



# PREPARE BEFORE YOU PARTNER

Competition for corporate support among nonprofit organizations is stiff. How can you capture a corporation's attention and connect with them in a meaningful way that leads to a rewarding business partnership?

The key is to do your homework. As with any relationship, the better you know your prospective corporate partner, the more effective you will be at communicating and connecting with them.

Here are five key pieces of information you should know before making contact with a corporation.

## What to Know Before You Go Knocking

A company website is your go-to for research. It's easily accessible and will contain an abundance of important information. While there, you should look for the following info:



**1. Charitable foundation and nonprofit solicitation process.** Check to see if the corporation has a charitable foundation offering community grants, and if so, what are the eligibility requirements? Learn if they have an existing application process and if it requires a written proposal or electronic submittal. Establish when and how often they accept applications.



**2. Their fiscal calendar.** Ascertain a company's accounting cycle to know if funds are available *before* you approach them. This information is often located under the "About Us" section of the website or can be found in the company's annual report. If fiscal information isn't available online, contact the company's accounting office directly.



**3. Company vision and social responsibility.** Search main menu headings and website footer information for keywords like "about us," "our vision," "social impact," "community" and "corporate citizenship" to find how the company likes to give back to your community.

Learn what causes they are passionate about and how they have partnered with other nonprofits. For example, "Do they have a company volunteer or matching gift program?" Be mindful of opportunities for company involvement and of ways their company values align with your organization's vision.



**4. The key players.** Learn the names of company principals and representatives who serve as contacts for charitable organizations. Take note if a current board member or volunteer of your nonprofit is employed by a local business. Don't underestimate the power of the "friend of a friend" concept. Ask for an introduction to a key company official.



**5. What they want to know about you.** While you're becoming acquainted with a company through their website, spend some time studying what information is important to them, what information they want to know about your organization.

Be sure to include material on your website about your ministry's outcomes including statistics and testimonials, financial stewardship, existing corporate partnerships and your nonprofit vision statement along with any other pertinent information you discover about the corporation you're courting values. Be prepared and expect a business to do their homework on you, too!

## Put Your Best Foot Forward

So, before you drop by a corporation because you happen to be in the area, be sure you first do your homework to avoid crazy looks from the receptionist and risk offending them by your lack of knowledge about *how* they want to be approached. Remember, your corporate relationship is as much about meeting their needs as it is about having yours met.

Be prepared, know your audience and have a plan before contacting a corporation. They will feel respected and understood – a great first step to building a thriving partnership.

This strategy sheet is provided to you by Brewer Direct's Academy and can be located in the Library. If you'd like to discuss the ideas found here or want to know more about the Academy, contact Shellie Speer, Senior VP, Academy at [sspeer@brewerdirect.com](mailto:sspeer@brewerdirect.com) or (719) 210-6207.



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