

A Buddhist Economic Approach to Employee Volunteer Program: Happiness in the workplace*

Wanna Prayukvong**

Abstract

This study was undertaken to observe factors affecting the process, and impact of employee volunteer activities in four business enterprises. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with executives and focus group interviews with the companies' employees in these four business enterprises.

Buddhist Economics differs significantly from Mainstream Economics on the paradigm of human nature. The core values of mainstream economics are self-interest and competition to achieve the maximum welfare or utility under resource constraints. While in Buddhist Economics, the core values are compassion and cooperation to achieve well-being through higher wisdom (*pañña*).

Higher wisdom (*pañña*) is the ability to understand everything in its own nature without personal bias or distortion. It is a crucial input that is not only used in production but also controls consumption and distribution activities. The Buddha believed in human potential to develop oneself through the Threefold Training (training in morality, mentality, and wisdom) to attain *pañña*. When *pañña* is cultivated, people will understand the wider meaning of self. "Self" in Buddhism includes oneself, society, and nature, which are all simultaneously interconnected. Rather than giving supreme importance to an individual's utility, as in the mainstream economics, happiness is the overriding objective. Happiness is not normally increased through more consumption only, but is also gained through good deeds that people do for their society. The objective of Buddhist Economics is to achieve this well being through the use of *pañña*.

The call for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is receiving more response from business. Employee Volunteer Programs (EVP) are one example of CSR activities. When the Buddhist Economic approach is adopted by EVPs through Threefold Training, the program can be embedded into the business practices including human resource development and the organization development process. When this happens, it can be considered as the process of cultivation of *pañña*. Public policy should be used to support networking of activities in order to share such practical knowledge and recognize innovations in EVP.

Key words: Employee Volunteer • Happiness • Workplace • Thailand • Buddhist Economics

* This paper submitted for presentation at the International Conference on Happiness and Public Policy dated 18-19 July 2007 Bangkok, Thailand.

** Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management Science and Ph.D. student of Integral Development Studies, Ubon Rajathanee University, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand.

1. Introduction

The social and environmental situation of our planet has become a serious topic. A new public awareness has focused on the issues of pollution, extinction of species, global warming, and the decrease of non-renewable natural resources. There has been a marked increase in racial conflict, as well as divisive tension at national levels and a lack of tolerance among the major religions causing terrorist activities in major cities around the world. Compounding these issues are increases in stress, the number of psychological patients, and the suicide rate (especially in the western countries) together with an increasing number of single parent families and divorce (UNDP, 2006). These are clear indicators of the downward trend of the environment and in the quality of life.

Even though there have been many movements at the global level to resolve these problems such as the conference of the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, the situation still exists and will probably be worse in the near future.

Business firms can be viewed as the engines of economic progress. How these firms will perform under the said situations may be critical in the future. Besides, these firms are a major cause of the above problems due to their unlimited quest for profit paradigm.

Governments, activists, and the media have appealed to business firms about their corporate social responsibility (CSR). Business firms are now expected to be concerned with all of the stakeholders affected by their business and not only to their shareholders. The United Nation initiated the "Global Compact" to promote responsibility and accountability among corporate citizens. The Global Compact asks companies to embrace, support and enact, within their sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labor standards, the environment, and anti-corruption (UN, 2007). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also issued the Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises for Business to adopt CSR. ISO 26000, which will be launched soon, will also require producers to have more CSR.

The above movements ask businesses to create CSR programs on a voluntary basis and not out of their obligation, and many business firms have complied. Much more has been done on CSR and some corporations have improved the social and environmental consequences of their activities (Kotler & Lee, 2005).

However there is still no clear definition of CSR and social performance indicators, and the principles of practice for CSR are still controversial (Liedtka, 1998). So CSR activities are only an additional cost, compulsory activity, or philanthropic activity of the owners, shareholders, or employees participation as a volunteer activity. If these activities are undertaken because they are beneficial to creating a positive company image or positive brand recognition, they will not achieve other benefits from doing well from society such as a source of opportunity, innovation, and competitive advantage. (Porter & Karma, 2006)

Among the various type of CSR initiatives, corporate philanthropy and community volunteering are the most popular (Kotler & Lee, 2005). If community volunteering and employee volunteering is only considered as an CSR activity to reinforce brand image, it will not be as

successful and will fail to gain the wider acceptance like the other types of CSR activities mentioned above.

Employee or corporate volunteering is the contribution of employees' time and skills to the community with their company's encouragement and support (Community Business, 2005: 5). There have been a lot of researches that mention the benefits of EV to the business such as developing better workforces, enhancing corporate reputation, and investing. There are also critical benefits to the community, such as reducing expenses and developing relationships. The benefits for employees include skills development (in areas that include teambuilding), and increased morale, pride, and loyalty. (For a detailed description of these benefits, see Peterson, D. 2005; Lee & Higgins, 2001; and Community Business, 2005).

These benefits confirm the essential value of EV, which goes far beyond the CSR activity and corporate image. This is especially in regards to the benefits for employees in the form of human resource development (HRD); this can result in company pride and employee loyalty.

The above benefits are understood from the western or capitalist approach, which focuses on money and materials. This approach believes that the accumulation of things, the consumption of goods and services lead to pleasure or happiness. This is a hedonist attitude. Even though most of the benefits of EV are intangible, they can be valued as benefits as long as the bottom-line improves.

