

Corporate Giving Programs That Help Nonprofits

By Adam Weinger, Double the Donation

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Is Your Nonprofit Tapping Into Corporate Giving Opportunities?



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Do you still think of corporations as stuffy places that your nonprofit needs to beg for support?

If so, you're woefully out of date. Today businesses spend almost as much time thinking about how to be good citizens as about their profits.

That's because we all expect that of them. Companies now take their corporate social responsibilities seriously and actively look for ways to be good for the planet, their communities, and to help their employees be good citizens too.

That is such good news for nonprofits. Every organization's revenue stream is different, but, for most, at least a portion of fundraising comes from corporate support.

Besides traditional corporate grants, which you apply for directly through a company's grantmaking arm, corporations offer a variety of programs to give back to communities where their employees live and work.

Collectively, corporate philanthropy accounts for nearly \$15 billion in annual giving to nonprofits.

You might be surprised at the number of ways that corporations spread around their corporate giving dollars. Here are some of the most popular.

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Pro Bono Service



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Is your organization stretched thin? Do you have an extensive list of projects that you'd like to tackle in the coming months, but don't have the manpower? If so, perhaps you should look into pro bono opportunities offered by local companies. Take a look at your pool of supporters, and I'm sure you'll find donors, parents, members, or volunteers who work in nearly every industry.

Need to update your website? One of your supporters probably has a strong IT background.

Do you have an upcoming fundraising event? Perhaps you can engage a local marketing firm to help design marketing materials.

In almost all cases, professional firms who specialize in each area can do a better job with less effort than you can do on your own.

Matching Gift Programs



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Employee matching gift programs allocate corporate dollars to causes that their employees are passionate about.

Corporations do this by matching donations to nonprofits that their employees support. Typically, companies with these programs match donations dollar for dollar -- effectively doubling employee contributions. It's a win-win situation for everyone:

- Employees can double their donations to organizations they care about.
- Nonprofits receive additional funding without having to attract new donors.
- Corporations can offer a benefit that employees appreciate, receive tax benefits, and can give back to a diverse set of nonprofits.

Matching gift programs are based on the idea that taking a bottoms-up approach works for corporate philanthropy. With over 65 percent of Fortune 500 companies offering these programs, including many of the nation's leading employers, some of your donors or members undoubtedly work for companies that will match their donations.

Dollar for Doer Programs



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Does your organization rely on a regular base of volunteers? If so, some of them may be eligible to participate in their employers' dollar for dollar programs.

These are grant programs set up by corporations to encourage their employees to volunteer within their communities. Although not as prevalent as matching gift programs, almost 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies offer a volunteer grant program.

The typical structure provides grants of around \$10 - \$15 per volunteer hour as long as an employee volunteers with the organization on a regular basis (for instance, 20+ hours in a year).

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Paid-Release Days



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Many companies offer employees a few paid release days each year, where it allows an employee or many employees to spend a day or two volunteering during normal work hours while on the company payroll.

Your organization should consider raising awareness around paid-release days especially if you have significant fundraising events coming up. Find major companies in your area with paid release days and ask supporters who work at those companies to request a day off to help your organization.

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Non-Cash Donations (Gift-in-Kind)



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Although most companies provide cash donations, some companies prefer to give back to communities in other ways. A typical example is a manufacturing company that can offer a greater benefit to organizations through product donations rather than cash contributions.

For instance, food manufacturers are one of the largest suppliers of food to food pantries. Lumber companies give building materials for charities such as Habitat for Humanity. On a more local level, make sure you're asking local businesses to sponsor events.

Another opportunity is to create a wish-list of items that your organization needs. Think about some of the things your organization plans to purchase in the

upcoming months and see if those items can be obtained through non-cash donations.

For instance, does your office need to upgrade your computers? If so, many companies may be willing to donate their older equipment.

Although it's tough to get precisely what your organization needs at the exact moment, if you publicize this wish-list you make it more likely to receive these donations. And make sure to share these needs with board members who are well connected in the community.

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Company Wide Day of Service Events



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Could your organization benefit from a large volunteer event? If so, you should consider partnering with a local corporation to create a company-wide day of service.

These events require an immense amount of pre-event coordination, but if you can pull it off, your organization can benefit from a large group of skilled volunteers. As an added benefit, companies also frequently provide funding for these events.

One tip for organizations looking to pull these events off successfully is to design appropriate sized chunks of work that can be finished by groups of company employees in a single day.

Corporate Community Fundraisers (Checkout Charity Campaigns)



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How many times have you gone to a movie theater or grocery store and been asked to donate \$1 to a worthy cause?

Many of the largest retail, grocery, and food chains partner with national nonprofits. But it's also an excellent opportunity for smaller local organizations. Such programs are often called checkout charity campaigns because consumers give at the cash register when checking out.

The easiest way to implement such a program is to take a look at your donor list or board of directors to see who owns or runs a local company. He or she is already passionate about the cause and may be willing to set up a checkout campaign. These programs are also an excellent way to improve your organization's visibility!

The bottom line is that there are many ways your organization can tap into corporate giving programs. So gather your staff and start brainstorming how to increase the amount of money you raise from companies in your community.