

Doing Good Is Good for Business



Charitable activities are good for the community, and they can help get the attention of potential customers. Discover 12 ways that giving back can build your business.

Getting involved with the community is a core pillar of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). A robust program of community involvement and charitable activity is not only socially responsible, it can also be used to drive traffic and as a brand-building strategy among both customers and employees.

According to Technomic, 59% of consumers consider community involvement and development to be an important part of Corporate Social Responsibility, while 55% cite charitable giving. That's why it's important to engage, and to keep your activities in the public eye.

Community and charitable events should be part of the promotional calendar, and can take a variety of forms:

- Donate \$1 from the sale of every burger to a local women's shelter
- Offer discounts to teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week
- Host a fundraiser for the local fire department or other community service organization
- Help plant and maintain a community garden
- Serve as a collection point for disaster relief through the Red Cross or other relief organization

Giving Back

Donations, community work, and other charitable activities are the public face of CSR, and they build sales and enhance a food service organization's reputation.

Giving back to the community is a great way to capture the attention of potential customers.

Here are some specific strategies to consider:

1. Pick a charity that appeals to your specific customer base or speaks to your concerns, whether it's a local hospital, animal shelter, or computers-for-school program.
2. "Adopt" a signature charity, such as the American Heart Association, as the basis for your activities. This makes it personal and memorable. For example, one restaurant that cooks most of its food over a wood-fired grill has pledged to replant five trees for every tree that it burns. In addition, the owners get patrons involved: For every guest dining on Arbor Day, they donate \$1 to Trees for the Future, with a goal of planting 6,000 trees. There is also an option on the menu to donate to Trees for the Future at any time.
3. Tap into the power of an existing charitable network, such as Share Our Strength and No Kid Hungry, in order to leverage a huge bank of marketing, event expertise, and other resources.
4. The Chamber of Commerce provides another conduit to the local community, and offers numerous benefits to members.
5. Money isn't everything; many organizations incent their staffs to donate time, even giving employees extra time off to participate in charitable and community events.
6. Promote your activities through your website, social media, and point-of-sale materials, as well as the local newspaper and other community calendar organizations.
7. Donate to a local charity by providing food for an event, volunteering at a food pantry, or providing a meal for two at a silent auction.
8. Sponsor a Little League or other sports team, perhaps with logo'd t-shirts or by providing sandwiches or a food truck at games.
9. Involve employees and staff, as well as patrons, in coming up with ideas for community involvement or selecting charities to support. Build a Dine and Donate calendar around these preferences, with proceeds from sales benefiting a different organization each month or quarter.

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10. Host meals and other special events promoting local farms, growers, and food artisans, with menus designed around their products; if possible, invite a farmer or cheesemaker to share the meal and meet with patrons and employees.
 11. Donate uneaten food to a local charity, such as a food bank, homeless shelter, or Meals on Wheels. Not only is this a good deed, it helps keep food waste out of landfills, making it a CSR twofer. Many organizations will even provide pickup.
 12. Look for existing community events that you can support, such as “Taste of...” events for which the local restaurant association, chamber of commerce, or nonprofits organize to provide a day of food and entertainment to benefit a particular cause or charity.

Source: Technomic Inc., LTO Promo Planner (January 2018)

The information provided is based on a general industry overview, and is not specific to your business operation. Each business is unique and decisions related to your business should be made after consultation with appropriate experts.