According to the hedonist thought, some intangible things are not counted or valued. This includes feelings such as being cared, mercy, culture, feeling at ease, and a calm mind. When you help someone by giving, sharing, or doing a good thing, you will gain happiness. This kind of happiness is not dependent on material or external things. The more people help the others or do good things for them, the more happiness they obtain. This is a higher level than happiness gained from consumption which are taught in Buddha Dhamma (Puntasen & Others, 2006).

The Western approach to EVP, not surprisingly, does not consider happiness as an important benefit. However, the study of EV programs in the Buddhist society of Thailand, examines the increase in this higher level of happiness. This study seeks to answer the following questions: in fact the level of happiness has increased; what are the effecting factors behind it; and what are the resultant consequences to the employees who obtain this happiness.

2. Objective and methodology

This study was undertaken to observe the factors, the processes, and the influence of employee volunteer activities in four business enterprises. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with the executives and focus group interviews with the companies' employees. The companies observed were Nestle, Somboon Group, Merck, and Price Waterhouse Cooper ABS.

3. A Framework for Buddhist Economics

Buddhist Economics is derived from the lessons of the Buddha's discoveries on his path to enlightenment that can be applied to economic concepts using in general (Puntasen, 2005, p. 3). The teaching of the Buddha, known as Buddha Dhamma, is neither a religion nor a philosophy in the Western sense because it does not offer a set of beliefs, require any faith, or require belief in

any concept without self-verification (Puntasen & Prayukvong, 2007). Buddhist ethics are not some abstract concept of “promising to be good” so that we will receive a reward at some time in the future, nor some mysterious code of behaviors we have to follow to belong to a secret club, but a way of living which accepts and complies with the reality of nature (Prayukvong, 2005: 1173).

Buddha Dhamma is a mind-based science that goes beyond matter and energy. The truth in mind-based science can vary according to the degree of mind development. This allows the truth to be the absolute truth if the mind is at the highest level or “*pañña*” (Puntasen & Prayukvong, 2007).

The difference between Buddhist Economics and Mainstream Economics is due to different paradigms of human nature. Mainstream economics views the human nature as an “economic man” who is rational; he knows his own interests and chooses from a variety of means to maximize his self-interests. The ultimate goal of Mainstream Economics is to allocate the limited resources to maximize self-interest. It focuses on utility or welfare under unlimited demand and other constraints. Rational behavior is a major assumption behind the mainstream economic theory.

Economics also adopts the Darwinian theory of “the survival of the fittest” to imply that competition leads to progress. Hence, the core values of mainstream economics (more popularly known as “capitalism are self-interest and competition. Because of such developments of thought, mainstream economics defines the pursuit of self-interest as a rational behavior as it is the behavior that contributes to more generation of utility.

However, pure competition is an ideal and does not exist in the real world (Friedman, 1962). Since information in the market is not perfect but is asymmetric or incomplete, an equilibrium market price always excludes social cost or benefits that are external to production (Ross, 1973; Stiglitz, 1974). When the price is below the social cost, consumption will tend to be excessive (Arrow et.al, 2004:157). Besides, the cost incurred during the exchange between seller and buyer which are transactional costs such as search cost, bargaining cost, contract cost, monitoring cost, and enforcement cost are not zero (Eggertsson, 1990). Transaction cost is positive and large (North, 1986). So a market economy does not provide for the efficient allocation of resources, known as market failure. Economists propose various government policies to intervene in the market such as price support or subsidies, which are called government mechanism. These are only a temporary solution. However, governments especially in the developing countries perform badly in their attempt at such intervention and they are not able to improve their market outcome (Datta-Chaudhuri, 1990). This happens when the government has not aimed to maximize social welfare but serving their own and their supporters’ welfare. The failure of the government mechanism can be commonly observed.

The objectives of business firms are to maximize their own interest or profit. The quality of life or well-being of society will usually be ignored by business firms such as when they produce negative externality through social and environment transgressions. Even though the call for CSR is more active, the understanding and practice of CSR are not yet clear. The paradigm of

following self-interest still has not shifted. Since the market and government mechanism aimed at controlling greed are not actually working, some business firms will consider their own interest as their first priority and leave society second or the least. They are usually after short-term interest without being concerned with the negative impact upon society or the environment.

When Buddha Dhamma is applied to economics, the understanding of human nature is clearer. There is an interdependence of all things and a mutually interaction between causes and effects. This existence of anything now results from earlier factors and, perhaps its original cause. Nothing can exist on its own. This is what is called the principle of Dependant Origination (*Idappaccayata*). So, human existence is not isolated but is related to society and nature. Without society and nature, human beings would not have survived. Self-interest in Buddhist economics has a wider meaning, which includes not only oneself but also others in society and nature. When people clearly understand the interconnected relationship, the cooperation is a more rational behavior.

There are two types of cooperation 1) real cooperation which is to help each other to fulfill the basic needs and achieve wellness of life together; and 2) pseudo cooperation which is to take some strong point of the competition concept as a pool-incentive. This implies group participation, or even a whole company, to put all of their co-operative effort into competing with other groups or companies, with the common target of achieving the better income of the group (P.A. Payutto, 1995). Therefore, compassion and true cooperation are the core values in Buddhist Economics instead of self-interest and competition.

