



Most kids fall into whatever fashion trend comes along. As a child in the 80's, I fell hard for my Madonna "Lucky Star" look: ripped sweatshirt, lacy fingerless gloves, an armful of jelly bracelets and a head full of hairspray. In middle school, I jumped permed-head first into pegged pants, rugby shirts and high-top Reeboks. And in high school, comfort was key: nothing but baggy flannel shirts, overalls, and a pair of Adidas slides.

Today, I really couldn't tell you if I'm fashion-forward or fashion-backward. Being "on-trend" isn't high on my radar anymore. At least fashion-wise. Today, I follow philanthropic trends and can't get enough of what businesses are doing. For good.

On the national scene, corporations are increasingly looking for innovative ways to create social and environmental impact through their giving programs. Here's how they're doing it.

**Corporations are giving more dollars than ever.** The Giving USA Foundation reported that corporate giving reached \$20.77 billion in 2017—an 8% increase from 2016.

**Year-round giving is surpassing year-end giving.** Since 2013, the number of companies that are giving throughout the year instead of waiting for fourth quarter has tripled. Makes sense. If the need is year-round, the support needs to be year-round.

**Philanthropy is becoming an integral part of the business model.** When Salesforce, a cloud-based software company headquartered in California, started in 1999, it launched its 1-1-1 model—meaning they committed to give 1% of employee time, 1% of company profits and 1% of company product to make a difference locally and internationally. While that small percentage for philanthropy doesn't sound overwhelmingly generous for a start-up, last year, the company reported \$10.48B in revenue.

**Corporate philanthropy is becoming more strategic.** Corporations have always had product and economic missions. Now, they're incorporating social missions into their business models and focusing on areas where they want to make the most impact.

**Impact data is impacting giving decisions.** And, when corporations are laser-focused on impactful giving, it's understandable why they rely on impact data to guide future giving. In fact, in a recent study, a high percentage of corporations reported they changed their giving due to increased knowledge about a nonprofit organization's effectiveness.

**Brand activism is growing.** Most companies used to market brands on their performance characteristics. For example, a toothpaste manufacturer would position the product as the better “whitener,” “breath freshener” or “cavity-fighter” to push sales in a competitive market. However, today, a big chunk of corporate America wants you to know what it cares about as well as what it sells. And, it seems we’re totally ok with that. In a recent survey, more than 90% of millennials and 85% of the average U.S. public reported they would switch brands to one associated with a cause they believed in.

**Employees are participating more fully in corporate giving.** As corporations continue to embrace philanthropy as part of their corporate cultures, employees are assuming even greater giving roles within the workplace and in the community.

I’m pleased to say the business community on the Cape is right on trend. Our local businesses are giving more. They’re giving more often. They’re changing their business models to begin or advance philanthropic missions. They’re being more strategic about what they support. They’re also being more public about what they support. They’re partnering with their employees to increase their community impact. And, they’re partnering with us. Here’s why.

While philanthropy is an integral and important part of their businesses, it isn’t their core business. Our Business Partners are architects, builders, lawyers, realtors, developers, and insurance agents. They’re running all kinds of for-profit businesses, including restaurants, golf clubs, retail stores, and luxury resorts. Even though they are very philanthropically-minded, they don’t always have the time and infrastructure for the “business-end” of philanthropy. We do.

The Foundation offers professional investment management, tax advantages and administrative support so businesses immediately benefit from economies of scale. In addition, with over \$40 million in our investment pool, they can potentially experience a higher return on investment and have access to different investment strategies than they might have on their own.

That’s a powerful suite of services. But there’s more. Because we’ve been in the grantmaking business for 30 years and have distributed nearly \$70 million in grants and scholarships, we are at the hub of the nonprofit community.

- We know what the trends are nationally and what’s working locally.
- We have a unique, objective purview of the nonprofit organizations in our region and can give businesses valuable insight and advice.
- We’re up to date on nonprofit projects, programs, and challenges throughout the community.
- We routinely conduct additional research for businesses. This saves time and allows them to remain anonymous while considering giving options.
- We’re able to make important connections and introductions. Some businesses would like to meet nonprofit leaders or talk with other business executives with similar strategies. Others may like to know about volunteer opportunities for their employees.

Above all, we help businesses create a Giving Strategy that aligns with their missions and provide essential services they need to execute that strategy.

There's no question that having a Giving Strategy is good for business. Statistically, corporate social philanthropy and responsibility initiatives have the potential to increase sales by up to 20%, affect customer satisfaction by 10% more, and reduce the average turnover rate of employees over time by 25%-50%.

Doing good has very tangible benefits. But, as Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." That's the trend I see from our Business Partners at the Foundation every day. And, I'll bet my fanny pack, that trend's here to stay.