

How to... Company Fundraising

Why and how do companies give to charity?

Why?

- 1 Philanthropy
- 2 Publicity / profile
- 3 Promotion
- 4 Access to new markets/increased sales/investment for the future
- 5 Staff relations/development
- 6 Social responsibility

How?

- 1 Cash donations
- 2 Matched-giving for employee donations
- 3 Gifts-in-kind
- 4 Staff time (volunteers, secondment)
- 5 Sponsorship (volunteers, events, programmes)
- 6 Advertising
- 7 Cause related marketing

How much?

The size of company does not necessarily determine the level of support – THE EFFORT YOU PUT IN DETERMINES THE OUTCOME.

It could be useful to gauge the company's finances? E.g. look at recent annual report (often on website) to see turnover, number of staff, salary of top execs. How many countries do they work in? What industry are they in? (e.g. air travel suffered terribly after Sept 11th, so it wouldn't have been an ideal time to ask BA for money!)

Things to think about:

- Approaching **relevant contact** within the company – not necessarily personal contacts – by all means name drop but use contact as a way of reaching most appropriate person (could be charity co-ordinator, marketing, community affairs or public relations)
- Think about **budget**, a company's charitable donations budget (if they have one) is not necessarily the most lucrative. Often advertising/marketing/PR budgets are bigger and more relevant if you can convince the company that sponsorship will bring commercial benefits (to customers, suppliers, staff, graduates (in other words, prospective staff)).
- What are the **links** with the company? Are you high up/well respected? Have you made a valuable contribution to the company that can be exploited? Are there strong links between VSO's objectives and the company's objectives/special interests?
- Proposal **MUST BE THOROUGHLY RESEARCHED** to catch attention and make it relevant to the company. Also look professional, so they feel we'll spend their money properly.
- Need to find an 'edge' and be creative to persuade a company to buy into sponsorship – what are the benefits for them?

A toolkit and top tips for company proposals

What should a company proposal look like?

- What are the **links** between VSO and the company?
 - What is your connection with the company?
 - Do VSO and the company work in the same countries?
 - Does the company have a particular interest in any of the issues VSO works on (e.g. Education or HIV & AIDS)?
 - Do VSO and the company share objectives (e.g. partnership, personal development, skill sharing)?
 - Has the company supported VSO before?
- **Introduce VSO** – KEEP IT SIMPLE!, avoid jargon. Make VSO stand out from the crowd – avoid 'VSO is an international development organisation that works through volunteers', this could apply to a number of organisations...

Maximise key selling points:

- Why is the work of VSO important?
 - Who benefits from the work?
 - How many people/countries benefit?
 - What's our track record? What success stories can we show?
 - Who are VSO's other corporate supporters? Or other prominent figures?
 - Bring our work to life – use photos/case studies
- Now make **the ask**
 - How much money do you want?
 - What will the money be spent on? Why is it so important? (Outline of volunteer's placement – emphasis on who will be benefiting and how – think about how this might appeal to the company)
 - If you are a volunteer, what are your motivation for doing VSO? A short profile of the volunteer (emphasise any work experience etc that might be interesting for the company).
 - Why are you specifically asking that company? Make them feel special!
 - What can VSO offer in return in terms of **benefits** for the company?
 - Exclusivity or 'ownership' of the volunteer
 - Publicity (in Lifechanges, opportunities in local /industry press etc.)
 - Opportunity to fulfil Corporate Social Responsibility criteria, e.g. promote on intranet or internal newsletters
 - Use of logo to promote association (brand endorsement – marketing opps)
 - Enhanced profile improved recruitment and retention of staff – feel good factor, perception that they care
 - Opportunities for employee involvement – motivating, valuing staff
 - Regular reports/photos from your effort as a fundraiser or/and as a volunteer to demonstrate the results of company support
 - Sponsorship of events such as RGS talks, Christmas concert etc.

increased brand awareness, access to supporter base + invitations to these sorts of events

- Acknowledgement in VSO's Annual Report and on website for donations £10k+

Sources of reference for company information

- The Guide to UK Company Giving (DSC publication)
- Corporate Citizen Magazine
- Company annual reports (usually published on company website)
- Company employees
- Industry publications/magazines
- Company websites

Top tips

- Make it **obvious** – if a company has declared an interest in a particular issue or cause, quote it back to them! Break their Corporate Social Responsibility criteria down and match each point with an example of how VSO can respond.
- **Research**, research, research – it will make you/VSO look professional for taking time and trouble to find out more about the company
- Make it **all about them** – put more emphasis on what the benefits will be for the company than what the company can do for VSO
- If you are a volunteer, **sell yourself**, maximise the good work that volunteers are doing. Do not apologise or be embarrassed about making the ask and do not underestimate how much to ask for – they can only say no but they might say yes!
- Establish contact with a **phone call first** – writing a proposal is time consuming, no point going to all that effort if the company says no straight away. This is also a good opportunity to ascertain special interests and what they might be looking for to help them decide. It will also ensure you're sending info to the right person – again, it shows you've taken the time to research your approach – not just done a mass mailing to a number of companies.
- Bear in mind that in many companies, a **PA** controls the flow of information to a senior manager/CEO – build a good relationship with them and they can often open doors for you or give you lovely nuggets of information.
- Think about **propensity and capacity** to help you prioritise – how willing/likely is the company to give and how much money do they have to give?
- If the company is interested in supporting VSO but doesn't have a budget for cash donations – don't give up! Provide them with details of **other ways to get involved** – payroll giving, employee involvement (especially VSO's Big Curry Night - see the Events diary).