Understanding the interdependence and mutual interaction between causes and effects is complex, and not easy to understand. Ignorance disable the mind to understand things with a great complexity. It needs a calm and clean mind with neutrality to understand such complexity. To begin with, people need to practice good conduct through *Silā*, to achieve their calm mind through *Samadhi* and develop their “*pañña*” (ability to understand everything in its own nature without any personal bias or distortion). These are not separate processes but interconnected. The Buddha believed in the potential of human mind to be develop indifferntly. This has already been consistently proven by the Buddha himself, monks, laymen and laywomen, in obtaining the real meaning of human being who can actually attain higher spiritual level.

The process of developing “*pañña*,” is not in current general education but it is in the Threefold Training which is the way leading to the cessation of suffering (*Dukkha*) or the Eightfold Path. There are three parts to this development, it works in the form of spiral dynamic:

- 1) Training to develop the morality (*Silā*) is necessary to conduct one’s actions, speech, and livelihood in a moral and proper way on a personal level. On a societal level, this training addresses one’s materialistic surroundings and especially one’s social behavior regarding rules and regulations. These are meant to protect the individual from immoral behavior and to enhance good behavior for society. So this training covers right speech, right action and right livelihood.
- 2) Training to develop the mentality (*Samadhi*), or concentration, is necessary for mindfulness at a personal level. On a societal level, it builds a peaceful atmosphere in the work place, the home, and other leisure areas which encourages people to have

good, positive, kind and merciful thinking. This training covers right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

- 3) Training to develop the wisdom (*Pañña*) which is necessary to understand the nature of reality on a personal level. At the societal level, promotes all education toward more moral and analytical thinking. Educational institutions should train people in the three aspects of morality, mentality, and wisdom. This training for *Pañña* covers right view and right understanding.
(P.A. Payutto, 1995)

The above development process allows us to not only to understand the theoretical concept (*Pariyatti*), but also to understand the application of the theory into practice (*Pattipatti*) and the proof of the results through (*Pattivedha*) (P.A. Payutto, 2005:105). Training of morality, mentality, and wisdom are not separate but interconnected among conducted calmness and wisdom or *Pañña*. Therefore, the Threefold Training could be called the process of *Pañña* that development.

Even though *Pañña* appears to be a factor of human capital in mainstream economics, human capital is more concerned with human beings as an input to the economic process, while *Pañña* represents brain power with always good intention that should be developed to understand the ultimate truth.

Therefore, *Pañña* is not only the mode of production in Buddhist Economics. It should be used to control all input factors such as technology, capital, and natural resources. It also ultimately controls consumption and creates a more compassionate exchange or distribution without using prices or profits as the first priority. For these reasons, *Pañña* is the essence of Buddhist Economics.

When *Pañña* directs the way of living or behaving in the working place, it will result in optimal resource allocation in the middle way as well as wellness which is the higher level of happiness, generated from giving and sharing and doing good things for society. It also help those who are still in needs to have enough so that they will be freed from physical pain.

Pañña is a very important attribute that can be developed through the Threefold Training and can be cultivated not only at a personal but also a social level. The process of the Threefold Training can apply to business practices, especially management systems in business organizations for human resource development.

The framework shown in Figure 1 uses the concept of Dependent Origination to develop a causal loop relationship with a holistic view of a company. It can begin with any form of business practice (EVP in this study) that involve the Threefold Training: in the form of spiral dynamics for morality, mentality and wisdom. Each company may adopt each aspect of training differently. The Threefold trainings is simultaneously interconnected into a single process through the accumulation of *Pañña* in the leader who continuously nurtures faith and confidence in the continual development of his colleagues.

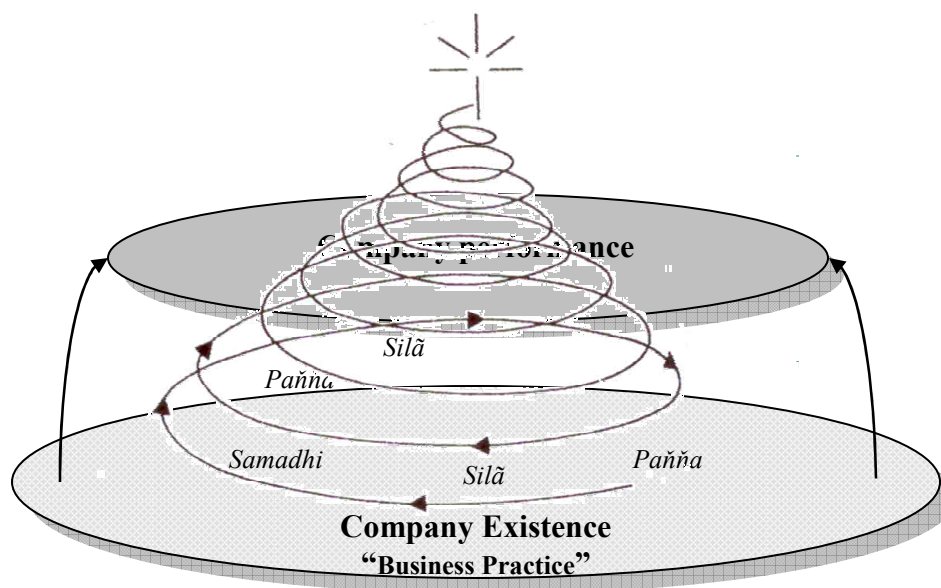


Fig.1 Conceptual Framework for Buddhist Economics Analysis of Employee Volunteer Program

