



Corporate Philanthropy Today

An insider shares secrets every nonprofit should know.

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

Give and Take: A Candid Account of Corporate Philanthropy

By Reynold Levy. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. Hardcover. 235 pages.

After 12 years as a corporate foundation officer, Reynold Levy understands corporate philanthropy. When he tells us what philanthropy means to corporations, he knows what he's talking about, and his advice is sound.

Don't ask only for money, he urges. Instead, involve the whole corporation. Businesses have many resources besides cash to share. Encourage their employees to volunteer for your organization. Take advantage of in-kind gifts, employee participation in grantmaking, and matching gift programs.

In a discussion of how corporate philanthropy is faring, Levy rebuts arguments that corporations shouldn't be in philanthropy. Corporations realize that they must give back to their markets rather than focus solely on profits, he explains. Thus, they are choosing to be more rounded citizens.

Societal trends are having a big impact on corporate giving, changing its very nature. Levy looks at four key corporate-giving trends:

- Both the nonprofit and corporate sectors are becoming more global.
- The speed of technological change carries profound consequences.
- Technology has empowered the employee.
- Corporate philanthropy is growing fastest in small and medium-sized businesses.

Creative nonprofits will draw upon these trends to solicit corporate funds. They will choose corporations carefully, targeting small businesses in their communities. They will learn all they can about a business before making contact, and they'll make sure that corporate employees participate. They'll also find ways to tap into a corporation's marketing budget.

Mercifully, Levy has avoided creating another how-to book. He takes a hard look at corporate philanthropy from experience and articulately considers its role. It pays for us to listen. ■

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