

Corporate Giving – and Getting

Social responsibility. Community relations. Philanthropy. Whatever you call it, the opportunities for businesses to give back abound. Whether you are looking for your first philanthropic effort or your fiftieth, putting a little thought into your philanthropic endeavor may maximize your impact even more.



Clarify The Purpose

Before you start the search for the perfect cause, look to your motivation. Is it internal or external?

Are you looking to celebrate a good year or a successful product launch? Perhaps you want to create a greater sense of teamwork between employees or build more pride in the business. *All are very good internal instigators for philanthropic endeavors.*

Perhaps you were approached by a nonprofit needing assistance. Maybe you want to enhance your image, repair a mishap or improve your presence in the community in which you work. *Each external force can drive charitable efforts.*

Understanding the motive and clarifying your purpose can help you find the best fit for your company.

Consider Your Players

There are a number of details to consider when thinking about your philanthropic future: give to one or many, give based on a theme or on whims; contribute regularly or in one shot; go global or be local; do your own thing or join in with a crowd.

Consider the people involved and let them help shape the decisions about where and what you will offer (e.g., time, money, skills, goods, image, etc.).

If you're trying to spark employee camaraderie, consider a project that involves teamwork in which you donate time and skills. Connect with an existing cause, like Habitat for Humanity, or establish your own unique endeavor that

requires joint planning. When planning something special, employees can really shape the effort. The more internal involvement when deciding, the more internal support you will likely receive.

If you're looking to improve perceptions, consider a cause that links to your mission and business focus. For example, a computer company might donate hardware/software to a national literacy organization. Or, a design firm might volunteer time to dig out flower beds at a community center. Think about who is involved, what makes them tick, what you want to accomplish and then make a list of possibilities. What organizations might fit your bill?

Know Your Intention

Once you've clarified your purpose and considered your players, do one more thing: clarify your commitment.

How far and/or how deep are you looking to go with your philanthropic endeavor? It should guide how you communicate with your nonprofit(s) of choice. Can you commit to multiple contributions up front? Be sure before you share your intention. Nonprofits count on commitments to budget and plan for the future.

No matter how you decide to give back, the search for the right philanthropy and the act of giving should be an enjoyable and rewarding activity.