Internal and external factors affect right view which is the first step of the Eightfold Path in process of spiral dynamics to cultivate *Pañña* or wisdom. “Training in Analytical Thinking” (*Yonisomanasikara*) refers to personal development to gain the ability to see causes and effects factually and not from the perspective of their own desires and biases. “Hearing from others” (*Paratoghosa*) implies the process in obtaining useful information from others known as “Good Friends” (*Kalayanamitta*). Positive relationships with good friends create direct and indirect benefits, such as improved ways of doing certain tasks or the avoidance of risks that can be a formation of social capital (Prayukvong, 2005: 1176). The two factors are considered as keys to ignite the Threefold Training or Eightfold path, in the direction to reduce suffering and gain happiness and wellness.

After developing business practices through Threefold training, the results (*Pativedha*), indicate the improvement in the company performance. Such results will generate happiness for all stakeholders.

The four business firms in this study all have undertaken Employee Volunteer Programs (EVPs). The Buddhist Economic model explained above will be used to explained the Threefold Training process of the EVPs and the key success factor in each business firm. Due to the limitation of method observation through focus group interviews, the Threefold Training will be analyzed at the social or company level only. In each case, the “good friends” (the ones who convince employees to do volunteer works together), the process of Threefold Training (especially toward the development of *Pañña*), as well as the company and performance have been observed.

In Buddha Dhamma, the results can be measured by the characteristics and consequences of the action on the owner of the action; are others harmed or has the action of those undertaken such action as well as good or bad consequence to the society. (Payutto, 1999:179). Therefore, the company that has more *Pañña*, should be able to put apply more effort to help people or doing good things for society. It is the better way to display in corporate social responsibility broader form.

The study also aimed to test the hypothesis that external factor which is “Good Friends” (*Kalayanamitta*), affect the development of EVP through the Threefold Training resulting in the accumulation of *Pañña* and generation of happiness in the work place.

4. Results of the study

Volunteering in a Thai context is quite different from the west. Since giving, sharing, generosity and attention (“*Num Jai*” or “*Ou Jai Sai*”) are noticeable behaviors in Thai culture, it is not just a general outstanding phenomena but it results from the positive feeling in the mind to help people. This is the reason why all of these Thai words end with mind (“*Jai*”). So volunteer in Thai context is the positive feeling inside people’s mind to help or do a good thing and to take action when all conditions or factors are available. Employee Volunteer in Thai context will be is the positive feeling inside employees’ mind to help or do a good thing for social if all the conditions and factors are available.

There are numerous patterns of EVP such as company charities, single day projects, development assignments, pro bono work etc. (Community Business, 2005: 20). EVPs in Nestle, Somboon Group, Merck and Price Waterhouse Cooper ABS followed different patterns. The details of each case study follow.

4.1 Nestlé: From personal attention to policy

Nestlé group in Thailand was established more than 10 years ago to produce and sell a variety of food products for nutrition and good health. Core values of the company include respecting local culture and keeping a good relationship with local communities.

Factory community service activities have been performed since the establishment of the company. Two years ago, an EVP in the head office was initiated by a group of staff that had experience with donations of food and money to orphan children and old people. The project was completed with financial support from the company and advice from the Vice President (a Thai executive). He found that social concerning in his staffs who work in the large and well-established firm with a better compensation than the average Thai firms, has been missing. So he would like to give a chance for them to expose the rural community through EVP during the weekend.

A few EVPs developed using the concept of sustainability helping concept, were the “Growing Forest Project” to provide permanent income for the Duang Prateep Foundation and the “Growing Mangrove Forest Project” for natural conservation with the Population and Community Development Association.

The results of these projects were not limited to the happiness of volunteer employees who were impressed by joining an activity with a local community. The participating employees shared a positive attitude with their colleagues and the organization. They also want to join this kind of activity again if they are available in the future. From the beginning of the projects until after the project the communication sharing the experience with all of the staff through various kinds of media was positive. The feedback, suggestions and messages communicated to non-participating colleagues their loss in missing a good opportunity to join the activities. Increasing interest developed.

After supporting the occasional project and with the accumulation of learning and understanding, the role for responsibility of this task was given to the corporate affairs manager and supported with a volunteer committee. The projects encourage all staff to care for people in need while their lives are better, and to be proud of helping people as much as they can. The upcoming EVPs will focus on increasing the staff awareness of environmental problems and living in a manner that disturbs the environment less. The company will sponsor events to recognize employees who volunteer. Direct motivation is not applied because of the potential abuse of EVPs. Even though the committee of EVP is ad hoc, the manager dreams of establishing the Nestlé employee volunteer club in the future similar to other employee clubs such as the sport club or the leisure club.

When the Threefold Training is considered, the corporate goals of producing nutritious and healthy food while respecting local culture and working toward a good relationship with the community, meet the goal of right livelihood in *Silā*. With executives who encourage their staff to be concerned with people who have less opportunities and set up the EVPs which create opportunities for employees to provide them needed assistance. This allows for the development of the *Samadhi* of the company. The executives and managers of this company, like good friends, demonstrate to employees a right view about a human existence which interconnects with society and nature, and the way of life they should have. This is an important step in the development of *pañña*. If a dialogue is held to discuss the results and impact of the EVP, it will encourage employees to have deep analytical thinking which reinforces *pañña* development.

