



Corporate Giving Builds Connections and Community

PHILANTHROPY: Both Nonprofits and Companies Benefit From Relationships
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Carlsbad-based Life Technologies Corp. and San Diego-based Sempra Energy are counted among the public companies that act as good corporate citizens in the communities where they reside.

Life Technologies spent a little more than \$250,000 in combined foundation and corporate giving in the San Diego region for 2010, according to Heather Virdo, head of corporate giving for the company, which ranks No. 3 on the San Diego Business Journal's list of Largest Public Companies. In-kind donations of biotechnology products were just over \$200,000 to San Diego schools last year for educational purposes, Virdo said.

It makes sense to be a good corporate neighbor any place where the company has a presence, especially when the company is drawing on the local talent pool for employees, Virdo says.

"We give back as many resources as possible to the community where we live and work," she said. "It's the right thing to do."

Act Locally

With a focus on advancing science among children, teachers and other adults, Life Technologies contributes locally to such programs as the Carlsbad Educational Foundation, the San Diego Science Festival and the San Diego Zoo's Institute for Conservation Research. The company has also opened up its facilities for hands-on science and career activities with local schools as well as local community groups, including Life Sciences Summer Institute, UC San Diego's Science Bridge, Elementary Institute of Science and Ocean Discovery Institute.

While not all of its giving is local — donations of \$500,000 and up that have a national or international scope are handled by Life Technologies' foundation, and corporate money is distributed for giving to 55 locations around the world — Virdo says a "significant amount" of money is spent locally on philanthropy.

Proximity plays a role in corporate giving for a variety of reasons.

Sara Wilensky Napoli, president and chief executive officer of the San Diego Police Foundation who has been active in local nonprofit causes such as The San Diego Foundation, says it's not uncommon for senior members of public companies to be active in their community by sitting on nonprofit boards. In addition to their influence as community leaders, they bring significant time and talent as well as the potential for "treasure," Wilensky Napoli said.

Big Help

"In every successful nonprofit you will find businesspeople helping," Wilensky Napoli said. "They (the nonprofits) can't get along without that kind of help."

There's also a goodwill connection. Companies like to be seen as good corporate citizens in the communities in which they reside, Wilensky Napoli says. The goodwill component extends to recruiting employees. Young employees generally like to play a part in doing something good for their communities, so corporate

participation can be a recruiting tool. The payback for a company is that it can save on relocation costs by attracting local talent.

Related to goodwill is the concept that the corporation is supportive of the community where they do business, which in turn boosts employee morale, says Nancy Jamison, executive director of San Diego Grantmakers, a membership association of philanthropic organizations. Although Jamison says there's no rule that companies will necessarily give in the communities where their headquarters are located, their headquarters are an important aspect of their identity. Giving creates a connection among people using their products or services, she says.

In 2010, Sempra Energy Foundation and the Sempra Energy family of companies contributed nearly \$14 million to nonprofit organizations and people in need, according to Sempra spokeswoman Sabra Lattos.

"We focus our efforts in funding charities that share our goals and benefit the communities where we live and work," Lattos wrote via email. "The majority of our contributions are made to organizations in Southern California, particularly in the areas of environment, education and economic development."

In addition to its local efforts, the No. 2 ranked Sempra made contributions last year to help victims of earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and Baja California and earlier this year the company went to help survivors of the earthquake and tsunamis in Japan.

"Sometimes, we spot unique, community-based opportunities and make grants that target a specific focus area or geographic region," Lattos wrote.

Laura Deitrick, director of the Caster Family Center for Philanthropic Research at the University of San Diego, which studies philanthropic trends and issues, says corporations have a lot more to offer than money. Companies, for example, can get their employees engaged in volunteering or may allow employees to volunteer on company time. Companies can also offer technical expertise such as creative, high-tech solutions to social issues, or they can be helpful additions to boards of directors, especially if they have particular content knowledge, expertise and business acumen, she says.

In addition, companies have the ability to market causes jointly with nonprofits.

Building Connections

On the flipside of giving are the benefits the companies and volunteers achieve, such as a boost to business networking.

"C-level executives get to connect on a human level on a cause they have in common," Wilensky Napoli said. "It creates a relationship that may be valuable in a business context at some other time. It gives access you could never get just by picking up a phone or attending a cocktail party."