

Timberland and the Path of Service

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Workplace Flexibility Case Study
Timberland and the Path of Service
by Ken Giglio

Company: Timberland (www.timberland.com)

Company profile: Timberland designs, makes and markets consumer footwear, apparel and gear. Its goods are sold in department and specialty stores as well as in its own retail locations. Founded in 1973, Timberland has grown into a publicly-traded corporation with annual global sales of more than \$1.5 billion. It employs approximately 5,200 people. The company is based in Stratham, New Hampshire.

Program profile: Timberland employs a number of workplace flexibility programs, many of which began as suggestions from employees and reflect the company's corporate values. Says President and Chief Executive Jeffrey Swartz, "We believe that companies have the power and the responsibility to affect positive and lasting change in the world and that's just one of the things that makes this a great place to work." The cornerstone of the company's flexibility program is its Path of Service initiative, in which full-time employees are granted 40 hours of paid time off per year upon hire, allowing them to spend time serving in their community. In order to qualify for this benefit, the employee's service activity must advance, assist or enrich the community in the environment, education, health or social/human service. Employees may use their Path of Service benefit for company-sponsored service events, such as Earth Day or Serv-A-Palooza, which occur once a year. Nearly 95 percent of company employees use their Path of Service benefit. All told, Timberland employees have contributed more than 300,000 hours of service to their communities since 1992. In 2005, the company's North American business units recorded more than 23,000 hours of community service through the Path of Service program, a 42% increase from the year before.

One extension of the Path of Service is the Sabbatical Program in which employees can apply for up to six months paid time off, allowing them to contribute to positive change in the community.

In addition to Timberland's Path of Service program, Timberland offers flexible work arrangements to its employees, allowing individuals the flexibility to manage their work hours around personal needs such as child care services or working their full-time schedule in four days rather than five to allow more time at home with family. Employees are also provided with three flex days off per year in addition to normal holidays and vacation days.

Benefits to Employees: In addition to making it possible to pursue activities outside of work, employees are able to feel a sense of commitment and connection to their local communities through their volunteer work. Participants also cite a greater sense of purpose towards their work and a feeling of being invigorated about their job and their employer.

Benefits to Employer: Timberland believes that its Path of Service and Service Sabbatical programs allow it to serve the dual purpose of investing in its communities and in its employees. The company feels that not only are program participants enriched by their experiences but so are their coworkers as well.

Personal profile: Maureen Franzosa is a service merchandise analyst who joined Timberland in 1994. She took advantage of her Path of Service hours by volunteering at Sexual Assault Support Services, a Portsmouth, NH-based facility that provides counseling and support services to women affected by sexual assault. As a volunteer counselor to the organization's toll-free crisis line, Maureen worked three shifts a month. Still, she felt that she wanted to do more. In 2001 she applied for, and was granted, Timberland's first ever Service Sabbatical, allowing her to extend her volunteer opportunities at SASS. In her first week, two top executives of SASS left for other opportunities. As a result, Maureen was able to develop and improve new skills in leadership and operations, helping out in ways that she couldn't have imagined before her sabbatical. Her sabbatical experience has given her new vigor for her job at Timberland as well. Says Maureen, "In any job it's easy to get caught up in the tasks you have to do on a daily basis. The Sabbatical provided me with a chance to step back, see the bigger picture of what Timberland does, and feel a renewed sense of purpose upon my return."

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