4.2 Somboon Group: Volunteers from inside the company to the society

From the origin of the business as a distributor of automobile spare parts seventy years ago, to the 2004 registration as family-led company in Thai stock market and becoming a industry in the country, Somboon Group has shown itself to be a significantly progressive company.

Even though all factories base on labor intensive, Somboon Group has Human Relations Policies that on develop employees and maintain good relationships among employees and with their employer. Somboon Group Public Relation Club was established in the factory ten years ago. A committee of the club had representatives of employees from each factory to volunteer for distribution of the company information to their colleagues. Each committee member donates his lunchtime to have meetings for receiving news and eating lunch together. Besides meeting two times a month, he receives training on communications and leadership skills to provide him with a high ability to convey his message to his colleagues effectively. The public relations manager (an executive who is a daughter of the founder) is the captain of this club and consistently supervises and develops the committee.

Programs we developed inside the company conducting EVPs to serve the employees' welfare such as construction of a football field, or changing the green area to be a center for learning new agricultural theory and a leisure park for the staff, or activities for employees' children during the summer vacation. These led to the development of activities in the society at large. These volunteers help to promote the company at public events and activities doing good things for society such as taking staff to donate and take care of needy people or sponsoring Done-in-a-Day Projects, like visiting an old people's home, a Project in Samut Prakarn Province which not only donated money and things but also entertained the old people and helped them to clean up their building.

From a one day EVP in the factory location the program expanded to a few days project outside of the factory location. An EVP to take staff to help on projects required by the community or Development Assignment Projects was held for taking care of an old, homeless couple in Chonburi province. Even though this was an individual not a community requirement, they were needy individuals. The activity was designed to encourage collaboration between employee volunteers and volunteers from the community. However, this effort was not accomplished. This collaboration concept led to a new challenge for the next project. The criteria to choose a community were not based on collaboration with people in the community. The next EVP was to help to develop a school in Nakorn Rachasima Province. This project included volunteers that were not only employees from the Somboon Group, but also students, teachers, villagers, suppliers' staff and members of other interested organizations.

Results of the Somboon Group EVPs were not limited to the gradual progressive step-by-step learning process in planning, surveying, acquiring knowledge to support and continuously evaluate projects by committees and managers. The experience of seeing the more troubled people, sharing the impressions from the people or community and having happiness together with pride in the company made them fond of these activities and they didn't think of the activities as a burden or extra work during their leisure time even after heavy regular work loads. These were common ideas among the members of committee. In particular, the manager mentioned that this job was totally different from her previous job; her present job requires more commitment and is more fun. After a project is finished, the feelings of the participants are good and the organizer feels good as well. Besides, the learning process is continuous. She shared her opinion that if there are a lot EVPs, the society will improve.

The committee shared the experiences of EVPs with their colleagues by using various communication tools to let them know that all of the donations had been given and provided benefits to needy people. Suggestions and ideas from employees reflected their increased understanding of helping and caring in and for society. When there was a flood disaster in Petchaboon Province, a fund was established to help victims that included the relatives or family of some Somboon Group employees. The necessary funds were raised quickly and were able to assist the families in a timely fashion. This showed the potential of the committee as a mechanism to direct the Somboon Group employee volunteers' minds to have more awareness and care for society and help them to do good things to create societal well-being. Now they have changed the name of the club to "Somboon Group's Volunteer Club" to be ready to help people in the society. Even though they did not set the vision of the club, they dream to have a voluntary fund which shareholders will donate to, based on the number of employee volunteers.

When Threefold Training is considered, the operation of spare part automobile which is one of the major sector in GDP, improves area to become leisure area for the staffs and has responsible for the impact of leaking waste to the neighbor's canal. However, this effort was not fulfilled the neighbor's satisfaction yet. They are applied with right livelihood of *Silā*. The consist support of the EVPs of the committee and the manager show their real intention to sacrifice, care for and help people. Though all of them are minimum wage salary men, they were still able to help people in a rural area. It was their hometown, and helped them care about their parents and families and not stay in the big city and ignore them. This situation leads to the development of *Samadhi* of the company.

Even though the number of employee volunteers is not large compared to the whole company, the quality each demonstrates caring for and helping people, the pride of their colleagues and the company and obtaining happiness (which is totally different from hedonistic happiness) in the work place and then expanding this kind of activity to their residential villages. When the employee survey was conduct two years ago, the suggestion was made to ask for the company to help more people. This showed the quality of gradual development of *pañña* by the good friends or the committee that is the mechanism to create it.

The committee felt that the manager enhanced the existence of this club (and the manager agreed). According to the principle of Dependent Origination, that was the factor that was more ready than the others and had a stronger effect. Since the manager always supported and consulted with the committee they developed themselves and encouraged the participation of employees which created the readiness in other factors to develop *pañña* altogether.

4.3 Merck: From “Care” to innovation in doing good things for society

After doing business Germany owned enterprise “Merck” in Thailand by using core value of company “Care” and under respecting of law, safety standard and environmental impact, was successful. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was initiated as a grand strategy of the company. The limitations of social development knowledge and an inadequate budget for setup of the foundation were concerns. Rak Thai Foundation under the subsidiary of Care International formed a business partnership that has had the financial support of Merck to create social development projects since about 2002.

