

SMALL BUSINESS GIVING

Why are you keeping your cause a secret?

by LuAnne Speeter

Maybe it's shyness, humility or simply Minnesota Nice. But many small business owners around the state are keeping the good they do for charity to themselves. Whether they've contributed a check, a percentage of annual sales or employee volunteer hours, some companies never get the word out to the public.

That's a shame.

By being quiet, you could be depriving your cause. Your donation is only a portion of the potential benefits your chosen charity will derive from your partnership. If you really want to maximize your effectiveness, take on the role as ambassador. That means you could:

- Show photos of your volunteers in action on your Web site, on your company's Facebook page or in your newsletter.
- Include the cause's logo on your home page and add your commitment, such as "2% of every dollar you spend with us is donated to help [cause name] achieve its goals."
- Display your cause's logo with photos at point-of-sale locations.
- Talk about your cause – word of mouth is the most powerful influencer.
- Submit press releases about your cause partnership to local newspapers. Increase the odds of it being picked up by including a human interest story, too.

Minnesota businesses are generous. According to a 2002 survey of 595 companies conducted through Building Business Investment in Community,* the vast majority of businesses make cash contributions to their favorite charities:

Business size by # of employees	% of businesses making cash contributions
<20	72%
20-99	76%
100-499	93%
500+	96%

In addition, many companies donate products, sponsor scholarships and events, contribute employee hours to school and community projects, and serve on nonprofit or agency boards. Add more impact to your generosity and dedication. Tell the community about your partnership, give information about the cause and provide others with a way to contribute, too.

*A project of the [Minnesota Council on Foundations](#), the [Minnesota Chamber of Commerce](#) and 12 Minnesota business and philanthropic organizations.

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