

“Recent trends in corporate philanthropy have ushered in a new approach to giving, one that seeks greater collaboration among all stakeholders, taps into the tremendous desire of employees to participate through their volunteerism, and more fully leverages tools available to businesses to maximize the impact of community investment.

—Harold McGraw III
Chairman, President, and CEO
The McGraw-Hill Companies
CECP Chairman¹



Effective Partnerships

110 Questions to Consider

There is no single question (or answer) that provides the right direction for every presentation, proposal or partnership that a nonprofit develops for a company. But there are dozens of questions for nonprofits to consider before meeting with a potential partner that might give good ideas on how to access corporate resources and build long-term relationships.

Chapter 5: Effective Partnerships: 110 Questions to Consider asks some of the more important questions to consider before approaching a potential company as a partner on LGBT equality. While these questions are primarily focused for those working at nonprofits, we believe corporate readers of this guide can also learn from them when considering how to build a business case internally for support of a nonprofit. The CECP website also offers a great resource for those working within corporations, “Giving Officer Quick Tips”, which is located in the Resource section of the website www.corporatephilanthropy.org.

¹ CECP website: corporatephilanthropy.org

KNOW YOUR VALUE:

Recognize, measure and respect the value of your organization and brand and the impact your work has on the world.

ASSETS: There are many reasons why a company might want to partner with a nonprofit focused on advancing LGBT equality. Your name and brand recognition, community presence, issue expertise, program development, and more. Understanding the unique and diverse assets that your organization may offer to a company is important to outline before approaching a potential partner.

1. What is your value proposition?
2. Are your organization's mission and values aligned with the company's values?
3. Do you have experience in developing and managing creative and strategic partnerships?
4. Does your organization have unique expertise or attributes that bring added value to the corporate partner?
5. What are the top five reasons why this company should partner with your organization?

TIP

Build and rank a Top 5 list of your most valuable assets and biggest liabilities

LIABILITIES: Just as there are many reasons why a company would partner with a nonprofit focused on advancing LGBT equality, there are many reasons they might not. Your philanthropic missions are not aligned, the business case has not been made or your geographic scope is too small (or big). Before approaching a potential partner, research the possible drawbacks that your organization might represent for a company and be prepared to speak to them.

6. What are your drawbacks?
7. Is the scope of your organization too small, or too big, for a particular company?
8. What are the ways in which your organization's work does not align with the business objectives of this company?
9. What are the top five reasons companies give for not partnering with your organization?
10. What are the top five reasons why this company might not invest in your work?

BE CREATIVE:

Push the limits of creativity and think about ways to make your partnership one-of-a-kind.

TIPS

Be ready and available to accept skilled support. Pro bono generally is a more sophisticated contribution than traditional volunteerism, so assign staff or board members to solicit and oversee pro bono engagements in their areas of expertise.

Meet with corporate funders to discuss the top three business issues outlined in your strategic plan; ask your funders if they can identify expertise within their organizations to help address these needs.

When negotiating sponsorship contracts, think beyond the cash mentality and recognize pro bono as a currency that can garner recognition and benefits. This will underscore its value and encourage more of it.²

CUSTOMIZATION: Grant request forms from companies, foundations and government agencies tend to have standard formats and fields of entry. However, even within these standard formats, nonprofits have the opportunity to use language that reflects creativity and specific knowledge of the business community. Going beyond a cookie-cutter approach and tailoring terminology may increase your chances of getting corporate resources and investment.

21. Is your approach cookie-cutter?
22. Have you tailored the language in your proposal to reflect the company's mission and values rather than simply cutting and pasting language from another proposal?
23. Have you expressed your openness to exploring opportunities with this company that include both cash and non-cash resources?
24. Have you integrated specific key words and references to the corporate mission, vision and objectives of this company?
25. Do you address or reference all the different and relevant departments in the company that might have resources?

