



NATIONAL

Through philanthropy, smaller businesses can make a big impact

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Businesses of all sizes and sectors can make a difference in their communities. Just because a business is small does not mean it should not be dedicated to philanthropy and charitable giving. While *Fortune* 500 companies and major foundations earn attention each year for giving back to the community, people often overlook the millions of American smaller business owners doing their part.

With smaller cash flows and operating budgets, money can be tight — too tight to easily disperse to community nonprofits. Entrepreneurs often end up putting profits back into the business to help it grow — but fortunately, there are other ways to give back to charities in need.

If your business is challenged with giving money, consider engaging with employees and volunteering time, donating goods and services and building a company culture that fosters even more generosity. Simply put, you don't have to be big to have a big effect on those who need your help.

For many businesses, there can be a strategic aspect to philanthropy that increases the bottom line and allows the company to give even more in the future. These efforts can range from recruiting a fundraising team for a walk to support local domestic violence victims to creating an alliance with a national nonprofit.

Enormous benefits



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The benefits of both types of initiatives are enormous. A hands-on community outreach event will go a long way toward putting your brand in front of potential customers, while a strategically placed sponsorship or supporting role within a larger production could touch a bigger pool of people affected by that particular mission.

For many business owners and their employees, these causes can be near and dear to their hearts — but they're also very special to the broader community. Your generosity can fuel more acts of kindness and giving from others and the resulting wave of interest can attract more clients or customers to your own business.

If you were choosing between a small business that supports a nonprofit that's special to you and one that doesn't, which one would you choose? Sometimes, it can be that simple.

Choosing

Strategically, it's best if there is a plan behind the generosity. For a small business to have the most effect, its good deeds have to stand out from the pack. For example, during the holiday season, people are feeling even more generous. While this is wonderful news for those receiving the generosity, as a company, you may not stand out in such a crowded field.

Another challenging situation is when numerous companies support one cause, resulting in your company logo displayed as literally one among dozens on a T-shirt.

Here are some tips for differentiating your company's giving:

- **Pick your spots.** Anytime during the first quarter may be a better time for your company to organize a toy drive, bring attention to a lesser-known disease or donate to a worthy cause. There is a natural let-down in giving after the holiday season concludes. Your gift is even more valuable then — making a bigger splash and bringing even more awareness to the program, not to mention your bottom line.
- **Incorporate your philanthropic mission into all aspects of your brand and messaging.** Assets, from your email signature to logo to website, can be temporarily redesigned to further immerse your philanthropic campaign with your company's identity.
- **Use social media.** Connect with the nonprofit you are supporting, using their channels and your own, and use this engagement to grow your company's business network and elevate its public profile.

When you're ready to take on a philanthropic program, make sure it is optimized to benefit both your business and the nonprofit of your choice. That's how small businesses truly can make a big difference.

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Hilary Kaye is the founder and president of HKA Inc. Marketing Communications. The firm recently won the National Philanthropy Day award in Orange County, Calif., in the small business category. It also placed Silver at the international 2015 Stevie Women in Business Awards in the Community Program of the Year category for its Locally PRoud initiative, a campaign which awarded one area nonprofit a full year of no-cost public relations services in celebration of the agency's 30th anniversary.