



Charity Self Help Guide

Connecting with **businesses**



Charity Partner Best Practice Hints and Tips

Trying to make the best of your time with a business is vital to ensure that it becomes a proper partnership where both parties are able to make a tangible difference to each other. It's just as much about raising awareness, helping each other and having fun along the way, as it is about raising money. By developing a relationship and talking together, who knows what opportunities might arise for both of

you that you would otherwise have missed. Always promote the idea of a two year partnership to maximise the opportunities for both partners

Below are a few hints and tips on how to make it work that we hope will set your mind racing with new ideas!



Research

- Research the company on-line
 - » Who is their current charity partner
 - » What is their charity policy or strategy
- Look at the Business in the Community website to view which businesses are actively engaged with them and their local communities
- Does the company fit with what you do?
- Is there one person who deals with charity partner, volunteering and CSR
- Research your local organisations? e.g. are they members of Chamber of Commerce? (Who undertake to improve the local business environment and communities in which they work)

Volunteering

- Identify exactly what it is you need
- Ask for help in identifying it if you don't
- 'Bite size' volunteer opportunities
- Provide a good variety of skills and challenge opportunities and try to encourage the company to do at least one of each to make more impact and further your relationship
- Skills based volunteers coming to your charity for the first time are always nervous that they won't be able to help you



It's all about a partnership



- Build up a relationship
- Invite them to a 'seeing is believing'
- Could you affect their:
 - » Training
 - » HR Policy
- Invite them to hold a meeting at the charity
- Make sure you both have links to each others websites on-line with an introductory paragraph on the business/charity
- Before preparing your newsletters, speak to the business about what they have done recently and share the newsletter with the company
- Provide regular updates
- Make a list of fundraising events and if you don't have one - create one!
 - » Create toolkits e.g. use the internet to find cheap game options for your themed event that you could put together yourself and sell at cost to the business
 - » Use the internet to find games that could be used for fundraising that are free
- Get a list of events that the company are holding and see how you can support them eg
 - » AGM
 - » Staff Council
 - » Leadership meetings
 - » Department meetings
- Create a list of fundraising ideas
 - » Organise a possibility thinking session with the business
 - » Lots of fundraising ideas don't need to cost lots of money
 - » Dress up and dress down themes: Valentines, Halloween, Christmas, Olympics, World Cup, Guy Fawkes
- Find out what they like to do?
 - » E.g. golf tournament
- Begin the partnership with an 'ideas party' for fundraising
- Celebrate success by holding a 'thank you' coffee and cake at the charity or at your partners offices or send a simple thank you card.
- Always talk about the impact the business has made on the charity

Leaving a legacy

- Businesses will be keen to establish a legacy with community groups after the partnership has commenced
- Consider legacy opportunities that would benefit both your community group and the business.
Ideas could include
 - » an annual awareness raising event in the community that addresses a range of social needs relevant to your organisations
 - » lobbying activity that changes policy for the good of your social issue
 - » colleagues and customers from the business continuing to volunteer with your community group in their own time after the partnership has commenced
 - » connections made with multiple community groups through the business to maximise positive impact in the community
 - » mutual showcasing between the community group and business to continue wherever possible



Top 5 hints and tips

from Vimme Rathour, Corporate Advisor for Business in the Community on how to build and sustain a successful partnership with a business:

1. Find out about your partner – what are their needs?

Find out what type of business you're working with or the type of business you want to work with.

Spend time getting to know each other. Having a good understanding of each other's priorities can help your partnership to develop.

Business / charitable partnerships that are aligned and share similar objectives are more likely to work.

What's the business case for the company involved with an organisation like you, try to offer opportunities that will complement this – be CREATIVE and open to possibilities.

Are you looking for volunteers? What for? What type of activities? Try to make this interesting and varied, skill sharing, practical projects where you get your hands dirty or is it capacity building? Don't just think of business support in terms of financial donations.

2. Communicating effectively with businesses – managing and meeting business expectations

Make it clear what you'd like to gain from being partners with a business / tell them your priorities.

Get to know senior / key members of staff – good if people move on too, this gives you other contacts to communicate with. Respond to emails / calls promptly / keep meeting arrangements – if your role is unreachable certain times of the day (like teachers) make this clear. Involve more than one member of staff to ensure smooth transition if someone from your organisation moves on.

Communicate successful projects with your clients / service users using the media, social media – make you / your partnership stand out! Make sure volunteers are informed about successes e.g. what difference did the mentoring programme make to certain individuals? This will encourage volunteers to return.

3. You know what you're doing today, tomorrow, next month

Without a well-laid plan, the best intentions of delivering on a project can be scuppered if a colleague is off sick or something has changed unexpectedly. It may not be the most fun part of your partnership but a good, solid plan that's been shared with relevant people can help to keep things going.

4. You can prove its worth it...

Sharing the impact with all stakeholders.

For example, your partner company painted a room you could hire out, how much has been made? Has this helped your organisation sustain / grow? Has this income supported other services you offer the community / your service users?

If your partner company developed an outdoor space for service users, is it maintained? What's it used for? Who's benefitting?

What does your partner need to report back on internally? Your partnership could last longer if you are aware of this and the correct information is obtained

5. How to keep it going...

Good partnerships are based on two way flow of communication, ideas, skills and resource.

The relationship should be built on mutual respect with both parties clear about what they are bringing to the table with clearly defined lines of communication.

Schedule regular meetings and use them to review and assess how well things are going against the original objectives.