IN-KIND: There are many kinds of resources that a company can provide to a nonprofit, including pro bono services, product donations and institutional and operational offsets. In-kind donations can help both the company and the nonprofit avoid issues related to limited budgets. Nonprofits should think creatively about partnership opportunities that go beyond cash and make strategic use of in-kind corporate resources.

26. Have you leveraged in-kind opportunities?
27. What assets does the company have, including products, event spaces, printing facilities, etc., that you could use to offset costs in operations, programming or fundraising?

² 2009 Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey, deloitte.com/us/community

28. What official pro bono services does the company provide, and how could you use them to further your mission?
29. How could you leverage product donations from this company?
30. Can you show ROI from in-kind donations and help the company champion the work in an annual report?

PARTNERSHIP: The difference between the word *sponsorship* and *partnership* is important in the landscape of corporate philanthropy. A sponsorship implies writing checks to help pay for events, materials or programs. A partnership, on the other hand, is a more powerful word that suggests a certain equality and mutual respect in the relationship. Nonprofits and companies open to framing relationships as partnerships may grow deeper, more sustainable relationships that leverage and amplify the unique assets of both organizations.

31. Are you willing to partner?
32. Do you have the experience, knowledge and resources to dedicate to building and sustaining a relationship with this company?
33. Would you be willing to co-brand aspects of the relationship, such as an event, set of materials or program?
34. How willing are you to share the spotlight with this company?
35. What are your key learnings from past partnerships, including successes and failures?

TIP

Find a corporate-nonprofit partnership that you respect and try to incorporate those ideas in your proposal.

TIPS

Create a list of reasons why your idea is ownable by your partner, and be ready to talk about them.

Manage expectations at the beginning of the partnership to determine the sustainability of ownable projects and resources required to complete them.

Discuss any parameters around partnership exclusivity upfront.

COLLABORATION: Your willingness to work with other nonprofits, particularly others in the LGBT arena, on a proposal for a company could be a creative way to build a partnership or get corporate resources. The journey toward LGBT equality is a complicated and ever-changing landscape. A collaboration of nonprofits with a clear and aligned mission might be more interesting for a company unsure of the organizations with whom it should partner.

36. Have you explored working with other nonprofits?
37. What nonprofits, whether LGBT or not, have missions that align with yours?
38. How would these other nonprofits amplify your strengths and address your weaknesses?
39. Have you built, or worked as part of, a successful collaboration in the past?
40. Why would a collaboration of nonprofits working together be better for this company than working apart?

OWNERSHIP: Companies seek to differentiate themselves from their competition by creating competitive advantages. Whether attracting and keeping clients or recruiting and retaining employees, companies want to develop products, services and partnerships that stand-out from the competition. Developing a partnership with an LGBT nonprofit might be an opportunity to do just that, to create something unique for the company.

41. Is your idea ownable?
42. Who are the company's competitors and what have they done?
43. What have those competitors done on LGBT equality and other issues your organization addresses?
44. Are you proposing an idea for this company that has been done before?
45. How might your idea give a competitive advantage to this company?

DIGITAL: Many companies are discussing and debating how to incorporate digital platforms and strategies into their work and workplaces. Stakeholders, especially consumers, actively use text messaging, status updates, instant messaging and mobile phone applications to instantly communicate with peers and colleagues. Interactive and social media can be important tools to engage and ignite company employees, consumers and community partners around your work.

46. How have you leveraged digital platforms?
47. Are you and your organization involved in social networks (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube)?
48. Through social media, have you effectively mobilized advocates around your organization or LGBT advocacy?
49. How have you or your organization leveraged mobile platforms (e.g., PDA applications, texting, etc.)
50. Have you successfully raised money and awareness around LGBT issues via digital campaigns?

GREEN: Many companies have both short-term tactics and long-term strategies to address issues related to sustainability and the environment. Some corporate sustainability goals extend beyond the company and guide suppliers, partners and other organizations up and down the supply chains. LGBT nonprofits should not overlook opportunities to incorporate green into their ideas to partner with a company.

