

Voluntary and Commercial Partnerships

Voluntary organisations and charities are increasingly entering into partnerships with commercial partners. Any voluntary organisation or company can work together whether big or small. Partnerships can bring great benefits to both; where more income could be generated for voluntary groups to achieve charitable aims, as well as awareness of their work. Partnerships could boost your popularity and gain more resources such as volunteers or other supporters for future fundraising activities. Groups might even be able to gain access to the resources, systems and services of a business you partner with.

Why would businesses want to support a voluntary group?

Donating time as a business can be as valuable to a charity as donating money. If teams in your organisation spend a day with a charity helping out, painting the office, answering phones or something equally as functional, they'll make a huge difference.

There is a huge pay off in team building and camaraderie in a joint fundraising effort. The charity gets funds, and businesses benefit from a motivated, positive team.

A relationship with a local charity can also help with staff retention as it adds a layer of loyalty to an employee's perceptions of their work with commitment to the charity and their employer.

It will make you happy! Charity matchmaking service, Pilotlight found that 90% of senior business executives said engaging with charities improved their sense of wellbeing and happiness.

Top Partnership Tips

Protect your charity's name and reputation: Your charity's name and reputation are valuable assets. A company could profit greatly from using your name through partnership with you.

Be wary of working with a company that has engaged in unethical trading as this may reflect badly on you. Research any company before entering into an agreement with them, consider if the company;

1. has a history of supporting charity - were they successful previously?
2. is financially sound - can they prove this?
3. has similar values and ethics - do they match those of your charity?
4. is a PLC, private company or neither?
5. has a parent company and who is it? Who should you hold your relationship with?
6. is new or a start up business?
7. has clear motives for corporate giving, and what they are?
8. has values and ethics that complement those of the charity?
9. has a high-level commitment to partnership with a charity?

Plan to work collaboratively: Working with another organisation where each party has a different approach to working, can lead to disagreement. You should put plans in place for how to deal with potential areas of conflict, including:

- charity brand, name & logo - how they will be used?
- copyright, events, services etc. - who owns these?
- roles and responsibilities - how are they allocated?
- money - how it will be transferred between parties?
- project success - how you will know you've achieved your goals?

Relationships can take time to build and develop - this is a key part of each organisation getting to know one another, and where the relationship brings benefits deepening that partnership.

The company and the charity should be equal partners, although this may not always be feasible. Both charity and company should be clear about the benefits they expect to gain from the relationship. Consider; is what the charity is expected to bring to the partnership a fair exchange for what the company is offering in return? What is the public's perception of the company and its brand?

Process

A policy on working with companies, agreed by the trustees, is essential for a charity to be able to engage effectively with the corporate sector. The policy should define the parameters of associations across all types of corporate and partnership activity.

There needs to be a process for decision-making, including a clear delegation of responsibilities, since working with companies is the classic example of where value judgements need to be made. A core group of key members of an organisation can then use the policy as a guide to deciding on all potential engagements with business.



Conflicts of Interest

It is important that a charity is driven by some kind of mission. This will help define what its aims are as an organisation and establish which are the right companies to associate with. When selecting a company a charity should establish that there are no conflicts of interest. Good partnerships often result from common interests and agendas. It can be a fine line between common interest and conflict of interest.

Communicating and Marketing Plans

Assuming part of the reason for going into partnership is publicity, thought should be given as to how it is to be communicated externally and internally within both of the organisations. It is advisable for a communications plan to be written at an early stage that gives the necessary amount of information to the necessary amount of people. It is good practice for it to be clear what both the company and the charity do independently and what they do together. It is important that each the other's branding guidelines, and that both agree the final procedure for press releases and media liaison, being aware of each other's needs and timescales.

Further Reading

[What to include in a written agreement: charities and fundraising](#)

[Contracts and agreements - The Institute of Fundraising](#)

[Corporate partnerships, code of fundraising practice - The Institute of Fundraising](#)