

# An Authentic Commitment to Social Impact

An Interview with Evan Hochberg,  
National Director-Community Involvement, Deloitte Services LP

**EDITORS' NOTE** Evan Hochberg joined Deloitte in 2005 and provides strategic direction for philanthropy, volunteerism, pro bono, workplace giving, and environmental impact. A frequent public speaker on philanthropic trends, he is a board member of the Taproot Foundation. Additionally, he is a member of The Conference Board's Corporate Contributions Council; serves as Education Vice Chair of the United Way Worldwide Campaign for the Common Good; and he is on the leadership committee for A Billion+Change and Reimagining Service. Hochberg received a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an M.A. in Management of Human Services from The Heller School at Brandeis University.



Evan Hochberg

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## How critical is corporate social responsibility to the culture of Deloitte?

Corporate citizenship is a very tangible part of our culture. IMPACT Day, for instance, is arguably the most significant statement of our organization's culture. As one Deloitte, we take an entire day living out one of our core beliefs – our commitment to the community.

However, IMPACT Day is simply a reflection of what is true year round. Our desire to be a good corporate citizen through our beliefs and actions is a key reason why people join Deloitte. They understand the depth and breadth of activities that Deloitte supports that benefit the wider society.

These activities bring our people together, open communication lines, drive skills development, and make a connection to the marketplace that is critical to our business.

## Do you align philanthropy with the business or are they looked at separately?

Our approach to philanthropy is fully integrated with our business strategy – that is what the future will look like for all businesses in this space.

It starts with an authentic commitment to social impact. If the philanthropic work you're doing is not having a real impact and the driver behind it is not a sincere effort to strengthen society and community, there is no business case – our employees would view

that as a hollow effort.

We look for opportunities that have real, compelling social impact but are very connected to our business strategy. This way, our recruiting team can use community involvement effectively to demonstrate social impact and differentiate Deloitte among our competitors and our marketing team can utilize the contributions we make in the community, not only to note the social impact but also to move us closer to our clients.

## Are your efforts global or are they developed on a regional basis?

It's a bit of both. Deloitte is structured so that most of the decision-making in terms of strategy is left at the member firm or country level – volunteerism and pro bono mean different things in the U.S. than they mean globally.

We make sure our strategy is very customizable in U.S. cities, because the players and the issues can be different even at that level.

It's important to think globally as an organization but have strategies and programs that ultimately touch the community on the ground in a way that is localized.

## How critical is the private sector role in making an impact on important societal issues?

The biggest mistake anyone can make is not appreciating the complexity of the community and national social issues we face, be it education, homelessness or hunger. Whether you're coming in with good intentions from the government, business or nonprofit areas, you want to get to a solution. Those who get into it realize that these problems are multifaceted and that the only way we're going to solve them is by having collaborative, multi-sector commitments and approaches.

The real power of business is doing what business does best based on whatever the core

competency or strength of that business is rooted in. We're one of the world's leading professional services firms, so we help organizations address all kinds of strategy, operations, finance, and technology issues.

We certainly donate a considerable amount of cash to nonprofits, but when it comes to complex problems, checks alone are generally not enough. We can raise the bar in terms of the corporate role in society if every organization does what they do best; that is what will drive change and make an impact.

## Many leaders talk about the need to reform K through 12 education, but the system remains broken. Why hasn't there been greater impact?

It's important to understand how complicated the education system is and that we're not going to create change overnight.

That said, there is a ton of progress being made, which compels us to continue our focus on this issue.

The role of business in education is critical. I see a lot of opportunities to be engaged more substantively in it, not only through things like volunteering and mentoring or giving monies, but also in terms of pro bono work that helps principals and superintendents with actionable data on how their students are doing. I think everyone understands that we need to do a better job of connecting education to employment.

## Do you reflect on the success of your efforts?

We definitely take pride in what we do. What we do best – leveraging the skills and talents of our people to address social issues – is something we celebrate and share through ongoing messages, most of which are internal, to help drive the culture.

We don't get hung up on thinking it is our job or within our ability to save the world. We do some powerful things, but we're only one player in this arena.

## Did you have an interest in this work early on in your career?

It's my life's work. I've always been interested in how we can develop world-class organizations that offer viable answers to our toughest community challenges.

The potential for business engagement in this work is high. We're still trying to understand how to drive better social impact efforts in a way that is sustainable because they are connected to the business goals of our organization. ●