

## Community Business Launches ENGAGE in Hong Kong with the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day

On Friday 30 May 2008, teams of employees from leading companies in Hong Kong, representing different industries – from banking and finance to technology and consumer goods, joined together for the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day, contributing their time and skills to help build the aspirations of young people in the district of Tin Shui Wai.

This was an ENGAGE initiative, an international campaign designed to increase the impact of employee volunteering by bringing companies together to take action in the community.



“ *Employee volunteering is a great way to motivate and engage employees whilst at the same time contributing to the community. Whilst a growing number of companies in Hong Kong are introducing their own programmes, the benefit of joining a collaborative project such as the ENGAGE 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day is that there is the potential for the impact to be so much greater. Each company brings different resources and different perspectives – it's a powerful learning opportunity for all.* ”

*Catherine Husted  
Deputy Chair of CBLT and  
Partner, Allen & Overy Hong Kong*

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September 2008

## BACKGROUND

The Community Business Leadership Team (CBLT) is a unique group of business leaders in Hong Kong committed to corporate social responsibility. Representing over 40 companies across a range of industries, the CBLT recognised that as a group it had access to valuable corporate resources that could be pooled and applied for the benefit of the local community.

In 2008, the CBLT decided it wanted to take action together under the banner of ENGAGE and to focus on the needs of young people in one of Hong Kong's poorest districts, Tin Shui Wai. It developed the concept of the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day. Working collaboratively, member companies contributed the time and skills of their employees and provided financial and in-kind donations to make a positive impact on the lives of aspiring young people by showing them the opportunities for further education and employment.

## DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

Whilst members of the CBLT were in agreement that they wanted to take action in the community together, it was not clear at the outset what the specific project might be. In order to develop an appropriate programme – one that appealed to participating companies and their employees, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of the community, the group engaged in a thorough process of stakeholder engagement.

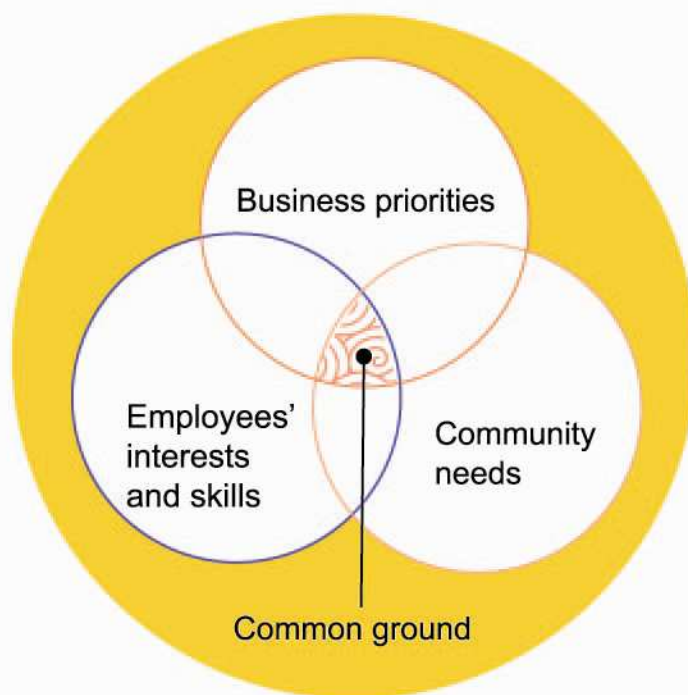
### Business Priorities and Employees' Interests and Skills

The first step was an online survey polling the views of the wider CBLT. This revealed an interest in engaging large numbers of employees, focusing on youth and taking action in the district of Tin Shui Wai – a district that had received much media coverage as a 'city of sadness' due to a number of social issues resulting from its remote location, limited employment opportunities and high density of public housing estates.

### Community Needs

The next step was to form a Community Investment Taskforce made up of interested individuals who were keen to shape the programme. The Taskforce reviewed the findings of the online survey and consulted with a local legislator and expert on Tin Shui Wai. To gain first hand experience of the needs of the community, the Taskforce took part in a 'Seeing is Believing Visit' to Tin Shui Wai, meeting with community and church groups and local residents. The visit revealed that in an environment of high unemployment and isolation from the heart of Hong Kong, young people especially were looking for opportunities to 'get out of' Tin Shui Wai and improve their skills so that they could have better job prospects.

Once the objectives of the CBLT and the interests of employees were understood and the needs of the community identified, the Taskforce was ready to develop an appropriate programme. The concept of the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day emerged.



