



# Making the Business-Nonprofit Partnership a Win-Win

*Teaming up with a business is a great way to meet your goals. Here's how to make it work.*

BY MARION E. GOLD

**J**ust watch the stock market and it's easy to see why so many charities are hurting. Ironically, at the same time as Corporate America tightens its belt, the need for businesses to expand their community involvement has never been so intense.

This should be a wake-up call to fundraisers that it takes more than walking through the door with a good cause (or putting envelopes in the mail or telemarketers on the phone) to convince local corporations of their ethical responsibility to be good neighbors.

The concept of "strategic giving" or "cause-related marketing" isn't new. But it's taking a bad hit in the press as consumers realize that using a certain credit card, for example, doesn't really add much to the fight against breast cancer.

The key is to create an environment in which the company's and charity's objectives are integrated to create a mutually beneficial result. That's *mutually* with a capital "M." Use these tips to partner with a company in your home town:

**Position yourself creatively.** How your program is positioned in the community makes all the difference in how it is perceived. And the responsibility for making that pitch to corporate sponsors lies in the laps of nonprofits.

**Be a clever marketer.** Just as corporations examine their role in the community, nonprofits must meet them halfway by using marketing tools

designed to influence behavior. More and more, corporations expect their nonprofit partners to be conversant about corporate marketing and sales objectives.

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# CREATIVE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

## Dig into Your List

Instead of looking elsewhere for money, begin with your own list. One teachers' college used its alumni list to pinpoint everyone over 65 (determined by graduation year) who used the prefix "Miss." Eight of those people ended up giving gifts over \$1 million. See *Nobody Wants to Give Money Away*, ASR Philanthropic Publishing, info@ASRpublishing.com.

## The Best Way to Raise Operating Funds

If you need money to operate your organization, the best fundraising tool is the annual drive. You can hold it every year to pay for your operating expenses. Start with personal solicitation of proven donors, and ask for true "annual support"—a gift that will make a dent in your operating budget. Then reach out to all parts of your community, and ask people to work and give at their level of ability. See *Keep the Money Coming*, www.pineapplepress.com.

## Creativity Is Key to Auction Success

To assure top dollar at your charity auction, give people a chance to bid on unique items, such as these: shopping spree at the mall, private boardroom lunch, clam bake for 30, handmade accessories, your weight in chocolate, mother-daughter makeover, lunch with a local celebrity, a day at the spa. For more auction ideas, see www.benefitauction.com.

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### Hold up your end of the bargain.

The public can quickly identify an imbalance between the business and the cause it supports. Under the keen view of the press, the charitable side of the equation better add up. Otherwise, the campaign can backfire and damage the reputation of both partners.

**Keep an eye on results.** Both partners must constantly reevaluate programs and goals. Monitoring and measuring must be part of the partnership package—just as they are with all marketing campaigns. Don't let the ball drop after the proverbial "check is in the mail."

The Boston College Center for Corporate Community Relations provides a diagnostic tool on its Web site (<http://www.bc.edu/cccr>) to help companies evaluate the impact of their community involvement. You can use that same tool to measure the results of your efforts.

**Don't be deterred by limited resources.** Even nonprofits on a shoe-

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string can create corporate partnerships. Instead of contacting big companies, small nonprofits might join with small businesses, sole proprietors, or independent contractors.

**Be sure both parties take something from the table.** The partnership must be a win-win situation—and the old advertising adage that "perception is reality" is critical to success.

As corporations and charities look for new ways to meet goals, cause-related marketing may still be the right medicine to achieve a win-win. The corporate partner wins not only in community visibility and product promotion but in staff motivation, team building, and pride. The nonprofit wins by growing its programs of support. But when businesses and nonprofits work together to improve communities, the ultimate winner is the public. ■

## Resources

Frede, Nancy, "Take the Money But Don't Run," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 19, No. 6.

Gifford, Gayle, "Cause-Related Marketing: 10 Rules to Protect Your Nonprofit Assets," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 17, No. 6.

Ptacek, Joseph and Gina Salazar, "Enlightened Self-Interest: Selling Business on the Benefits of Cause-Related Marketing," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 15, No. 4.

These publications are available from the Society's Resource Center, [www.snpo.org](http://www.snpo.org).

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