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Is It Time To Revive Your Employee Workplace Campaign?

A new partnership is emerging among companies, employees and local communities. That's because organized employee volunteerism is growing rapidly — a trend that can greatly enhance the value and impact of corporate outreach nationwide.

But, within this new environment of partnership, only a few companies have been bold enough to redesign employee workplace giving as an integral part of their overall commitment to employees, their interests and needs.

Why? And what can companies do about it?

"We know people still want to help. After all, \$4 billion is being raised every year through workplace giving," said John Coy, president of The Consulting Network (TCN). "The basic problem is that *employee* workplace giving is just not keeping pace. It's actually losing ground. Participation has dropped to the point that only 35 percent of workers are making contributions through

workplace campaigns compared with 47 percent of workers who gave just 10 years ago.

"The bottom line is five million fewer donors and at least 500 million fewer dollars are raised each year. But more important than the money is that we are not engaging, encouraging or allowing employees to direct their support to groups and programs that have captured their interest."

"The loss of support is hitting charities hard, especially as more nonprofits are established and everyone is competing for funds," said Don Sodo, chief executive officer and president of America's Charities, a federation of 100 charities, including the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Habitat for Humanity and the NAACP.

"That's why we asked The Consulting Network to study the situation and suggest proven ways to get companies and employees excited again about employee workplace giving."

A national advisory council of public officials and Fortune 500 company executives provided input for the study, which yielded a report titled *Employee Workplace Campaigns At the Crossroads: Recommendations for Revitalization*. The report is available with tools and resources by calling 1 (800) 458-9505 or logging on to www.charities.org.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The business world is changing, and three major trends are affecting the workplace giving campaign:

1. A new social and working contract — Employees have a new level of expectation of their employers. Mergers, downsizing, new economy start-up companies, employee empowerment, professional mobility and increasing pressure for financial performance have contributed.
2. Capacity and technology — Employers are giving employees the information and environment they need to work in our

electronic/technology-driven culture.

3. Pride, loyalty and retention — Employees look for employers who help them balance work and their personal lives. Companies that can fulfill this need enhance their ability to recruit and retain the best and most competitive work force.

WHERE THINGS STAND NOW

When TCN explored the current state of employee workplace campaigns, three major observations surfaced:

1. Employee participation is in decline. Only 35 percent of employees at companies with campaigns give, compared with 47 percent a decade ago.
2. Traditional workplace campaigns continue to rely on major employers at a time when most employment growth is in medium and small businesses. Only about 25 percent of the public report that they work in a company that has an employee workplace giving campaign. That means at least three-quarters of America's work force does not have the opportunity to give through payroll deduction.
3. Traditional workplace giving campaigns do not fit in today's culture. In this new culture, employees typically are more involved, empowered and are given choices to select retirement programs and health care plans that fit

their interests and life styles. Some of the signs of culture clash between workplace giving and the way people work are:

- ◆ Younger employees are less likely to give simply because it is expected.
- ◆ Senior managers, who often are highly mobile, do not get as involved.
- ◆ The workplace campaign is perceived as a time-consuming, costly administrative function of the company.
- ◆ Employees want their contributions to go to organizations that touch their lives personally. They are less inclined to give to umbrella organizations or intermediary groups that simply redistribute their gift.

THE RX FOR REVIVING YOUR CAMPAIGN

The TCN study of employee workplace campaigns included interviews with key executives from top public and private sector employers. Their input gives companies a step-by-step guide to improving the workplace campaign and new insights into building a more empowered, loyal, effective and happy work force.

1. Assess your current campaign. This includes clarifying your employee and community relations goals; reviewing your campaign performance; and identifying employee attitudes,

perceptions and interests, usually through a survey.

2. Make the case for a strong workplace campaign. Your employees probably want it! A recent Independent Sector survey showed that 89 percent of employees at companies with a payroll deduction plan want to continue that kind of giving.
3. Integrate the campaign with your employee involvement objectives. Batch and brand all employee involvement programs together, including matching gifts and volunteer programs. As a single package, these activities provide more identity and momentum to volunteering and giving. Some of the key factors to integrating the campaign successfully are:
 - ◆ Branding all activities with a common name.
 - ◆ Providing oversight by an employee committee.
 - ◆ Promoting the value of giving and employee participation.
 - ◆ Including the campaign in all promotional brochures and marketing activities for volunteer programs.
 - ◆ Linking the campaign to the overall community relations and employee involvement strategy.
4. Incorporate technology. Technology provides exciting opportunities to communicate with and engage employees. It can reach new donors, such as younger workers or people in smaller businesses; give employees information, such as how

contributions are spent or how they can make a gift online; and help administer the campaign through, for example, automated pledge processing. But, take note. Technology is not a substitute for personal involvement. A passive, leaderless campaign is a dead campaign and doomed to failure.

“We need a fresh look at how the campaign fits in today’s workplace environment ... how it enables employees to be engaged in activities close to their interests.”

— John Coy,
TCN

5. Build the campaign on best practices. These are proven approaches that have worked well for other companies. They include:
 - ◆ Focusing on employee understanding and satisfaction, not their level of giving.
 - ◆ Giving employees a sense of ownership.
 - ◆ Branding the campaign with a name, theme and logo that fits your culture and responds to employee interests.
 - ◆ Providing leadership through involved senior officers.

- ◆ Reviewing and assessing current campaign performance and practices, including regular feedback from employees.
 - ◆ Building a strong educational component that promotes understanding the value of involvement and the importance of giving.
 - ◆ Retaining a personal connection as much as possible.
 - ◆ Tracking and monitoring employee attitudes and satisfaction throughout the campaign.
 - ◆ Having an internal recognition/thank-you program.
6. Create a partnership between your company and the nonprofits participating in your campaign. These organizations want to add value to the relationship by being a resource to the company and your employees.

MEASURING SUCCESS

In the past, companies looked only at the total amount of dollars raised, how many employees participated in the campaign and how much those employees gave per capita. Today, as companies realize the true value of employee involvement programs, including their workplace campaign, they have added other measures of success to the mix.

Five key indicators that companies are using to determine

the success of their campaigns are:

- ◆ The campaign is integrated with their employee involvement program.
- ◆ The campaign is branded to fit their culture and includes organizations that are relevant to employees and their charitable and volunteer interests.
- ◆ The campaign provides opportunities for employee involvement and team building experiences.
- ◆ The campaign promotes loyalty and good will between the company and its employees.
- ◆ The campaign garners strong employee support.

The employee workplace campaign should be about more than how much employees give. “New employee workplace campaigns are not measuring success with the traditional indicators exclusively,” said Coy. “Campaigns today are about helping employees value involvement and providing them with options to give to the organizations that matter to them. Most of all, new workplace campaigns should help build relationships among the company, the employees and the groups that are the fabric of the communities where employees work and live.”

To receive a copy of the employee workplace campaign report with tools and resources, call 1 (800) 458-9505 or log on to www.charities.org.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

This project was initiated because of the growing need to provide research, examples and recommendations to increase the value of giving and caring through the employee workplace campaign.

These are the members of the National Advisory Council who offered their expertise for the study of employee workplace giving campaigns commissioned by America's Charities and prepared by John Coy and Stephen Greenhalgh of The Consulting Network.

Maria Capone-Goodwin
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* As of August 2000, Coker-Gibson became affiliated with another organization. Mund has retired, and Sandelman works in Multi-Family Housing for Freddie Mac.