



Corporate Fundraising Resource Sheet



Any charity willing and able to invest the resources can introduce corporate fundraising as an income stream to some extent. With the right approach, even the smallest of charities can benefit from fundraising in the corporate sector.

Corporate giving isn't for everyone. Corporate donations to the third sector tend to be 9 times lower than income from individual giving, so it's worth thinking about how you can use your time and resources most effectively. Read our Individual Giving resource sheet to help you decide. If you're a 'big brand' charity, a children's charity or a cancer charity you are likely to be more successful, but others do achieve significant results from corporate partnerships.

But developing corporate partnerships is not easy. It takes preparation, the right approach, making contact with the people inside the company who can help, an excellent 'sell' on why your charity and their company are a good 'fit'. It takes patience to develop the relationship. 'Smash and grab' in the corporate sector simply doesn't work. In fact, the timeframe for developing a corporate prospect towards a long-term, sustainable partnership can be between 3 – 6 months ...sometimes even longer.

Let's assume that your charity has identified corporate fundraising as a new income stream. You are to be the person responsible for taking it forward.

Know thyself

As the person responsible for developing corporate fundraising as an income stream, your first task must be to find suitable prospects. But before you begin the process of thinking about all the companies you want to approach, take a while to think about your charity. In short, know thyself.

- What can your charity offer a prospective corporate partner?
- What is your core business?
- What is your vision?
- Do you have a unique selling point (USP)?
- Where are your beneficiaries?
- Who are your supporters?
- What is your brand?
- How do you fare in terms of public awareness?



- What engagement opportunities can you offer a prospective corporate partner?

Research your prospective corporate partner

Remember, corporate partnerships are just that. Don't just think about what a corporate partner can offer your organisation. Consider what you can offer each other.

So now that you have thought about your own organisation, start thinking about your prospective corporate partner.

- What is their core business?
- What is their vision?
- What is their brand?
- What values do your charity and your prospective corporate partner share?
- How big are they?
- Who are their customers?
- Do they support a charity already? If so, who?
- Who are their customers?
- Who are the decision makers within the company?

How will your proposal improve the profile of your prospective corporate partner?

If you feel an association with your cause will not necessarily improve the image of the prospective corporate partner, don't be put-off. Remember, these are simply considerations prior to engaging with a company. Some corporates will engage with charities for reasons other than enhancing the profile of the company – see section below, *What can you offer your prospective corporate partner?*

What do you want out of this corporate partnership?

Corporate partnerships offer many benefits. So what are you looking for? Here are some of the key benefits a corporate partner can offer:

- Donations (including cash)
- Gifts In Kind
- PR
- Volunteering
- Payroll Giving



- Partnerships, affinity products¹ and Cause Related Marketing²
- Pro bono work
- Employee fundraising

You may be looking to achieve one, several or all of these benefits over a period of time. You should enter an initial meeting with a goal in mind but prepare to be flexible. You might not get exactly what you want straight away but the important thing is getting the partnership started.

Building a social case

This is when you start thinking about the social case with which you are going to approach your prospective corporate partner. You are the expert on the work of your charity, so start demonstrating your expertise.

- What is the larger social context of your work?
- What have been your key achievements so far?
- What else can you achieve?

Engaging with a prospective corporate partner

You should now have a clear idea of how your organisation and your prospective corporate partner 'fit' and what you want to achieve from the relationship. You have built a strong social case to demonstrate why you are the right charity for your prospective corporate partner. So how will you engage them? How will you get yourself and your proposal at the same table?

¹ Affinity products are items or services provided by a corporate partner that can be used to benefit both parties. The non-profit organisation benefits financially while the corporate partner benefits by association to a good cause. A common affinity product is the ubiquitous charity credit card. However, Help the Aged have benefited from insurances services and many non-profits have benefited from affinity partnerships with energy and water companies.

