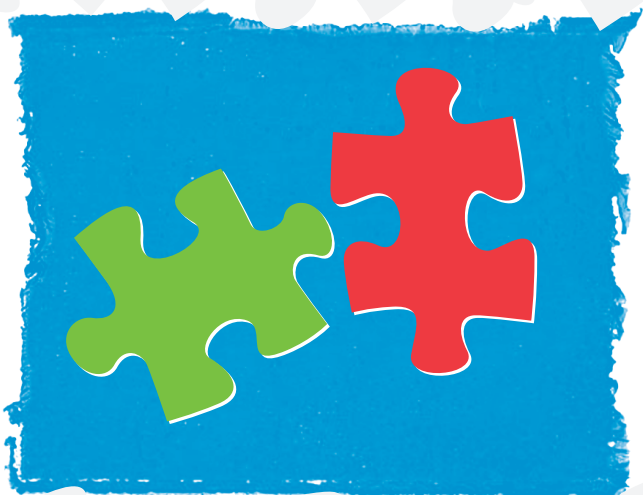


So, You Want to Get a Business Partner?

Tips for Getting *and Keeping*
Business Partners



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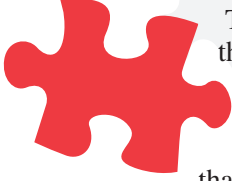
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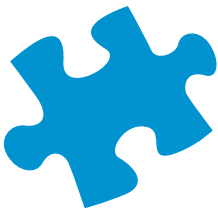
So, You Want To Get a Business Partner?

Tips for Getting *and Keeping* Business Partners

Business partnerships can be a tremendous asset to any nonprofit organization. Having a business partner provides wonderful opportunities for both cash and in-kind assistance and can help with everything from equipment, programs and landscaping to volunteers, technical assistance and fund raising. Although the benefits of a business partnership are obvious, the steps for getting and keeping them are often much less clear. Without proper planning and good communication, new partnerships can quickly become mired in frustration, miscommunication and disappointment.



To minimize the likelihood of these unintended and clearly undesirable outcomes, KIDS COUNT has developed a simple, six-step process that any organization can use when recruiting and working with a business partner. By following these simple, common-sense guidelines, nonprofit organizations will greatly improve their chances of having a successful partnership that improves outcomes, motivates staff and builds stronger connections to the community.



Step 1: Get Prepared

Determine Your Needs

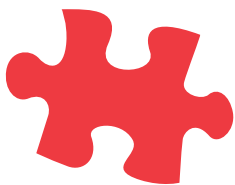
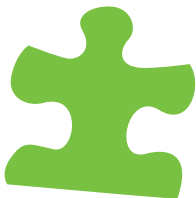
- Don't depend on sole sources of funding. Partners like to know that others are supporting the project as well.
- Develop a detailed project budget, including in-kind needs. Potential partners will be more willing to participate if your budget looks reasonable.

Do Your Homework!

- Take an inventory of businesses/civic organizations in your area.
- Find out what kinds of projects they support.
- Don't make a pitch if they don't support your issue. Their time is limited, and they won't want to spend time listening to a proposal that's not a good fit.
- On the other hand, they are always looking for good projects to support. Don't be shy!

Have a Plan

- Develop a target list of potential partners in your community.
- Create a list of Community Friends who can help you make the pitch or seal the deal. They support your project and have close personal contacts with the potential partner.
- Develop a formal presentation tailored to each potential partner and practice it before you present in person.



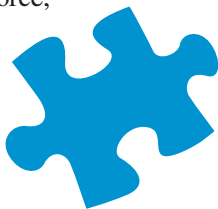
Step 2: Make the Pitch

Call First

- Don't show up without an appointment. The potential partner's time is limited, and unexpected guests are an unwanted interruption.
- Find the appropriate contact person for the potential partner. Start there first with a phone call.
- Test the waters with the primary contact before scheduling a visit. Ask about their funding priorities and request process; then briefly explain your request.
- If your project seems like a good match, request an appointment to present your proposal in person.
- Ask the contact to include other appropriate people at the in-person meeting. Tell her/him exactly who will be coming with you. Surprises are not good!

Visit in Person

- Take a small gift and a Community Friend, if possible.
- Keep it simple and brief. Time is money and long presentations aren't necessary.
- Be specific about what you expect from the partnership: cash, volunteer time, number of volunteers, supplies, etc.
- Emphasize the benefits of the partnership, not just your organization's needs. Talk about things like free publicity, public service, better-trained workforce, happier employees and employee discounts. Invite them to visit your facility. It's harder to say "no" when they have seen your project firsthand.



Step 3: Follow Up

Write a Thank You Letter

- Write a short, personal letter to each person who attended your presentation.
- Thank them for their time and mention specific issues that were discussed during the meeting.
- Briefly review your request and how it will benefit the partner.
- Set a date to follow up on the status of your request, and don't forget to call the primary contact every couple of weeks to check the status of your request.

