

THE EXCHANGER PROGRAMME

Pioneering community engagement and collective action across the United Arab Emirates

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the concept of employee volunteering being relatively new in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Emirates NBD is recognized as a pioneer across the region for promoting the importance of serving others through volunteer activities. The company's award-winning Exchanger Programme engages thousands of employees, friends, family members and external business partners in volunteer activities in the UAE and beyond. By integrating employee volunteering into the company's business strategy, promoting social good as a business imperative, and actively encouraging the private sector to join these efforts, there has been a groundswell of engagement across the region.

ORGANIZATION



SECTOR

Financial Services

HEADQUARTERS

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

SDGs IMPACTED BY THE CASE STUDY



ACTIVATING A CULTURAL SHIFT

In 2015, Emirates NBD made the decision to prioritize community engagement as central to its company values through the establishment of Exchanger – a dedicated employee volunteering programme. While the concept of giving back to others is a core pillar of shari'a (the UAE is a majority-Muslim country), on an institutional level this support has historically been offered through financial gifts and in-kind donations. The introduction of the Exchanger Programme shifted the conversation of giving back in the UAE and created space for the practice to become much more commonplace and actively encouraged.

The Exchanger Programme offers employees and partners the opportunity to serve the community for a variety of different causes including promoting financial literacy, women's empowerment, health and wellness, environment, and community development. To encourage employees to get involved in Exchanger, there is institutional support, dedicated volunteer leave days, and an internal infrastructure to make finding opportunities easy. The bank has also expanded the Exchanger programme to its business partners, namely suppliers and vendors as well as relatives

and friends of staff, in an effort to further volunteering among the UAE community. Over the past four years, more than 143,800 members of the public have been positively and directly impacted by the Exchanger Programme.

Emirates NBD has implemented a specific business KPI around employee volunteering, where every department was expected to engage at least 20% of their workforce in volunteer activities. In addition, performance numbers and impact of the Exchanger Programme are audited by a third party assessor, Sustainable Square, a global CSR and Sustainability agency.

To further encourage the culture of volunteering, the company introduced Member Get Member (MGM) to inspire employees to recruit the most fellow employees to participate in Exchanger. The top recruiters are eligible to participate in a short-term international Exchanger Trek, with previous volunteering/trekking trips having taken place in Nepal, Morocco and China, and top recruiters for 2019 heading to Egypt.

PARTNERSHIPS IN PRACTICE

As an inaugural member of the UAE Impact Council Executive Committee, Emirates NBD is continuing its quest to encourage the private sector across the UAE to collaborate through their employee volunteer programs. Convened by IMPACT2030, the Impact Council is bringing together the business community, UAE government, and community organizations to identify opportunities for collective action around the SDGs. Together, the Council is working to activate volunteering opportunities for tens of thousands of employees in the country; promote collaboration between UAE-based organizations to amplify the approach to volunteering; help member organizations better understand the impact of their employee volunteering; and evolve to a focus on skills-based volunteering to further amplify the impact being made.



KEY OUTCOMES AND LEARNINGS

Since the program's inception, Emirates NBD has surfaced a series of innovative success factors that have contributed to the program's continued growth and progress. These factors include:

SHIFTING CULTURE — By using a top-down and bottom-up approach, with company management team heavily involved in the program and employee volunteer champions helping to promote and direct activities at the team level

INCENTIVES — With volunteering being a newer concept for many Eastern cultures based in Dubai, Emirates NBD worked to showcase to other companies the benefits that volunteering brings to an organization (i.e. skills development, teambuilding, employee engagement, etc.)

PARTICIPATION — By extending the invitation to participate in volunteer activities to friends, family and non-employee business partners, Emirates is contributing to a cultural shift in the UAE overall

RECOGNITION — An annual Volunteer Summit tells the story of the volunteer impact and provides direct recognition and appreciation to top volunteers and teams

REPORTING — Extensive reporting allows Emirates NBD to track volunteer participation and activity impact with local partners

FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING — While Emirates offers employees one paid day off to volunteer per year, the Exchanger Programme also allows flexibility for employees to volunteer outside of work.

“As a homegrown institution committed to serving the UAE community, Emirates NBD was among the first private sector institutions to create a volunteering platform for employees. The commitment and passion we have seen from our Exchangers is outstanding. The Exchanger programme has become an integral element of the bank’s corporate culture and we hope to continue to encourage more partners in the private sector to join our efforts.”

- SHAYNE NELSON, Group Chief Executive Officer, Emirates NBD

SNAP SHOT

To encourage UAE residents to give their time to volunteer in the community, Emirates NBD produced Give in to Giving to celebrate “World Kindness Day” with the overarching message: “Let’s take time to reflect on how we can make a difference. Let’s reach out to those who need help and volunteer for causes that change us for the better, just as they change the world.”

