

# For Long-Term Stability Look to Corporations

By Bruce W. Burtch

Here's how to garner corporate dollars.

**W**hat if I told you that you could use new trends in corporate culture — to create solid, long-term stability for your nonprofit organization, even if yours is a small or medium-sized organization?

“It's this focus on the greater good that provides the magic.”

It's true. And smart nonprofits know it.

On the other hand, if you *miss* the hundreds of opportunities out there right now, you could find your wells getting drier and drier in the coming months. That's because for-profits are focusing more and more of their funds on full-scale cross-sector partnerships with nonprofits.

For-profits know that when they fully align with a good cause, their customers notice. So do their employees, who gain valuable skills, become re-energized, and are more loyal. And then there's that precious free press coverage for-profits get when they're out there supporting your organization.

## Nonprofits and For-profits: Better Together

Art with a Heart is a two-person nonprofit whose mission is to bring art to underserved school districts around California's Marin County. This tiny nonprofit partnered with Autodesk, a locally-based corporation. The corporation not only sponsors the artists but provides paid employee volunteers and guidance for the nonprofit, which now provides art programs to 300 students. More and more companies like Autodesk, who see partnering with nonprofits as an integral part of their corporate culture, simply will not consider assisting a nonprofit unless it focuses on the business objectives of their company.

So when you walk in with a solid Business Valuation Proposition, believe me: They'll take notice.

(Don't worry: You won't have to compromise your mission to reap all the benefits.)

In these austere times, for-profits are looking for mutual value in the nonprofit/for-profit equation. After all, it's their time, it's their talent, and it's their money!

### UNDERSTAND WHY FOR-PROFITS WANT TO WORK WITH YOU.

For-profits are finding that with long-term, multi-faceted partnerships with nonprofits, they get both a financial return on their investment and social benefits from fostering closer engagement with nonprofits.

As we noted in Part 1 of this series, for-profits actually gain more benefits (38 to be exact) than nonprofits (31) when they contribute funds, highly skilled advisors, in-kind donations, and pro bono services to a nonprofit. That's why your nonprofit is very valuable to the right for-profit companies.

Cause marketing, a subcategory of cross-sector partnerships, is “the fastest growing area of corporate marketing spending” according to *Advertising Age*: In 2012 an estimated \$1.7 billion was spent in North America alone on cause marketing campaigns.

A cross-sector partnership is fund development wrapped in a multiple benefits package. It will increase your success in getting

## Gen Y Embraces Cause Marketing

Gen Y, or Millennials, are people born in the 1980s and early 1990s. This generation has a very strong affinity to causes. The 2010 Cone Cause Evolution Study stated that “college-aged Millennials have nearly \$40 billion in discretionary income . . . and they buy with an eye toward the greater good.” This study also found that “94% of respondents ages 18-24 find it acceptable for a company to involve a cause or issue in its marketing” and “they are much more willing to try new products because of a cause affiliation.” The study also found that 81% of respondents volunteer in some way, and 87% consider a company’s cause commitments when deciding where to work.

funding, lowering expenses, and expanding your donor base while bringing a myriad other opportunities — benefits you won’t receive if you’re only seeking funding.

### ZERO IN ON ALIGNED COMPANIES.

Research your community or marketing region’s companies to find the ones that best “fit” your organization’s goals and mission. One example of excellent brand alignment is the partnership between Barefoot Wine and the SurfRider Foundation, whose mission is the protection and enjoyment of oceans, waves, and beaches.

Together they’ve created the *Barefoot Wine Beach Rescue Project* to help keep America’s beaches “barefoot friendly.” The partnership has hosted beach cleanups and restoration events coast-to-coast, utilizing volunteers to clean the shorelines, plant native greenery, and collect litter along the beaches. At the end of each event, volunteers enjoy Barefoot Wine and surf-inspired food.

What a perfect fit for both partners! You can find one too, maybe several.