Community Business - "The Best Fit"

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day, designed to build the aspirations of young people and show them the opportunities available for further education and employment, was a full day event involving teams of corporate volunteers. Over 100 people took part in the programme, including more than 50 corporate volunteers (whether it be in teams or as corporate hosts), 8 university students and 48 school students from Tin Shui Wai. Corporate volunteers accompanied groups of 10 young people between the ages of 16 and 18 on a journey from their home district of Tin Shui Wai, to a university institution where they experienced life on campus and then on to a corporate office to get an insight into the world of work. The day ended with dinner and a movie.

Throughout the day, the role of the corporate volunteers was to act as a mentor:

- interacting with the young people in their team
- seeking to understand their personal aspirations
- encouraging them to continue their studies
- inspiring them to think through their future job opportunities
- sharing their own experience

## OBJECTIVES

By partnering with tertiary education institutes and tapping into the unique resources of the corporate sector, the specific objectives of this programme were to:

- broaden the vision of the young people
- encourage them to continue their studies
- inspire them to think about their future job opportunities
- provide them with access to people and experiences they would not otherwise have
- motivate them to create a better future for themselves



## JOURNEY DESCRIPTION

The journey involved three key stages. These are outlined below.

### 1. Tin Shui Wai

Corporate Volunteers were transported out to Ju Ching Chu Secondary School in Tin Shui Wai. Here they were assigned to their teams and introduced to the young people they would be spending the day with. A formal opening ceremony was held and then the teams were invited to engage in a number of introductory activities. This included the distribution of a 'Journey of Opportunity Passport' and ice-breaking activities to help participants to get to know each other.



### 2. University Visit

The participants then travelled in their teams to one of two universities: City University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong. Each arranged its own programme, providing the young people with an overview of courses on offer, the opportunity to hear from current university students and a first hand experience of life on campus, including a tour of university accommodation.



### 3. Corporate Visit

The teams then visited one of four corporate offices. During the 3-hour visit, they were shown behind the scenes of a leading company and given a unique insight into the world of work. Whether it was learning coffee-tasting at Starbucks, experiencing a train simulator at MTR, visiting the Xbox showroom at Microsoft or taking part in banking games at Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited, this was an opportunity that could not be experienced in the classroom of their schools.



The day ended with the opportunity to reflect on what they had experienced followed by dinner and a fun activity in the form a visit to the cinema.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The management of the ENGAGE 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day can be divided into five key stages: planning, marketing, recruitment and training, implementation and review, with the bulk of the work in the planning phase.

### Planning

The priority during the planning stage was to ensure that the programme met the key objectives of all the parties involved and that relationships were established with the right partners. It was important to identify a local NGO in Tin Shui Wai that understood the objectives and was able to assist with the recruitment of the young people. The Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service based in Tin Shui Wai played a crucial role in working with the local schools, promoting the programme and recruiting the young people through an interview and briefing process. Likewise the universities played a key role in organising the university visits and appointed student leaders to act as guides on campus. Although our NGO partner was a religious one, students selected did not necessarily come from one faith.



### Marketing

Once the detail of the programme was defined, attention was focused on developing the communications strategy. The challenge was to promote the programme as widely as possible to secure financial and in-kind donations from the corporate sector and capture the interest of employees to participate as volunteers. A campaign logo and website were developed to support the programme.

### Recruitment and Training

The success of the programme relied ultimately on the commitment and enthusiasm of the corporate volunteers. Once volunteers had registered their interest in participating, a number of Corporate Team Leaders and Co-Leaders were appointed from each of the hosting companies. A series of individual briefings and group briefings were arranged for Corporate Team Leaders and other participating volunteers as well as online briefing materials.

### Implementation

With the delegation of responsibility to the Corporate Team Leaders and teams fully briefed in advance, implementation on the day itself was relatively straightforward. Each party knew the role they had to play and had the information they needed to respond if something unexpected happened.

### Review

The review process started on the day itself with participants invited to give feedback. This was supplemented by an additional review meeting with key stakeholders a week after the event. This gave time for participants to reflect on what worked well and what could be improved for future events.

## EVALUATION

Whilst the most powerful feedback for an event such as this is anecdotal, Community Business took steps to evaluate the impact of the day. All team members, corporate volunteers and the young people from Tin Shui Wai alike, were invited to share their learnings with the rest of their team at the end of the day. They were also invited to complete feedback forms. High level findings are shown below. The creative nature of the programme captured the interest of the media and the event received significant coverage in the local press.



### Tin Shui Wai Youth

Over 48 young people from 7 schools in Tin Shui Wai participated in the event. For the youth it provided a unique experience to engage with people outside of their normal social network and broaden their vision – both about the world of work and more generally in terms of the opportunities available to them. When asked what was the biggest thing they had learnt from the day, they came back with comments such as:

- I have learnt to think positively and know that there are always opportunities
- Knowledge is very important in my life
- Success is not as far as I thought, if I work hard and seize every opportunity!
- We must try our best to achieve our dreams
- I must have bigger determination to study in University

To what extent did you enjoy the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day?	91% said 'Very Much'
Would you recommend this programme to your peers?	98% said 'Yes'
What impact has the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day had on your thoughts about your future?	95% said 'More Optimistic'

“ I have learnt to think positively and know that there are always opportunities.”

