and engagement. It's emerging as one of the few interventions that deliver benefits simultaneously for organisations, their people and communities.

**54%**

agree volunteering would provide more purpose in their day-to-day work<sup>2</sup>

**6 in 10**

workers say the chance to use their skills to benefit the community would increase job satisfaction, motivation and engagement

**60%**

of 18-24s agree it's important for employers to offer volunteering days<sup>3</sup>

***A study by Oxford University's Wellbeing Research Centre suggests volunteering is the only workplace wellness intervention to consistently deliver positive outcomes***

<sup>2</sup> Research was conducted by 3Gem Research, which surveyed 2,000 British adults (ages 18+) between 6 – 9 October 2025

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## THE GAP

# A solution hiding in plain sight

Although employee volunteering has tremendous potential, it's often overlooked in workplaces.

Indeed, while the majority (62%) of businesses have introduced programmes, a Royal Voluntary Service study reveals a big gap between intent and action.<sup>4</sup>

Just one third of the time gifted for volunteering is being utilised, as businesses struggle to find suitable opportunities and navigate red tape and processes. More than 140 million employee volunteering hours go unused annually

It's a vast, untapped source of social impact and organisational value.

Analysis by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr)<sup>5</sup> estimates fully utilising the time allocated for volunteering could generate substantial financial benefits, driven by productivity gains from employee's enhanced skills, confidence and engagement.

**Only a third of the time allocated to employee volunteering is used**

**140M+**

volunteering hours go unused in UK workplaces every year

Gains of up to

**£5,239**

**per employee, per year** in professional and managerial roles

## ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

**£32.5bn**

in productivity gains for the UK economy from full utilisation of volunteering hours

<sup>4</sup> Censuswide research from a sample of 1,000 HR Decision Makers in UK businesses (aged 21+), with a minimum of 50 who work for a FTSE 350 company. The data was collected between 27.02.2025-04.03.2025.

<sup>5</sup> Analysis was conducted by The Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) - <https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/news/volunteering/employee-volunteering-the-untapped-325bn-opportunity-for-the-uk-economy/>

## THE SOLUTION

# Transforming volunteering from a 'nice to have' into a critical asset

Employee volunteering is a simple and effective way to address workforce and performance challenges while meeting growing expectations to deliver positive societal impact. However, realising these gains depends on increasing participation – embedding volunteering into organisational culture and recognising it as a business-critical asset, rather than a 'nice to have'.

## Maximising Impact – Volunteering Programme Checklist

- ✔ **Integrate volunteering into broader strategies.** Align with other people, ESG and social value initiatives, rather than treating it as a standalone activity.
- ✔ **Offer diverse opportunities.** Provide flexible, skills-based, team and remote options that fit around modern working lives and suit a range of interests.
- ✔ **Track and measure outcomes.** Use participation and impact data to support ongoing engagement, ESG reporting and tender submissions
- ✔ **Lead from the front.** Visible involvement by senior leaders sends a clear signal that volunteering matters
- ✔ **Open volunteering up.** Enable more to benefit by offering volunteering to all, or more, staff
- ✔ **Make it easy.** Develop clear guidance and a simple sign-up pathways

By taking these steps, the rewards are clear. Research from Royal Voluntary Service and Cebr<sup>6</sup> shows that organisations with higher uptake of volunteering – the 'Volunteer Leaders' – report stronger outcomes.

Impact area	Volunteer Leaders	Under-used programmes
Improved employee motivation	53%	42%
Stronger wellbeing and engagement	52%	37%
Enhanced reputation in the community and with clients	49%	37%
Increased employee skills and confidence	37%	33%



# Are you maximising the volunteering opportunity?

**Answer these questions to find out**

## **Utilisation**

- What proportion of the volunteering time you offer employees is used each year?
- How does this compare to participation in other people initiatives?

## **Organisational impact**

- Is your volunteering programme aligned with your strategic people initiatives and goals?
- Can you see clear links between employee volunteering and outcomes such as engagement, wellbeing, retention or productivity?

## **Social value**

- Can you demonstrate the social value generated by your employee volunteering programme?
- Do you have data to leverage this impact in bids, regulatory reporting and stakeholder communications?

If the answers to any of these questions is no, or you are uncertain, it's likely your organisation – like many others – is leaving value on the table.

# GoVo for Business

Turning good intention into measurable impact requires more than policy.

It demands a practical way for employees to easily access and participate in volunteering opportunities that fit around their day jobs. At the same time, organisations need robust ways to measure outcomes and demonstrate the value of their efforts.

Royal Voluntary Service's employee volunteering platform, GoVo for Business addresses these challenges. Built in collaboration with 100s of UK charities, it's designed to enable workplace volunteering at scale.

## **Volunteering made easy**

Access to thousands of local and national opportunities — 400+ in every postcode. Includes skills-based, remote, micro-volunteering, team days and in-person roles to suit different schedules and interests.

## **Measure and report with confidence**

Tracking and reporting tools capture hours, participation rates and causes supported — creating a robust evidence base for ESG reporting, procurement and alignment with workforce metrics.

## **Reduced friction and admin**

Simple and secure access for employees, streamlined approvals and ID checks, and integrated management of opportunities — without creating extra work for HR or management teams.

## **Expert consultancy**

Embedded expert guidance helps organisations sustain participation — including engagement strategies, practical roll-out, and aligning volunteering with wider culture, ESG priorities and workforce goals.



## ABOUT ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

**Royal Voluntary Service's mission is to mobilise volunteers for a better Britain.**

Our North Star is **volunteering for all**, growing participation across all backgrounds, ages and abilities so everyone can volunteer.

For more than 85 years, we've convened volunteers at scale nationwide to support people in need, communities and the NHS, including through major digital initiatives.

Building on this experience, we recently launched GoVo for Business, the only national charity-backed employee volunteering platform designed for the modern workforce.

It makes it easy for employees to volunteer and simple for teams to manage. The result: higher participation and volunteering that genuinely supports engagement and social value delivery – without creating extra work.

## READY TO MAXIMISE YOUR VOLUNTEERING IMPACT?

Interested in a 20-minute consultation to explore how you can maximise the impact of your employee volunteering and how GoVo for Business can support you? Contact our team to get started.

**Contact the team - [sales@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk](mailto:sales@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk)**

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