



## CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY 2010

# Helping the Community Is Now Good Business

Thankfully, amid the worst financial crisis in decades, many companies throughout the country as well as here in San Diego have found creative and strategic ways to continue and even extend their philanthropy. Some have accomplished this through strategic noncash contributions, others through increased employee volunteerism, and still others through sheer dedication to supporting their community despite the financial challenges they face.

A recent Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy study found that the majority of companies surveyed year over year gave less money in 2009 than they did in 2008. However, aggregate corporate giving among those companies grew 7 percent from the year before — reaching its highest value in four years. Most notable were increased support of nonprofits through non-cash contributions, as well as increased employee volunteerism and giving programs. Where there is a will, there is a way.

## High Expectations

And there is a growing will, in part, because there is a growing expectation by community members that businesses be more socially responsible and use their resources to help solve major societal problems. Another survey, conducted by **Deloitte & Touche** on corporate community involvement, found that 92 percent of Americans think that it is important for companies to make charitable contributions or donate products and/or services to nonprofit organizations in the community.

In San Diego County, the majority of businesses are small to medium-sized. Some of these business owners may not think that they have the capacity to be

philanthropic, especially as they continue to struggle with their own financial health. But the practice of corporate philanthropy does not have to be limited to big companies with big money. Rather, the goal is to be really smart with the investment of the limited resources. When this is accomplished, corporate giving not only improves the community in which a business operates, but also improves the business itself by enhancing its reputation, improving relationships with customers and other stakeholders, as well as building employee morale and retention.

## A Growing Need

There is no arguing that nonprofits need money now more than ever. San Diego Grantmakers believes that all companies, no matter the size, have a responsibility to give what they can. But corporate giving is also about more than money; it is about leveraging the resources you have to give back — from employee talent and time (as Sue Carter from Volunteer San Diego describes in this report) to products and services. Ideally, what you give should be in line with things you're already doing anyway. I hear more and more stories about how companies are becoming philanthropic in the natural course of doing business.

One of those stories is about a delivery company that, as part of its regular course of business, drove along jungle roads in South America that were lined with trees in which deadly snakes lived. The company learned that these snakes were responsible for killing local residents, and it worked out a system with the community wherein the truck drivers would stop and mark the location of the snakes if they saw them and alert the local snake exterminator by calling a central number with the GPS location.

So I challenge local business owners to essentially ask themselves, "What can my company do to help a nonprofit mitigate the snakes?"

The underlying principle of high impact corporate giving is really very simple — it is all about fit. This snake example was a great fit for the delivery company, but what fits your company? Find a fit between what you do really well, what your corporate mission is, and what you are best positioned to give back to the community. Find a fit between your internal, leadership, employee culture and what the nonprofit needs. Once you figure this out, it may only take a small change in operations to begin practicing corporate philanthropy.

A pharmaceutical company donates medicine to seniors and people without health insurance.

An electronics company provides TVs to after-school programs.

A furniture company helps outfit a homeless shelter.

A CPA or law firm donates pro bono employee time to nonprofits.

A solar energy company gives its dollars, time and space to environmental education programs.

A bank supports financial education with grants and employee volunteers.

## Join the Grantmakers

San Diego Grantmakers is a membership association here to help organizations be more effective with their giving. Because the logistics of how to give strategically and effectively can be challenging, we help San Diego businesses by connecting them to information, resources and networking opportunities. The more effective San Diego businesses are with investing their charitable dollars, the better off our communities will be.

I would like to thank the **San Diego Business Journal** for once again publishing a special supplement that shines a light on the call for San Diego businesses to be philanthropic. Thanks also to all of you that give back — in both your professional and personal lives.

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