“ Success is not as far as I thought; I must work hard and seize every opportunity! ”

### Corporate Volunteers

44 corporate volunteers from 15 companies took part in the mentoring teams. For these volunteers it was the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of young people in Tin Shui Wai whilst at the same time enhancing their own experiences – both personal and professional. Specifically they talked about how the experience had opened their eyes about the local community and been beneficial to them as well as the students.

To what extent did you enjoy the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day?	97% said 'Very Much'
Would you recommend this programme to your peers?	100% said 'Yes'
To what extent do you think the youth benefited from the 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day?	79% said 'A lot'

“ It was an inspiring day for both students and volunteers. The students were open and communicated well. ”

“ A very informative and enjoyable session, a meaningful and memorable day! ”

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The ENGAGE 'Journey of Opportunity' evolved into a complex project involving many parties. There were several factors that contributed to its success and are worth highlighting as they can be applied to other employee volunteering programmes. They include the following:

### Common and Clear Objectives

From the outset it was essential to have a common understanding of the objectives of the project from all sides. This helped to establish realistic expectations of what we could achieve as well as to set indicators for success. This involved establishing a key set of messages with which to brief participating volunteers and share with the media. We knew for example that we were not able to change the lives of the young people in one day, but were clear that we were aiming to make a positive impact by broadening their vision and exposing them to new opportunities.

### Delegation

Given the number of people involved – both in terms of the variety of stakeholders and sheer number of participants, it was important to delegate as much of the responsibility as possible so that the teams became self-running. A Corporate Team Leader and Co-Leader were appointed for each team and given the responsibility of co-ordinating the event for their team. Careful briefing ahead of time ensured that on the day the teams ran almost independently.

### Clear Communication

Starting with the stakeholder engagement process through to liaising with the various partners, marketing the event, recruiting volunteers and briefing volunteers, it was essential to ensure that there was clear communication. All parties needed to know what was expected of them and what role they had to play. A specific website was developed as a communication tool and the project was strongly branded with a distinctive logo and supporting marketing materials. Time was also taken to provide tailored briefings for each party – both face-to-face and via conference call to ensure that the programme was well understood.

## CONCLUSION

Corporate Community Investment (CCI) is one component of CSR and is the most visible way a company can demonstrate its social responsibility. It refers to a company's total contribution to the community and has three components: financial contributions, in-kind contributions and the contribution of time and skills of its staff. The ENGAGE 'Journey of Opportunity' Action Day satisfied all three of these components with the focus on the latter, also known as employee volunteering. As this case study demonstrates, employee volunteering programmes can have enormous benefits – both for the community and the employees taking part. When you extend that to beyond one company the impact has the potential to be even greater. For more information on how to develop strategic Employee Volunteering programmes, please see Community Business' publication 'Employee Volunteering: The Guide' available in print and online at [www.communitybusiness.org.hk](http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ENGAGE 'Journey of Opportunity' was a truly collaborative project, representing a partnership between the NGO sector, tertiary education sector and corporate sector. Community Business would like to thank all the partners for the role they played in making the event a success, especially: the Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service based in Tin Shui Wai for recruiting, briefing and being responsible for the young people; City University of Hong Kong and The University of Hong Kong for organising the university visits and engaging their students and staff; Microsoft, MTR, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited and Starbucks for acting as corporate hosts and providing the young people with such unique experiences. Community Business would also like to thank all the 17 participating companies listed below for their voluntary contributions whether it be funding, in-kind donations or corporate volunteers.

### Participating Companies

ABN AMRO, Allen & Overy, Baker & McKenzie, British Council, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Heartware, Microsoft, MTR, Peak Eye Offset Printing Limited, PepsiCo Asia International - Asia Pacific, Pinsent Masons, The Prudential Assurance Company, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited, Starbucks, Time Technology and Wildfire Restaurants.

### Partners:



### Participating Companies:



## ABOUT COMMUNITY BUSINESS

Community Business is a unique membership based non profit organisation whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to continually improve their positive impact on people and communities. Community Business provides training, facilitation and advice to some of the world's leading companies in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its major areas of focus include diversity in the workplace, corporate community investment and CSR strategy and policy. Founded in 2003 and based in Hong Kong, Community Business currently works with a number of organisations, small, medium and large, committed to CSR. For more information, visit [www.communitybusiness.org.hk](http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk)

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