

INFP

Technology Solutions for Teleworkers

**Community Attachment Translates
into Higher Volunteer Rates**

Recruiting Corporate Sponsors for Special Events

Whether your organization needs funding for a single event or for ongoing activities, the business community is an obvious place to turn to for support. Whereas the main benefit enjoyed by individual donors is the satisfaction that comes with supporting a worthy cause, corporate donors often profit financially from their relationships with charities.

Belying claims that corporate social initiatives represent a drain on shareholder wealth and a distraction from core business activities, a 2006 study by economists from the New York University Stern School of Business found that companies that give to charities earn back \$6 in sales for every \$1 donated. Businesses in industries that are highly sensitive to consumer perception, such as retailers and financial services firms, experience a particularly large boost in revenues when they contribute to charities, researchers

continued on page three



TONNESON & COMPANY CPAs PC 
Certified Public Accountants and Business Consultants

Technology Solutions for Teleworkers

Considering the nature of nonprofit work, and the fact that many workers and volunteers may have other jobs and responsibilities, nonprofit organizations should consider the potential benefits of telework. Providing the right technology solutions for staff or volunteers who work outside the office is getting easier as Internet and phone connections become more sophisticated and affordable. Given the software and hardware tools available, it should be possible to integrate home computers and other remote devices into your organization's IT network quickly, securely, and cost-effectively.

Staff who work at home on a regular basis should have a personal or notebook computer that meets your network's specifications and is not used by other family members. Dial-up access is not recommended for work purposes; instead, telecommuting employees should have a high-speed, always-on broadband Internet connection at home. High-bandwidth connectivity—available through subscription services such as DSL, cable modem, satellite, and Wi-Fi—enables users to be as productive at home as they are at their office workstations.

For teleworkers who travel frequently or shuttle between home and the office, a laptop or notebook offers much greater flexibility than a second desktop computer. Using a notebook, staff can connect to the Internet or your organization's network via a broadband connection at home, the local area network (LAN) in the office, and Wi-Fi hotspots when on the road. While more limited in their functionality, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and some types of cell phones allow staff to read and send e-mails, access their electronic calendars, and even browse the web.

A virtual private network (VPN) provides telecommuters with secure remote access to files and applications stored on your network. While VPNs operate over the Internet, "tunneling" locks out extraneous Internet traffic, creating a direct, encrypted line between the remote computer and your organization's network. Once a VPN is in place, remote desktop software can provide users with full and secure access to their workstations, allowing them to view and use their documents, files, and applications as they would on their desktops in the office.

Remote workers are often involved in projects that require extensive interaction and cooperation with co-workers. Collaborative software, or groupware, permits several users to work on a single project at the same time or at different times, and it can schedule and track a project as the work progresses. Other collaborative management tools that may prove useful both inside and outside the office include knowledge management, document sharing, and workflow systems.

Security is, of course, a priority when implementing a telework program. All computers and other devices connecting into your organization's network should be equipped with appropriate antivirus software, firewalls, and spam filters. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption should be used when transmitting sensitive data. It is important that staff who do remote work receive training in how to manage passwords, update security patches, back up data, and handle security emergencies.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is not only useful in helping telecommuters stay connected to their office phones; it can also result in substantial savings on long-distance and cell phone charges. The call notification features of VoIP systems alert remote workers to new voicemail or faxes through messages to their e-mail inboxes, PDAs, or cell phones.

Notebook computers and voice-data handhelds known as "smartphones" can also receive VoIP phone calls. Staff may be able to reduce their cell phone usage while traveling by making VoIP calls over their business phone number. In addition, VoIP technology makes it possible for those working from home or on the road to participate in meetings via teleconferencing or video conferencing. Miniature web cams, desktop microphones, and portable headsets make remote videoconferencing easy.

While these technologies are becoming increasingly user-friendly, employees or volunteers who are telecommuting are just as likely as those in the office to require IT support. If your teleworking staff typically work outside of office hours, providing emergency helpdesk assistance late into the evening is essential. IT should also remain in regular contact with telecommuters to ensure there are no functionality or security issues that should be addressed. ♦

RECRUITING CORPORATE SPONSORS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

■■■ *continued from page one*

discovered. In business terms, the study concluded, sponsoring or contributing to a good cause can be as easily justified as research and development, capital expenditures, or marketing campaigns.

Since both parties stand to gain when a business contributes to your organization's event, approach potential donors or sponsors from the business community with a view to building a mutually beneficial partnership. Rather than simply asking for a handout or touting the social importance of your cause, be prepared to explain in detail how and to what degree the potential sponsor would profit from an association with your organization.

