

## developing news\_Your checklist to corporate success

*By Ernst Bauer*

Fundraising in the corporate world differs in many ways from other development cultivation. Corporate partnerships can be made regardless of whether you live in a large city or small town.

The best way to engage corporations is to look for a win-win situation. Often, corporations will be more responsive if they are assured that a co-branding opportunity will lead to positive public relations. In looking for this win-win situation, remember that all companies have giving priorities. Some may only fund children's programs; others, only veterans' programs.

The best part about this is that The Salvation Army has a wide variety of programs. We have a program for almost everyone—it's your job to make sure that your community leaders and potential partners are aware of this. Don't assume company leaders know everything there is to know about our programs. I can't tell you how many times I've heard a community relations executive say, "Wow, I didn't know that The Salvation Army has all that programming." The most cost effective way to market our programs and services is by word of mouth.

Another key point to keep in mind is that corporations are made of people. This leads to a variety of possibilities. A good place to start is by asking corporations if they would like to send a group of their employees to volunteer for a few hours. This will engage employees who then may internally encourage their colleagues to also volunteer and their company to donate. Employees might be more willing to donate if they know their company is donating to or involved with The Salvation Army.

The individual supporter remains the top donor segment for the Army. So even if a company chooses not to give, an individual of that company may still donate on his or her own. Another strategic way to approach corporations is to look for individuals who may be a great addition to your local advisory board. If you can find an individual to serve as a board member, that person will be able to work through their company's bureaucracy and help secure more funds or corporate involvement.

"Back to School" is an excellent example of how all these elements come together. During the month of July, Salvation Army corps across the Western Territory hosted "Back to School" events. Target, an international corporation, supported this event by providing the Western Territory with \$143,000 worth



of gift cards so that children in local communities could buy basic supplies for a new school year.

This annual event is an excellent way to showcase the Army's community support and after-school programs. We were able to support our back-to-school programs while Target received positive PR for its generosity. This event was also a natural fit for Target's giving priorities. Target employees witnessed the events, which engaged their interest in what The Salvation Army actually does. However, what was really exciting was that we had volunteers from various corporations, including Wells Fargo, at the event. They were thrilled to be part of such a joyful occasion. We received a flood of emails from these individuals saying that they would love for Wells Fargo to play a larger role next year. Fantastic!

There are many ways to approach corporate fundraising. Above all, have realistic expectations. Companies may not always give as much as you'd like them to. Remember—don't focus purely on the money. There are many definitions of success when it comes to corporate partnerships.

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