

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP

1. IT TAKES TIME

Corporate fundraising is not an overnight success. In fact, many people underestimate all the research, precision and communication that goes into making a corporate partnership successful. It takes time and resource but with the right approach even the smallest of charities can benefit from fundraising in the corporate sector.

Corporate partnerships take preparation. You need to have the right approach, contacting the right people within the organisation and making an excellent pitch on why you and the organisation are a good fit. It is an ongoing process and once you have got their support it is all about continuing to develop that relationship.

2. IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Remember, corporate partnerships are just that. Sometimes it can seem like corporates hold all the cards because they are providing the funding. But it is important to think of not just what the corporate can offer your organisation but what you can offer each other. Developing a more equal partnership that recognises each other's strengths should allow the partnership to have more impact and enable you to develop a more lasting relationship.

3. YOUR OFFER

Before you can even begin to start looking for potential partnerships you need to think about your organisation, in order that you can find a corporate partner that aligns with your values as an organisation or your target audience.

Questions you should ask yourself are:

- What can you offer a prospective partner?
- What is your vision?
- What are your values?
- What is your USP?
- Who are your beneficiaries?
- Who are your supporters?
- What is your brand and its reach?
- What engagement opportunities can you offer?

4. RESEARCH YOUR PROSPECTIVE CORPORATE PARTNER

So now that you have thought about your own organisation, start thinking who you would like to approach to be a prospective corporate partner. Get together as a team and identify some corporates who you would love to work with but recognise what is idealistic and what is realistic. Once you have got a list of company names, it is time to investigate further.

You want to look for partners that align with your charity, so you need to think about the following:

- What is their core business?
- What is their vision?
- What is their brand?
- What values do your charity and your prospective corporate partner share?
- How big are they?
- Who are their customers?
- Do they support a charity already? If so, who?
- Who are their customers?
- Who are the decision makers within the company?

You also need to think about if there are any potential partners that you as an organisation do not wish to be associated with e.g. an animal charity may not choose to align themselves with a make up company that is known to test their products on animals. You should check if your organisation has an ethical fundraising policy in place as that will help you with this. If you don't this might be something you want to produce. A template one can be found [here](#).

5. WHAT DO YOU WANT OUT OF THIS CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP?

So, you know what you can offer, and you have identified a potential Corporate partner. Now you need to think about what it is that you are looking for?

Corporate partnerships can offer many benefits, and you should think about more than just cash!

Here are some ideas of ways that they may be able to offer support:

- Donations (including cash)
- Gifts in Kind
- Publicity – both internally within their business but also to their customer base.
- Volunteering
- Payroll Giving
- Pro bono work
- Employee fundraising

You may only want one or several of these ways of working. The important thing is to approach the corporate with options that are attractive to their objectives as well as to yours.

6. ENGAGING WITH THEM

You know what you can offer them, and you know what they can offer you. You have thought about the ask. Now it is time to make the approach. So how will you engage with them?

Formal Applications

Some large organisations have a formal application process. These can be like Trust applications, with very strict criteria on who is eligible to work with them and with a set form to complete.

Leverage Personal Relationships:

As with Major Donor fundraising, using your network is a very effective way to approach a corporate partnership. Ask staff and board members for contacts they may have at companies on your list of targeted prospects. You can use our [network mapping exercise tool](#) to help with this.

Email / Letter

Companies receive hundreds of requests from charities asking for help. If you are going to use this approach you need to ensure that you have the correct contact details for the person who will be making the decision about corporate partnerships for the organisation as well as having a very strong ask and case for support.

7. AND YOU ARE IN

You have made it through the door! The organisation is interested and now you want to arrange a meeting with all the decision makers at the organisation.

This is your chance to make an impression and remember the saying “first impressions count” so you want to make it a good one. To make the most from it you want to know their preference for the format of the meeting. Would they prefer face to face or online? Would they like a formal presentation? Also, it’s important to know who will be attending the meeting and their role within the organisation as this will help you to structure your presentation e.g if finance is attending make sure you are on top of your figures, if marketing are in the meeting they are going to want those website and social media stats.

8. HOW TO MAKE A PITCH

When it comes to the pitch, you do not want to leave them in any doubts that your charity is the right fit.

It is common to want to talk a lot about your charity and what corporate support would help you to achieve. Remember this partnership is not about your organisation at this stage. Your prospective corporate partner will be working to their own agenda which could be:

- Improving their reputation in the community
- Improving staff morale and retention through charity events and office fundraising

- Providing team building and volunteer opportunities
- Increasing their reach.

Be aware of what the company is looking for from your partnership and your pitch will be a lot stronger.

The company will likely not decide right away, so after you have pitched leave them with the contact details for the member of your team who will be responsible for the relationship.

The company will probably have some follow-up questions for you before they fully commit to the partnership. You will probably have a few questions for them, so make sure they have given you a contact at the company who you can get in touch with too. During this time, you need to stay on top of your emails and respond to the contact quickly. Don't leave them waiting on answers from you when they're so close to becoming a partner.

9. DELIVER WHAT YOU PROMISE

It's really important for your reputation and for ongoing relationships that you deliver what you promised. Corporate partnerships as you have seen can involve many different elements, such as volunteering, marketing as well as fundraising. They will potentially be working with different people within your organisation and sometimes things can get missed. To avoid this, it is important to make sure you have someone within the charity who is responsible for owning the relationship and making sure that you are delivering on everything that has been agreed.

10. DEVELOPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Every little bit of funding helps, but most organizations would prefer long-lasting partnerships rather than one-time donations. You have invested a lot of time and effort into getting this relationship, so it is important to ensure that it maintains its momentum.

Here are just some of the ways that you can do that:

- Meet for coffee – with no ask and no other agenda than just seeing how they are and genuinely being interested in their wellbeing.
- Look for future opportunities that might interest them.
- Provide feedback on how they have helped your organisation

Good Luck!