The “Care Call Team” had a employee representative from each department and was establishment to communicate, collect ideas and information, consider project proposals and follow-up all activities with Rak Thai, employees, customers and social organizations as Merck's ambassador. At the beginning, there were some misunderstandings regarding running a business to for profit together with helping society, or providing help to one foundation such as “Rak Thai”. The consist attention of the CEO to communicate with his colleagues about helping only one foundation or NGO seriously gained significant and sustainable benefits. This way of helping is beyond general philanthropy by working with an NGO to give advice and then follow-up on the progress of work.

Beside money donations, an EVP working with a development assignment in Rak Thai's development area took a staff of five on a weekend to teach the accounting to a housewives group in the north of Thailand. The participation of the employees was not limited to this group,

but included others who donated money, materials, and support information to create more activities in this project. This kind of participation or employee-involvement reflected of the core value “Care” by the employees.

The work with Rak Thai was integrated into general business operation such as the sales department bought handicraft from a housewives’ group for use as customer’s souvenir; and the Care Bazaar sold these products. These reflected in an increase in understanding and sharing which made the members of the team happy and proud of their colleagues and company.

Due to the fact that the development community of Rak Thai was in a remote area, employee involvement was limited. An EVP to help another group was supported. There was not only an EVP Christmas Festival to serve the wish of an orphan child, but also an additional activity integrated into the staff party that raised funds from the company through rewards from a game and the funds were donated to a community nearby. Details of the activity were developed by the members of a team and their colleagues to create this innovation to do good things with the CEO’s support.

The innovation was not only a reflection of understanding of the EVP, but also to work out the new challenge which was to link the customer to involvement in the EVP. There was about 60,000 Baht of fund raising from customers through a training program that was done without charge. The customers were very pleased to help with this social work with Merck’s ambassador acting as the middleman. Feedback on the benefits of their money was provided in a bi-monthly newsletter. They were also pleased to join with EVP to help a community in Ayudhaya Province in a development assignment project during the last Songkran Festival. The results of these activities have created a bond between the company, the employee, the community and the customer. The customer’s evaluation indicated that the customers were pleased to continue to support the product as long as the quality remained the same, even though the price is higher than the competitor.

When Threefold Training is considered, the operation of a drug and health industry with respect for the law and demonstrating a concern for safety and the environment is the first step or minimum corporate social responsibility, and demonstrates the right livelihood of *Silā*. The attention of the CEO to active CSR programs as a part of the company strategy and support of EVPs through team, employee and ultimately extension to customers together with good working conditions in the offices and warehouse. This kind of atmosphere leads to the development of the *Samadhi* of the company.

The development process of *pañña* in EVPs reflects in the CEO who is the good friend to his colleagues to encourage them to understand how to do business with responsibility to society and nature through discussion at the various meetings and training events. And also supporting the Care Call Team to be good friends, and undertake EVPs to help their friends realize and have a right view of the interconnection between themselves, other people in the society and nature. Now this CEO would like to share the ideas of CSR with other business firms that will encourage even more companies to be active in CSR and EVPs to do more good things in society and create more well-being in the society.

4.4 PWC: From the impression of activity at the global level to the HRD at country level

Price Waterhouse Cooper ABS (PWC) is one of the leading auditing and consulting companies in the world. Even though high performance human resource teams around the world will be interested in working with PWC, the HRD programs inside the company in each country is conducted with the same high standards. After the collapse of Enron and Arthur Anderson Consulting firm, the Ulysses Program was developed for training executives from each country to integration the ideas of helping the community into their local programs.

Each year, the executives or partners of PWC in each country receive an invitation to participate this program to help people in rural communities in an 8-10 week development assignment in EVP. Although the salaries are still paid, the participants need to arrange time to do their job and make themselves available during the program time because of the volunteer concept.

The Thai partner had a chance to join this program. The volunteers need to be trained by a coach for two weeks to understand the aim of the program and their role and the requirements of the community. One aim of this program is to see change in each participant in their understanding of the leadership from the people in the community, the sustainability of the project that they provide to community and an ability to recognize the diversity of talents and skills of colleagues in different countries and people in community. This kind of learning was not conducted or lectured by coach or any instructor; each participant learned from living and helping in a community in which they had no experience. These participants are totally out of their comfort zone. During the two months, he was living in Africa to study the HIV/AIDS problem in order to submit a solution program to help the people in the community. He learned the meaning of leadership from a man who was neglected and very poor like his neighbors and didn't have any position, assets or political power. He was fighting to solve the HIV/AIDS problem in a sustainable way. When he asked this man about motivation to helping HIV/AIDS victims, he just answered, "I'm not infected, but I am affected". This man did not fight against this problem alone; the people in the community trusted him as a leader and participated to help solve this problem together.

Even though this program did not expect participants to do any thing after the project ended, the change in behavior in each of them reflected in each of them continuing to do good things for society. This was reported in the follow-up meetings and reflected the learning outcome from this program. This kind of project was initiated in Thailand and conducted by the Thai partner demonstrating the change it made in his life outlook. When someone asked him whether it wouldn't be wasted, if a staff member who participated in this project later quit the job, he did not give an answer but only looked at the target of this project which was beyond the company benefits because if the man is a good man, it means it is good for society.

