

Starbucks' charity bonded staff

Here's an easy way to make your team come together: Mobilize everyone to donate time and energy to improve their community.

Giving back produces twin benefits. Participants feel like they're making a positive difference in the larger world. And co-workers get to know each other better—and gain a stronger affiliation with their employer.

Consider how Howard Schultz rallied his employees during a difficult time. When Schultz returned to Starbucks as its CEO in 2008, the company was in a tailspin. Increased competition hurt sales, employee morale plummeted and public-relations nightmares afflicted the once-beloved global giant.

Despite the need to cut costs, Schultz decided to spend lavishly to bring 10,000 store managers to New Orleans for a conference. But first, he joined them to do volunteer work.

Their efforts amounted to the largest community support initiative in New Orleans' history, according to Schultz. His team donated over 54,000 volunteer hours during the week, and Starbucks invested more than \$1 million in post-Katrina rebuilding projects.

"I personally assisted with the restoration of homes in one of the hardest-hit areas of the city," Schultz says.

The experience of pulling together to improve the lives of New Orleans' residents gave the employees a shared sense of purpose. It also reinforced the need to persevere and show resilience in the face of adversity.

When you allow your team to give back to people who are less fortunate, it helps everyone see their situation in a broader perspective. As a result, they are more apt to help each other succeed rather than cling to petty grievances.

— Adapted from ["The HBR Interview: 'We Had to Own the Mistakes,'"](#) Adi Ignatius, www.hbr.org.