

Cause and effect: Measure how your corporate giving is making a difference

by LuAnne Speeter

Chances are, you started up a corporate giving program because you care about one or more causes and want to make a difference – whether your goal is to help eradicate a disease, provide a warm meal or shelter for those in need, or clean up the environment. Just participating may seem to be reward enough, but measuring and promoting your program's effectiveness is a wise business strategy.

There are a number of stakeholders who will benefit by learning the program's results:

- The partnering nonprofit organization
- The individuals who are the end recipients of donations and volunteer efforts
- Your employees
- Your board of directors
- Your customers who contribute to your cause program
- Community members

Promoting the results gives a positive boost to all those involved and encourages ongoing effort. It also enables you to make adjustments during the process to better reach your goals, and to help you assess at year's end whether to continue the cause relationship.

First, decide what you want your corporate giving program to accomplish, and then which metrics are important to track. Consider the following areas:

Donations and donors

Generate enthusiasm by setting a financial goal and a timeline. In many cases, the nonprofit organization can help you determine your first year's goal based on your company size. For subsequent years, develop a stretch goal that exceeds the previous year. Track online donations through a dedicated landing page on your Web site, or through sites such as GiveMn.org. Keep counts of **noncash donations**, such as number of toys donated to Toys For Tots or pounds of nonperishable items for food shelves.

Corporate growth and brand perception

Determine how much your company revenue and brand reputation is benefiting from your cause promotion by gathering a variety of metrics and other information, such as:

- Leads generated from cause marketing efforts tracked through unique toll-free numbers, URLs or “how heard” questions
- Sales trend (over five years, if possible)
- Share value trend (over five years)
- Customer testimonials
- Focus groups and customer surveys on brand perception

Employee satisfaction, loyalty and recruitment

According to the [2009 Corporate Citizenship Study](#), 56% of survey respondents believe that working for a socially responsible employer makes a difference. Determine the effects of your corporate social responsibility program by measuring the following:

- Employee satisfaction through surveys conducted before the program’s initiation and annually thereafter
- Annual contribution of employee volunteer time, five-year trend
- Employee growth, five-year trend
- Employee retention, five-year trend

Include the above results in your annual report or as a separate corporate social responsibility report. Round out hard data with testimonials from a representative of your nonprofit partner organization, customers, employees and community members.

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