However, this project was adapted to fit in a Thai context and as such the program time was reduced to 4-6 weeks and participants were limited to middle management level. A 360° evaluation was to be used. The essential concept of the project in leadership, sustainability, diversity and learning process with the coach (Thai partner) still remained.

The first year project was conduct to help a Tsunami affected community to learn accounting for their community enterprises and households, and the second year project was to help people in

the north of Thailand to do costing and accounting under the supervision of a coach and volunteer staff who had participated the previous project. This project was named “Leadership Development Journey”. Each of volunteer was trained one week before living in the community. During the training, the personal and program targets were setup to allow the volunteers to have a clear picture. The change in each volunteer was not only the learning of three topics but also the real life experience that impressed and allowed each to have a clearer meaning of life. The change in behavior and attitude resulted in more self-motivated, caring people in the work place. The more they did the more happiness they gained. They realized that they cannot change anyone except themselves.

Accepting new jobs in other countries with more responsibility were taken by some of volunteer. These were not promotions for participation but they reflected the new courage required to challenge a new job all gained from their participation in the EVP. However, the sustainability of this change is hard to confirm. The answers of some of the volunteers mentioned the happiness that they found in helping people, even though it was a small thing. They also confirmed that this happiness was totally from the happiness derived from consumption or any material goods. This may help them to derive more happiness in the work place.

This project has showed the significant power of this project to create good people for society. PWC has already incorporated this project into the policy, and supports the network of PWC in this region and has invited the Ulysses program to do a project in Thailand. Even though the Thai partner thought this projects aim was to support HRD, the details of the activity allowed volunteers to study and help people in the community with a sustainable concept during the one month that the EVP operated. Together with other kinds of EVPs in PWC such as donations, entertaining disabled children and pro bono services the staff are continuously encouraged to care for people in the society and dare to do good things for society.

PWC provides the service of auditing and financial consulting with the highest professional standards and takes good care of their staff with good welfare that is applied with the right livelihood of *Silā* in the Threefold Training. The policy support of the EVP which allow employees to help a community for one month and the communication of the experience among staff and outside with various media create an atmosphere that encourages people to do good things and leads to the development of *Samadhi* within the company and each employee.

The Thai partner who participated in and was impressed by the experience at the global level would like to share these experiences with his colleagues by being a good friend to manage this project without thinking of it as a burden or extra job. Providing a chance for his colleague to learn to have a right view about the meaning of life, happiness and the interconnection of themselves, society and nature helps them realize that they will be affected by any kind of social problem and dare enough to step out to help people. This is the way to develop *pañña* to create a peaceful society.

5. Conclusions and Implications

EVPs in the 4 case studies were not ad hoc or occasional project but done consistently. The type of groups used to organize the EVP which were referred to as “good friends”, are all different as the occasional team in Nestlé, the committee of the club in the Somboon Group, the Care Call

Team of Merck and the Thai partner with participants in PWC. The more formal committee will effect to development of EVP like Somboon Group and Merck. If the “good friend” is an executive and has more involvement such as CEO at Merck, more EVPs will be conducted. The pattern and activity of the EVPs in each case study are different and depend on the conditions at each company. Innovation of EVPs will be a necessary condition because it shows attention and deeper understanding of EVPs and will be an anchor to the activity for new employee volunteers.

The Threefold training was used to analyze the EVP development in these case studies. All of them demonstrated *Silā* and *Samadhi* because of the consistency of the enjoyment of doing EVPs to help people. The development *Pañña* by gradually accumulating good friends will proceed as long as the EVPs are still active in the company.

The above process through EVP is the human development process of three parts:

- 1) *Pañña*: the ability to understand everything in its own nature without personal bias or distortion. In this study, it is the understanding of the meaning of life and recognition of a higher level of happiness.
- 2) Mind: a good mind with positive thinking and attention to helping people
- 3) Behavior: the action of helping people or doing good things consistently and trying to change and develop one’s own potential instead of asking others to change.

Some will argue that these case studies conducted EVP without thinking or understanding the Threefold Training. That is true. During the interview, the analysis using Buddha Dhamma was raised and the interviewers agreed with this approach. EVPs are like an activity to practice the Threefold Training (*Pattipatti*) and all of volunteers gained the results as the principle of Buddha Dhamma (*Pattivedha*) (such as happiness which is not dependant on external things), by helping people etc., and having more confidence to consistently do it again and again.

The limitations of this study are the scope of study which focus only on EVPs in each case study, so that the misbehavior of these companies in general practices were not discussed. The EVPs in these cases showed only the positive side and the negative side was not mentioned. Some of the negative side was not treated as a negative such as the non-sustainability or lack of participation from the community side but rather were used as a lesson to learn in how to improve in the next project.