² Cause Related Marketing (CRM) is a cooperative effort between a "for profit" business and a non-profit organization for mutual benefit. Cause related marketing differs from corporate giving as the latter generally involves a donation while cause related marketing focuses more on the marketing relationship between the two parties. Sometimes a financial benefit is involved but often the partnership is centred on brand awareness and profile.



Ask fundraisers who have achieved success in building corporate partnerships and you will probably get a range of answers as to how they first made contact.

Formal application

Some large companies with CSR programmes³ have a formal process where non-profit organisations are required to apply to become a corporate partner. These companies usually know the types of causes they want to form partnerships with (and those they do not) and provide guidelines to applicants in writing or through their websites. This is worth checking before you invest time in contacting them.

Networking

As in Major Donor fundraising, networking is very effective in seeking corporate partnerships. Talk to your organisation's trustees and staff to find out if they have any contacts in companies that might be suitable as a corporate partner. Recommendation by word-of-mouth is a powerful tool in fundraising – don't underestimate its value in getting you to the table of prospective corporate partners.

Open days and events for local companies are a good way of showcasing your work and starting to build relationships. These events will need to be well organised but have the added advantage of bringing together key people from local companies.

Mail

Many companies can receive up to 50 requests a week from charities asking for help. If you are going to contact a prospective corporate partner by mail, you will need to make your case a strong one.

You've already done your research so put it to use in telling the prospective corporate partner your unique selling point (USP) and how it will benefit them

³ CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is a model adopted by many companies in today's commercial world as a means of monitoring and adhering to law and ethical standards. This includes taking responsibility for the impact of the company's activities on the environment, consumers, employees and even the developing world. Partnerships with non-profit organisations are an integral part of CSR for many companies because it gives the company a direct link and means of 'giving back'. It allows the company to help its chosen cause by investing in the expertise and experience of their chosen non-profit corporate partner.



to work with you and your organisation. Tell them about the need addressed by your organisation and let them know your strategic objectives for the next three years. This is what you want your prospective corporate partner to 'buy into'.

The right information at this stage is crucial. The person reading your document is likely to be very busy, so don't present them with a huge manuscript. Give the reader short insights – not pages of facts. Most of all, help your prospective corporate partner to see where they fit into your vision of a better world.

Your first meeting

All your diligent research and hard work has paid off. You have been invited to meet with key staff from your prospective corporate partner. Your approach to this meeting is crucial – you stand as the representative of your organisation and success or failure of your proposal rests with you. Make sure you get this right.

By this point you should have an established contact within your prospective corporate partner. Why not ask them about their preferred format for the meeting? Stress that you want everyone to get as much as possible from the meeting and that everyone present gets the opportunity to engage.

There's every chance that you will be asked to prepare a short presentation followed by a conversation. Everyone participates and everyone gets the opportunity to describe what they want from the relationship.

This approach takes your role away from the hard-sell and into a situation where all present are working towards a mutually beneficial partnership. You will still need to prepare and be ready to get across your main points.

What can you offer your prospective corporate partner?

Remember, this partnership isn't just about your organisation. Your prospective corporate partner will be working to its own agenda, probably along the lines of:



- Improve staff morale and retention through charity events and setting fundraising goals
- Provide team building and volunteering opportunities
- Generate positive internal and external PR
- Deliver on Corporate Social Responsibility goals
- Increase sales through sponsorships and CRM activity

They may be focusing on one or several of these, or something completely different, so try to establish their objectives early on.

Developing the relationship

Whether you have developed the relationship yourself or have taken over corporate fundraising from someone else in your organisation, if you have reached this stage, someone has invested a lot of time and effort. Make sure you maintain the momentum.

Keep in contact with your corporate partner regularly. Look for opportunities to publicise the partnership locally. Provide feedback on the amount of money raised by their company and what it has achieved. Keep communicating, keep positive and be honest with your partners at all times. They will have greater respect for you if you present the challenges faced by your organisation as well as the successes you have achieved.

This isn't a recipe for instant success but it is a tried and tested process. The key is to remember the elements that have met with success and improve on them while adjusting areas that have not been so successful. In short, practice makes perfect.