Ask Others to Help Seal the Deal

- Find other Community Friends who are willing to make a follow-up call, send an e-mail or write a letter of support.
- Personal relationships are very important. Don't be afraid to use them.

Be Gracious if They Say "No" and Ask For Feedback

- If they say "no" to your request, don't argue about the merits of their decision. They usually have good reasons for their decision.
- Thank them for their time and ask them why your request was declined.
- Seek suggestions for making a better proposal next time.



Step 4: Get the Ball Rolling

Acknowledge The Partner's Support

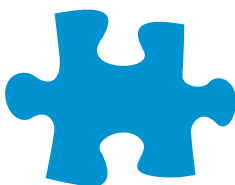
- Let your partner know immediately how happy you are to be working with them – a call or a letter of thanks is appropriate and welcomed.
- Schedule a meeting to discuss project details such as tasks, timelines, costs, etc.

Keep Things Moving Forward

- Partners get nervous when it appears the project isn't moving forward.
- Don't delay implementation; it's important to maintain the momentum of the new relationship.
- Advise the primary contact immediately of any delays or changes to the implementation timeline.

Tell the Media!

- Don't wait for your partner to take the lead in notifying the media of their participation in your project.
- Take the initiative by writing a press release or calling your local paper or television station.
- Good publicity will make your partner happy and help you recruit additional partners.



Step 5: Stay in Touch

Communicate Regularly

- Carefully document the project with photos, data and anecdotes, including the partner's involvement.
- Begin keeping a project scrapbook to give to the partner at the end of the year or at the end of the project.
- Get in the habit of sending monthly or quarterly updates to your primary contact, even if it is not required.
- Include photos, anecdotes and data about the success of the project in your updates.
- Keep the reports simple but relevant. Emphasize your success in delivering the promised benefits and improving outcomes in your facility.



Get Frequent Feedback

- Don't wait until the project is over to get feedback from your partners.
- Call them regularly to get their feedback and suggestions for improving the partnership.
- Take suggestions to heart and make changes. Keep the customer happy!

Host a "Thank You" Activity

- Plan a simple party or reception at your facility to thank your project partners.
- The event does not have to be fancy...just a small gesture to let them know how much you appreciate their support.
- Take this opportunity to present the project scrapbook and a small thank you gift.
- Invite the media to attend and take photos for yourself and your partner. These photos can help you make a better pitch to future partners.

Step 6: Share Your Successes, Give Thanks and Get More Feedback

Formally Summarize Project Successes

- Write a letter that briefly describes the project and expresses appreciation for the partner's participation.
- Attach a detailed project report. Include all relevant project data, information about the partner's involvement (volunteer hours, etc.) and a financial report.

Follow Up with a Phone Call

- Thank the partner again and ask for suggested improvements to the project or the partnership.
- Express appreciation for any constructive criticism and indicate your willingness to incorporate the suggestions in future projects.

Key Concepts

Plan and prepare
Be strategic
Communicate regularly
Be appreciative
Take the lead in publicity efforts
Ask for feedback
Keep good records
Share project results
Make improvements based on feedback



Why Business Partnerships Work: A Firsthand Account

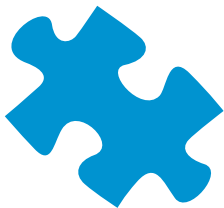
The best endorsements always come from satisfied customers. Here's how one child-care center director described her positive experience with a business partner:

"...The meeting today really helped me to understand just how lucky we are here at Children's Place Child Care Center to have such a wonderful partner in Strictly Business Computer Systems. I think that there are several factors that have contributed. The first being that Strictly Business was just as excited and as willing as we were to make it a success. Everyone involved saw it as a 'positive' rather than a 'have to'.... At the first meeting we had with KIDS COUNT and representatives from Strictly Business, we expressed our center's needs and what they might be able to help us with. They offered to assist us with those things and also offered to set up a bulletin board in their staff lounge for information regarding the center and our fund-raising efforts. They are also helping us design a more up-to-date brochure that we will use for advertising purposes. Of course, the biggie was that they offered their services of labor and people power to any cleanup or fix-up projects that we might decide to take on at the center. The most recent one was...during our center-wide clean-up day and the United Way Day of Caring. During these events, three Strictly Business employees weeded the front garden, trimmed bushes and shrubs, took out dead bushes, dismantled equipment that was in need of replacement, shoveled sand for the sandbox and helped re-seed the playground. They will be returning...to finish up any projects they didn't get a chance to finish...."

”All of the things that they have so graciously volunteered their time and effort to help us with are things that we would have had to hire out to get done at a considerable cost. With money in child care being tight, even on a good day, this was incredibly beneficial to us and the children and families we serve, allowing us to use these funds on classroom supplies and materials that effect the children directly.”

Gretchen Palmer,

Interim Director, Children’s Place,
Huntington, West Virginia



Investing in Early Learning Project

Major Funders

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund
WV Department of Health and Human Resources

Staff

Margie Hale, Executive Director
Pam Folden, Assistant Director
Laura Gandee, Director of Communications



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