So companies interested in setting up EVPs should consider the following suggestions:

- 1) Check that the existing business practices are in line with right livelihood in *Silā* of the Threefold Trainin. If it is not, the EVP will be only a good thing to substitute for the bad things that the company is already doing to society. It is impossible to substitute.
- 2) Understand the meaning of “volunteer” well. which is the good feeling inside people’s mind to help or do a good thing and to take action when all conditions or factors are available. So the EVP with company support and permission can carry out even though there is a lack of
 - budget; EVPs for blood donation are an example,

- time; most EVPs, except the case of PWC, were done in weekend or on a holiday. Somboon group employees work 6 days a week.
 - knowledge or skill; the EVP of Somboon group is an example of an activity without using any special skills to help people or community.
- 3) Look for “good friends” who will gather and inspire the volunteers in the company to do good things for society. Normally this is the person who is most interested or concerned with the activity. The good friend or initiator will be:
- Any employee who is interested and has experience to help people, or
 - A group of employees invited by a close friend or people who are particularly interested in helping people.
 - Executives that support and consult can be very important in creating an EVP
- Good friends are the key factor in undertaking EVP or the mechanism to inspire employees to volunteer or participate in an EVP and develop *Pañña*. The quantity of good friends (which means the number of persons) and the quality (which means good friends such as staff, manager, vice president or CEO who have good hearts) are both relevant to EVP.

It is important to promote communication which is not “advertising” to attempt to insure that all of the employees have the opportunity to develop *Samadhi* to have a good mind to help people more. Using the various tools of media, the message should let them know the benefits of the EVP to society and should bring pride, loyalty and happiness to the working place. However, the message should be right speech that does not create conflict between employees who volunteer and those who do not volunteer. This communication should bring all stakeholders to have trust in the company. It is not necessary to have any budget to support this communication.

- 4) Use Project Management Techniques in the development of an EVP that starts with planning, implement and evaluation. The role of the volunteers during implementation should not be fixed and create an atmosphere for volunteers to work as a good friends. Evaluation methods such as a satisfaction survey, any kind of feed back information, or a post-project dialogue among the volunteers can be used.
- 5) Make people more interested in participation by being innovative in doing good things. However, it is not necessary in the beginning.
- 6) Being consistent is very important in the development *Pañña* in the Threefold Training. If a company undertakes an EVP only once a year, it may be more like a traditional ceremony which may be an considered an obligation and not a volunteer project.

When a company conducts an EVP through Threefold Training, the success of the EVP will not only benefit the stakeholders but also develops *Pañña* in the company and creates well-being in the society.

Acknowledgements

This paper would never have been finished without the assistance of a number of kind contributions. The author would like to give particular thanks to all interviewers for their sharing good experiences, Pareena Prayukvong for her effort in this project, Professor Dr. Apichai Puntasen for his helpful comments, and Linda Nowakowski and Leon Potter for their

help in editing this text. The author is particularly indebted to The Morality Center, The Office of The Prime Minister, The Royal Golden Jubilee Program, and The Thailand Research Fund for providing funding for this project.

Reference:

- Arrow, K., Dasgupta, P., Goulder, L., Daily, G., Ehrlich, P., Heal, G., et al. Are We Consuming Too Much? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 2004 Summer; 18(3): 147-72.
- Datta-Chaudhuri, M. Market Failure and Government Failure. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 1990 Summer; 4(3): 25-39.
- Eggertsson, T. *Economic Behavior and Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Employee Volunteering: The Guide. Hong Kong: Community Business; 2005.
- Friedman, M. *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962.
- Kotler, P, Lee, N. *Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good For Your Company and Your Cause*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley 2005.
- Lee, L., Higgins, C. Corporate volunteering: ad hoc interaction or route to dialogue and partnership? *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*. 2001; 1(4): 79-89.
- Liedtka, J. Constructing an ethic for business practice. *Business & Society*. 1998 09; 37 (3): 254.
- North, D.C. The New Institutional Economics. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*. 1986 03; 142(1): 230-7.
- OECD. *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*. 2007. OECD 13 June 2007; http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,2686,en_2649_34889_1_1_1_1_37439,00.html
- P.A. Payutto. *Buddhist Economics*. 3 ed. Bangkok: Komol Keemthong Foundation 1995.
- P.A. Payutto. *Buddha Dhamma (in Thai Version)*. 13 ed. Bangkok: Maha Chulalongkorn Rajwittayalai Printing 2000.
- Peterson, D.K. Recruitment Strategies for Encouraging Participation in Corporate Volunteer Programs. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 2004;49:371-86.
- Porter, M.E., Kramer, M.R. Strategy & Society: The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility. *Harvard Business Review*. 2006 12; 84 (12): 78-92.
- Prayukvong, W. A Buddhist Economic Approach to the Development of Community Enterprises: A Case Study From Southern Thailand. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*. 2005 11; 29(6): 1171-85.
- Puntasen, A. *Buddhist Economics: Evolution, Theories and Its Application to Other Economics Subjects (in Thai)*. 3rd ed. Bangkok: Amarin Publishers 2005.
- Puntasen A. and others, *Buddhist Economics: Student Version (in Thai)*. Bangkok:Dokya, 2006.
- Puntasen, A., Prayukvong, W. *A Theorization of Buddhist Economics That Goes Beyond Schumacher's Middle Way, and Thailand's Revival of Sufficiency Economy*. Ubon Rachathanee, 2007.
- Ross, S.A. The Economic Theory of Agency: The Principal's Problem. *American Economic Review*. 1973 05; 63(2): 134-9.
- Stiglitz, S.E. On the Irrelevance of Corporate Financial Policy. *American Economic Review*. 1974 12; 64(5): 851.
- United Nations Global Compact. 2007. UN 14 June 2007; <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html>

Human Development Report 2006: Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis. 2006. UNDP 15 June 2006; <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/>