Guidelines for Requesting Corporate Donations

Planning Your Request

1. Plan in advance. Many companies (stores) require at least 6-8 weeks to process donation requests. Often companies must work through their corporate offices to make donations. Some have set budgets from which to make donations during each quarter of the year. These processes take time.

2. Decide what type of support you're looking for - is it a donation of product or money or other consideration?

3. Make a list of businesses or organizations in your area that make charitable donations and might be interested in supporting your project or program.

4. It's definitely worthwhile to check if the businesses you've included on your list have websites with information about their methods of supporting community projects. A great place to do a search is from www.google.com, or other search engine. Often times entering the name of the business followed by the word "grants" will result in web pages that provide guidelines about seeking assistance from that business. If you don't get any results from this search, you can also try searching within each company's website for a link to community support and/or grants programs. If this search does not yield the desired results, you may want to contact the company directly by phone and ask about their donation process.

The Request Letter

5. Many companies require non-profits seeking assistance to submit a letter on their official letterhead (this helps give credibility to your request) in which you should include:

   A description of the project/event for which you are seeking support, including:
   · the project's history
   · the issue(s) the project is trying to address
   · the date of your project (if there is a specific event date)
   · expected outcomes from the project/event

   Explain what it is you are requesting of the business (monetary donation, supplies, discounted products or supplies, etc.) and how the requested items will be used in your proposed project. Provide all pertinent information, but do be succinct.

   State whether or not your group has non-profit status. If you are non-profit with 501(c)3 status, you should include a copy of your 501(c)3 form with your letter. Similarly, if you are a non-profit with 170(c)1 status, you should include a copy of this form. (These forms are needed for the businesses' tax purposes.)

   State if and how the businesses that are supporting your effort will be recognized in publicity for your event.

   Sign your letter and include a return address and contact information so the business can reply to you (also needed for their tax purposes). Be sure and include any appropriate email address.
Visiting the Business

6. Once you write your letter, plan a visit to the business (if local).

7. When you visit the business, bring along your letter and copies of any non-profit forms your organization has available.

8. At the business, visit the customer service desk and ask to see the manager or person-in-charge.

9. Some businesses will have application forms that must be filled out to request their support. If this is the case, your letter should contain all the information that is required to complete an application (Aren't you glad you wrote it?). The business might want to attach your letter as a supplement to their application.

10. If you speak with a manager, briefly (and with a smile) present the information in your letter to him/her verbally. You will likely either be asked to submit your letter and forms to the manager, or you will be given the address of a corporate office and a contact name to which you can send your letter.

The Business Response

11. If your request has been approved, the response you receive from the business should give details of how to proceed to obtain the donated materials or funds. If your request has not been granted, and you still have time before your event, try again with other businesses! It might also be useful to ask the business for reasons why your original request was denied. This information could help you with future requests.

12. Be sure to carry through on any publicity you promised to provide to the donor business. Keep copies of any publicity materials to give to the business after your event.

13. After you’ve completed your project/event, write the business a thank you note and include publicity materials about the project, or copies of any press coverage you may have received.

Summary

Follow these steps and you will likely achieve a reasonable rate of success in your fund raising. When your request is not approved or granted, don’t take it personally. Firms receive many such requests and cannot possibly fulfill them all. Keep trying. Best of luck to you in your efforts.

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