### DEVELOP YOUR BUSINESS VALUATION PROPOSITION.

A corporate marketing or sales proposal won’t see the light of day unless it provides a solid Business Value Proposition (BVP) for increasing the revenue of the business. So, to begin a partnership conversation on a level playing field, you’ll need a good plan — and a great Business Valuation Proposition.

Here’s how to do it:

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

You’ve looked at for-profits in your community or marketing region and narrowed down the list to those whose brands look like they could align well with your nonprofit’s mission and goals.

Now it’s time to dig deeper, to learn everything you can about your top two or three potential partners. Read the organizations’ promotional materials and annual report. Conduct an Internet search for press coverage and other information about your potential partners. Check them out on Hoovers.com, their LinkedIn page, business journals, and the Chamber of Commerce. Talk to friends who work or volunteer at these companies. Do all you can to gain a good understanding of your potential partners’ key business priorities.

Now take the list we discussed in the first part of this series, the benefits for-profits receive from partnering with a nonprofit, and mix these benefits together with the information you’ve gathered on the for-profits’ key business priorities. With this knowledge, consider the ways that this partnership can best benefit the particular for-profits you’re interested in approaching. Keep in mind that if it doesn’t make dollars, it doesn’t make sense — although dollars to the for-profit also come in the form of free media coverage, increased brand awareness, and lower employee turnover, to mention just a few.

Now you can develop a BVP like they’ve never seen before — one that makes them say, “Wow — these nonprofit people really ‘get’ our business.” Create a BVP that shows you’ve done your homework, you’re clear on their business objectives, and your nonprofit has good things to offer them. Greater good things.

Chances are, with a well-researched BVP, you’ll knock it out of the park.


### KEEP IN MIND THE PARTNERSHIP GOALS.

Your Business Valuation Proposition should meet the business objectives of each partner, but most important, it should have a clear focus and impact on the *greater good*. It’s this focus on the greater good that provides the magic that drives the success of any cross-sector partnership.

### IT’S MARKETING, NOT PHILANTHROPY.

So where do you take this Business Value Proposition? No, not to the foundation desk. Knock on the marketing door. The budgets of a corporate marketing and sales department are usually between 100 and 1,000 times larger than the budgets of their foundation or their overall philanthropic giving. What’s more, the marketing director is in contact with every department of a company, from the CEO to HR to PR to Sales. And when you’re proposing a long-term mutually-beneficial relationship that improves a company’s sales, product brand, and human capital, you need to show the Marketing Department how this association is going to be good for them. Very good.

### REAP THE MAGIC.

Success comes through a step-by-step approach, leveraging what you already have, with the right partners, in a combined effort to create a greater good. And if there is one thing I’ve learned over these many years, there is magic when organizations from different sectors come together to create a greater good. These experiences will not only change the lives of those you are serving; these experiences will change your organization, your life, and the long-term stability of your nonprofit organization. 

---

*Bruce W. Burtch (bruce@bruceburtch.com) is CEO of Bruce W. Burtch, Inc. (www.bruceburtch.com) and author of Win-Win for the Greater Good. Called the “Father of Cause Marketing” by the Cause Marketing Forum and highly regarded for his innovative and creative win-win partnerships, Bruce Burtch is recognized nationally and internationally as a pioneer and leading expert in the field of cross-sector partnerships and cause marketing.*

## Making the Match

For more on corporate partnerships, see these articles at [www.NonprofitWorld.org/members](http://www.NonprofitWorld.org/members):

**Please Give Generously: How Your Nonprofit Can Help For-Profit Corporations** (Vol. 32, No. 3)

**Boost Your Share of Corporate Sponsorships** (Vol. 29, No. 4)

**For-Profits and Nonprofits Meet Missions Together** (Vol. 25, No. 4)

**Corporate Partnerships for Nonprofits: A Match Made in Heaven?** (Vol. 30, No. 2)

**Is a Cause-Related Partnership in Your Future?** (Vol 32, No. 1)