

BUILD A BETTER BUSINESS WITH *generosity*



Why companies are pitching in to support charities and their communities.

BY STAN CRAIG

A full-page ad in a Sunday edition of *The New York Times* stated boldly that \$60 million was received in 2012—more than \$1 million a week—by a variety of recognized charities and community causes. The ad was not from a charity or fund-raising organization. It was from one of America's largest retailers with multiple stores all across America. Why run full-page ads announcing charitable giving? Why not a sales ad or holiday offers? Because statistics prove over and over that customers, if given a choice, prefer to buy from those who provide support to charities and causes they see as valuable to their community.

More companies understand the balance sheet is more than numbers and have developed values that are stated, respected and carried out. Generosity is one of those values. The buying public has made clear that they prefer to buy from good corporate citizens. Generosity demonstrates a genuine corporate value that benefits the company, employees and the community. It comes in all sizes. It will fit nearly every business. How is true generosity recognized? Generosity is noticed if its goals are visible and more than a sales or a morale booster. If your company is looking for ways to give back, consider the following options.

Volunteers matter

Businesses that encourage employee volunteer days at a local nonprofit of their choice get a double bonus. Employees enjoy serving and local non-profits see your company in a very different light. With employee verification, write a check to an organization representing the value of an employee's work if a paid day-off can't be granted. Schedule an employee generosity day for all employees to sign up for a community or team project.

Helping build a house for Habitat for Humanity, spending a day at a soup kitchen or shelter or helping in a local community center are all team-building events as well as acts of generosity.

Here are just a few of the dividends that corporate generosity creates, according to a VolunteerMatch.org survey. It:

> **Raises employee morale.** 94 percent of companies surveyed believed employee volunteering provides a way to raise employee morale.

> **Boosts employee health.** 92 percent of people who volunteer through their workplace report higher rates of physical and emotional health.

> **Provides skill development.** 88 percent of employee volunteers report that volunteering provides networking/career development opportunities.

> **Increases employee loyalty.** 66 percent of employees reported a greater commitment to the company as a result of their experience as volunteers.

There are many more examples of creative ways to be generous. Look around your community. How can what you do every day become more evident and beneficial to others?

Little things count

"Giving" actually multiplies what you are "receiving." Walk into most Sam's Clubs or Costcos at 1 p.m. on almost any weekday and you can basically have a free lunch—and not by ordering at the lunch counter. Just walk down the aisles and you will find hot foods

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from pizza to burgers, cold beverages, hot beverages, sweets and treats of all sorts—freely and gladly handed out. Whole Foods and Trader Joe's are doing the same for their customers.

Why this generosity? The truth is, even if the goal is not necessarily to be generous (as we think of it), generosity can build sales. Coupons for free items, free bonus gifts and prizes have always worked to gain attention and build sales for products from cereal and soap to jewelry and big ticket items such as automobiles and even homes.

But how can you be generous when your cash is low, your business consists of products or services that you can't give as samples—or you have few employees to volunteer? What then?

- > Offer discounts to charitable organizations;
- > Give time or funds to community projects;
- > Participate in a community event that's not business-related;
- > Offer your place of business for community use, seminars, calling-marathons or a meeting room;
- > Lead a class on your specialty for the chamber of commerce or any local organization or non-profit; or
- > Speak to senior citizens clubs, retirement communities, schools and PTAs and let the group charge participants for your valuable information and keep the revenue.

Customers and potential customers will take note. You will generate positive publicity. Commit to generosity in the true sense of the word and it will make a difference that can pay dividends for years to come and build your balance sheet in ways that simply can't be quantified.

Remember, your bottom line may not only be measured by revenue received but by resources shared. Generosity is a business vitamin that will build a healthier bottom line. **LM**

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GREEN INDUSTRY gives back

Volunteers tackled 140 projects nationwide during PLANET's fifth annual Day of Service.

The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) held its annual Day of Service on April 22, Earth Day. The event is a grassroots effort by individual landscape industry companies to create volunteer projects in their own communities. This year's theme was "Come Alive Outside" to showcase the positive effects green spaces have on peoples' lives.

This year, more than 1,900 volunteers from across 36 states, Canada, and Trinidad and Tobago, participated in approximately 140 projects that had an estimated value of donated time and services of \$660,000.

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GREEN INDUSTRY gives back

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"Our industry has the ability to make people's lives better by improving the community green spaces, gardens, parks and ball-fields that people use every day," says PLANET President Norman Goldenberg, LIC. "It's so inspiring to see the incredible projects that these companies do in their own communities, at their own cost, without question, out of a desire to help people."

Event sponsors included Belgard Hardscapes, Blizzard Snowplows, Fisher Snowplows, Include Software, John Deere, Nature Safe, Western, TruGreen, Shindaiwa, CNA, Stihl, Snapper Pro, Turf Appeal, and HighGrove Partners and The Greenwood Group. Many sponsors including Stihl, Shindaiwa, Turf Appeal, The Greenwood Group, and HighGrove Partners organized projects in addition to providing financial support for the event.

Here's a look at a few projects:



Gachina Landscape Management
MENLO PARK, CALIF.

Project: Build an educational garden at Marin Day Schools in Redwood City, Calif., including irrigation upgrades, amending the soil with organic compost, planting a variety of vegetables and planting annual and perennial flowers.



Belknap Landscape Co. & New Hampshire Landscape Association members
GILFORD, N.H.

Project: Lead a three-day cleanup effort to restore the yards and landscapes of nearly 200 homes ravaged by Hurricane Sandy in Lindenhurst, N.Y.



Kane Landscapes
STERLING, VA.

Project: Construct a memorial patio at Langley Residential Services, a home for disabled adults in Dunn Loring, Va.



Hemlock Landscapes
CHAGRIN FALLS, OHIO

Project: Clean up the grounds at the Ohio Army National Guard's 135th Military Police Co. armory.



Ammons Landscapes
PAMPA, TEXAS

Project: Clean up, replant, paint, aerate and more at the Pampa Optimist Youth Club.



Colorado Association of Lawn Care Professionals
DENVER

Project: Remove approximately 60 large, medium and smaller dead trees from the Riverside Cemetery in Colorado.



HighGrove Partners
AUSTELL, GA.

Project: Install landscape elements at Calvary Children's Home in Powder Springs, Ga.