51. How green are you?
52. Do you know this company's sustainability commitments?
53. Does your organization have stated policies related to your environmental impact?
54. What are the green elements to your organization, such as energy efficiencies in the office, use of recycled paper, carbon offsets, etc.?
55. Have you incorporated any green elements in your proposal to this company?

TIP

Use social media—like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn—to find, engage, and update potential partners on your work.

TIP

Look online for a company's corporate responsibility report or sustainability report to read about its commitments to protecting or improving the environment.

THINK BUSINESS:

Show that you have a mind for business and that you know something about theirs.

TIP

Look for the names of stakeholder organizations on corporate websites or in their corporate responsibility reports.

STAKEHOLDERS: Many companies create stakeholder maps that identify the different people, organizations and systems that impact their businesses: consumers, customers, shareholders, investors, employees, executives, community groups, and more. Identifying at least some of the most important stakeholders of a potential corporate partner will help a nonprofit proposal speak more directly to core business objectives, brand values and missions.

56. Who are the company's stakeholders?
57. Is the company public (with shareholders) or private (with investors)?
58. Is the company focused primarily on marketing to consumers or marketing to other businesses?
59. Who are the people that buy the company's products or services?
60. How does your organization or proposal align with those people?

TIPS

Look for speeches by company executives to get an understanding of its corporate mission, brand values, giving guidelines and marketing strategies.

Network with an ERG leader or other company employee to gain insight on how best to navigate the company when seeking resources.

CORPORATE MISSION: Companies today are increasingly aligning their philanthropy and giving strategies to their corporate missions, business objectives and brand values. Researching a company's mission and how it connects to its giving guidelines is an important element to understanding the potential for a partnership. A proposal for partnership with a company must clearly align to the company's mission and giving guidelines.

61. What are the company's business objectives and mission?
62. What is the corporate mission statement for the parent company and/or its business units?
63. Does the company have—and publish—its own giving guidelines?
64. Does the company focus its corporate giving and investment in particular areas or on specific issues?
65. How does your organization align with or support the company's mission, giving guidelines or focus areas?

TIPS

Check business websites, like Yahoo! Finance or Hoover's, to find calendar information about public companies, including their fiscal year.

Ask your internal champion, such as an ERG leader, about important dates on the calendar that matter to the business and could impact a partnership.

CALENDAR: As noted in *Chapter 3: A Guiding Glossary*, the fiscal year is important to a company for making budgetary decisions, developing products or making donations. Other dates on the corporate calendar can offer some guidance to nonprofits as to the ideas and opportunities a company might support. Nonprofits should consider how dates throughout a calendar year might guide the decisions of a company and opportunities to partner.

76. What are important dates on this company's calendar?
77. What is the fiscal year of the company, and how might it impact the budget related to your proposal?
78. If the company makes products, what is the approximate development cycle to design, build and launch the product?
79. Does the company support heritage days, weeks or months, like Pride or Diversity Awareness Month (October)?
80. Does the company create partnerships, employee award ceremonies, or other promotions around the holidays or other times of the year?

NEWS: The 24-hour news cycle and constant access to headlines can engage, entertain or ignite consumers on many different topics. Reading recent stories about the company, especially any related to its philanthropic work or LGBT support, is important to do before approaching a potential corporate partner.

TIP

Check the hometown newspaper of the company's headquarters, identify the company's community partners, and look for LGBT-related news about each organization.

81. What are recent news stories about this company?
82. What are recent stories about the company, its competitors or its industry?
83. What are the recent stories related to this company's philanthropic work, diversity or LGBT-specific issues?
84. Have any of the stories been controversial? If so, how might they impact your potential partnership?
85. What are the company's most recent press releases, and do any have to do with diversity or advancing LGBT equality?



**ONE THING IS CLEAR—ALL OF THE
COMPANIES AND NONPROFITS TOOK THE *TIME*
TO WORK TOGETHER TO SHAPE PARTNERSHIPS
THAT WOULD BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL
AND SUSTAINABLE.**