

## HOW TO APPROACH LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS

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If you are thinking about getting in touch with local businesses to see if they can help you with your fundraising, then this 'How to...' guide is for you!

### Things you'll need

- Your address book / LinkedIn profile
- A computer complete with printer and paper
- A telephone
- Basic information about your charity
- A clear idea of what you are fundraising for
- A little creativity!

### 1. Make connections

Start by thinking of any companies you may have existing contact with. Use your extended network (contacts of contacts) and ask for introductions – 'LinkedIn' can be useful in identifying indirect relationships you never knew you had!

### 2. Identify the right person

Make sure you approach the right person the store/company Manager or person responsible for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is most usual. Do some research, find out their name and approach them personally and directly – in smaller businesses, where there is no formal CSR policy, donations are often made at the discretion of the Manager.

### 3. Think about non-monetary support

Only around half of all company giving is in cash and it is often easier to persuade a local business, particularly one that you may not have had much contact with before, to give you something tangible than it is to convince them to give you money. Asking for items to auction or offer as raffle prizes is often a good approach, restaurants can be asked to donate a dinner for two or a local grocers might be persuaded to offer a hamper. Other forms of nonmonetary support might be to include a flyer for an event you are holding in a staff mailing or allowing you to sell Christmas cards around the office.

### 4. Think about what can be offered in return

Where appropriate, think about what you are prepared to offer in return, such as public acknowledgement or publicity opportunities. Most companies give out of self-interest rather than pure altruism, and it is important to remember this when approaching them. If you are asking for sponsorship, think about why a company would want to be associated with you – this could include positive publicity so bring along any press cuttings or correspondence indicating media interest. Many smaller local businesses may be unaware of the tax advantages available in connection with charitable gifts, so make sure you are prepared to tell them!

## 5. Make the 'ask'

A letter outlining what you are doing, what it is you are asking for, and why a company should think about supporting you is often a good starting point see 'Further Information' below for some templates you can adapt.

Follow up with a telephone call a week or two later, allowing time for the recipient to familiarize themselves with your 'ask'. If you are looking for something substantial, this may be a good opportunity to suggest a meeting to discuss how any partnership might work.

## 6. Say 'thank you'

Remember to say 'thank you' and report back on how a company's support has made a difference. This not only prepares the ground for any future donations, but also helps ensure the reputation of the charity and fundraising in general.

## 7. Consider any ethical dilemmas early

When considering companies to approach, please remember that many charities would not wish to be associated with companies whose business values or practices conflict with what they stand for. If you have any concerns in this regard whatsoever, talk to your charity before making an approach.

## Further information

- The Institute of Fundraising's 'Codes of Fundraising Practice' cover all aspects of fundraising. Of particular relevance are the Codes on 'Acceptance and Refusal of Donations' and 'Charities Working with Business'.
- [LinkedIn](#) can be an extremely useful research tool, helping you identify indirect contacts and key individuals within companies.
- Further guidance and template letters for approaching local businesses can be found on [VirginMoneyGiving.com](#) and [BetterFundraising.com](#).
- The 'Complete Fundraising Handbook' covers all aspects of fundraising, including an excellent chapter on 'Companies', whilst Valerie Morton's 'Corporate Fundraising' is, perhaps, the definitive guide. Both are published by the Directory of Social Change.