While it may be possible to reel in a few sponsors simply by contacting a large number of businesses, your success rate in securing business donors will improve if you do some research before picking up the phone or sending an e-mail. Find out in advance as much as you can about each company's core customers and main business goals. Familiarize yourself with each company's marketing strategy, and think about ways that involvement with your organization's event could complement the company's current marketing efforts. If staff, board members, or volunteers have contacts within companies that are likely sponsors, ask them for help in crafting a strategy for recruiting the company.

Before approaching a potential sponsor, you should also consider what types of businesses sell products or services that are most closely aligned with the work of your organization or with the focus of the event. If, for example, your organization is planning a 10k race, sports equipment retailers would be obvious choices to sponsor the event. If many of the people expected to attend the event are relatively affluent, banks or investment firms may be persuaded to provide support.

On the other hand, it is generally best to avoid recruiting sponsors that sell products and services antithetical to your declared mission or engage in questionable business practices. Even if these companies make substantial contributions to your event, your organization could alienate other donors by associating itself with a company that does not appear to support your goals as a nonprofit.

When approaching a potential sponsor, introduce the event as an opportunity to market the company's products or services. Depending upon the size and type of event, sponsors may, for example, be invited to have their company's name announced at the event, displayed on a banner, or displayed on a stage or podium. The sponsor's logo or ad could appear in printed materials, on t-shirts, or on your organization's website, together with a link to the company's website. Larger sponsors may wish to send company representatives to the event or even set up a marketing stand. To make sponsorship more attractive to a wide range of supporters, create several sponsorship levels, each with different levels of publicity.

Before agreeing to become a sponsor, most businesses will want information about your organization and details of the event. If you are meeting in person with a company representative, bring along brochures or other succinctly worded materials that not only outline your group's mission and activities, but also emphasize its achievements. If you are contacting potential sponsors by mail or email, draft a short, compelling letter introducing the event and presenting the business case for sponsorship. Include a brief description of the planned event, listing any supporters already on board, as well as the projected number and demographics of the attendees. Follow up any written communications with a phone call.

Start the process of securing sponsors as early as possible, especially for a major event. Larger companies may ask for a written proposal and require several months before making a decision. But even if your organization is small, don't assume that you cannot attract sponsorship from big corporations, provided the target audience of the event coincides with the company's target market.

If sponsors are satisfied with the event, chances are they will be open to collaborating with your group on future events or projects. When the event is over, thank sponsors both publicly and privately for their support. Build on these relationships by keeping companies informed about your organization's activities throughout the year and inviting them to attend or participate in any events that may be in line with their business or social responsibility objectives. ♦

Community Attachment Translates into Higher Volunteer Rates

People who live in metropolitan areas known for their high quality of life are more likely than residents of the major urban centers of the east and west coasts to donate their time and energy to charities, according to a report published by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency which oversees AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other national service and volunteer programs.



The nationwide study of volunteering trends in U.S. cities found the highest volunteer rates in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area of Minnesota, followed by Salt Lake City, Utah; Austin, Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Kansas City, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. By contrast, researchers said,

the lowest volunteer rates were observed in Las Vegas, Nevada; Miami, Florida; New York, New York; Virginia Beach, Virginia; and Riverside, California.

The study also demonstrated a correlation between volunteer rates and educational levels, homeownership rates, and commuting times. Compared with cities with lower volunteer rates, the analysis showed that communities in which more people volunteer generally have below-average poverty rates, fewer high school dropouts, shorter average commutes, and higher levels of community attachment through homeownership.

“Volunteering isn’t just nice; it’s necessary for tackling our toughest problems,” said David Eisner, CEO of the Corporation. “Cities with high volunteer rates are cities that have lower crime, higher employment, better education, and a better quality of life. City leaders should use this report as a roadmap to increasing volunteering and citizen problem-solving in their cities.” ♦

Be advised that this information was not intended or written to be used, and cannot be used, for the purpose of avoiding tax-related penalties; or for promoting, marketing, or recommending to another party any tax-related matters addressed herein. This publication is intended to provide accurate and authoritative information on the subject matter covered. It is distributed with the understanding that the publisher and distributor are not rendering legal, accounting, or other professional advice and assume no liability whatsoever in connection with its use. © 2007

TONNESON & COMPANY CPAs PC
Certified Public Accountants and Business Consultants

