

Help from Companies



What Are They?

Raising support and income from companies is often a new and untried task for voluntary organisations or community groups. Many small and large organisations do successfully work with companies, and the number of companies who promote their links with charities is increasing.



Who Can Apply?

This varies according to the company. There is a genuine wish by most companies to contribute to charitable and community activity on an international, national or local basis. With some companies this is organised and structured, sometimes with foundations independently set up disbursing a proportion of their profits through formal and accountable application procedures. The larger of these trusts will be covered in the section on funding from Trusts and Foundations.

At the other end of the scale it may be left to a marketing department or a whimsical process, dependent on furthering their company profile or the personal interest or inclination of board members. This does not mean that it is not worth pursuing contact with this sort of company. They may be able to be far more flexible in their giving and be very generous. You may be ideally placed to give a presentation to a board member or make an appointment with a local company manager or to have an informal chat with an employee that could lead to the funding or other help you seek. If there is no formal plan for giving or precedence you can be more inventive in your approach. You have little to lose. Most like to fund things of local interest.



What Do They Fund?

Most companies don't have published donation policies. Mostly they cover a wide range of good causes, or attempt to deal with each appeal on its own merits.

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? • How Do You Apply?

A personal contact can help. Find out about the company and what they offer either through looking at their website or by phone. Applications are usually made in writing. Use a personal letter. Find out who you need to write to by name.

£ How Much?

Companies vary considerably in the amount they will give. Some provide core funding of hundreds of thousands of pounds to national high profile charities. Others only give small donations to projects in the communities they where they have a presence. It is useful to know their giving patterns so you avoid asking for an inappropriate amount. If it is not clear ask.

+ Pros:

- Little bureaucracy
- Can often respond quite quickly
- Seconded salaries can be used as match funding
- Minimal monitoring required

- Cons:

- May depend on personal contacts
- Usually small amounts
- Some causes more popular than others, e.g. children's toy appeals do better than work with offenders
- Some companies may not fit with the aims and ethos of your organisation due to various ethical issues

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➔ Further Information:

• Why do companies give to voluntary and community organisations?

Company giving is just part of what they now term 'Corporate Responsibility'. This also covers their impact on the environment and on the communities where they operate, their terms and conditions for suppliers and the working conditions for their workers.

• The give for a variety of reasons:

- Philanthropy.
- To generate goodwill in the communities where they have a presence.
- To develop a particular image for the company – association with helping schools or hospitals, funding sport and activity, sponsoring opera or theatre.
- Conscience – banks supporting debt advice services, tobacco companies supporting medical research, petrol companies supporting environment projects.
- To help market their services – computers for schools tokens, low price or free software for charities, 2p for sport when you buy a chocolate bar.
- To support their staff and develop their relationship with them – time off for charity activity, encouraging their collections for charity.
- To satisfy legal requirements – ameliorating the impact of a mining, compensating for landfill operations through environmental project support, helping with retraining when they downsize or close operations.
- To take advantage of tax concessions – payroll giving, matching employee donations.
- To pass on unsold goods or recycle – supermarkets donating perishable foods to those working with the poor or homeless, passing replaced office equipment to charities.

Many companies are becoming pro-active in their support for good causes - setting their priorities well in advance and pro-actively choosing the causes they will support, rather than simply responding to requests.

Some companies choose to build a close relationship with a charity working within the sector appropriate to their activity. Pharmaceutical companies support health charities. Building developers may give help to housing associations and tenant groups.

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➔ Further Information: (Continued)

• How do companies give?

As you see companies do not just give money, they give support in a variety of other ways. They also support their employees and their community interests.

Apart from organised funding, companies may offer help such as:

- Donations.
- Regular giving from staff salary.
- Gifts in kind – Do-it-Yourself stores may give materials for repairing a community centre.
- Support for volunteers – community clean up events, painting the village hall.
- Staff involvement – paid time for staff to give to voluntary work / projects.
- Secondment of skilled staff offering skills and company expertise – accountancy, lawyers time, fundraising.
- Publicity – local radio giving exposure or appeals, help with promotion materials from advertising companies.
- Sponsorship of local events.
- Providing premises, grounds for events.
- Giving surplus stock.

• Why companies may not give?

Corporate image is very important. Companies do not like to court controversy. They like to be associated with causes that are simple to understand and universally popular. Sport for children is more likely to be supported than drug rehabilitation. They will probably avoid giving to animal rights organisations or for political ends. It is worth considering where you fit in the popularity stakes before you start. Unpopular causes may be better placed when applying to trusts and foundations.

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➔ Further Information: (Continued)

• Per Cent Club

The PerCent Club was first established in 1986 and launched by HRH the Prince of Wales. It uses as its benchmark the Per Cent Standard - that is, those companies that invest 1% or more of their pre-tax profit (or the equivalent) in corporate community investment become members of the club. In 2005 there were 116 companies in the UK that qualified to be listed. These appear listed on The Guardian website at: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/givinglist/tables/0,10999,848720,00.html> and companies (including these) that register their corporate contributions are listed on the BITC website at http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/programme_directory/percent_club/results_2005.html

There are links to the websites of the Footsie 100 companies below. You can also use the Per Cent Club listings to find other generous companies. There are no links provided in these listings but a search with 'Google' will find their corporate websites (see below).

• Footsie 100

There is a list of companies containing the 100 financially biggest public companies listed on the UK Stock Exchange. They vary considerably in what they do and where and how they operate. It is up to you to decide whether one company is worth pursuing rather than another. There is some indication as to what they do, what their interests might be and what approaches they have to charitable activity.

This listing is brief and only intended to give a general indication of a companies approach to charitable giving and community involvement. Look at their website and contact them for accurate and further information before making any application for funding.

Apart from 100 largest UK based companies there are many more large foreign registered companies, large private non-listed companies, subsidiary companies and smaller public companies that operate in the UK.

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➔ Further Information: (Continued)

• Finding Company Information

You can look for companies that are not listed below using 'Google'. Make the Search as simple as possible. Use only the company name or part of it. Otherwise you may only get references to them in the news or to their latest products.

In general the sort of information you are looking for will be listed under subject headings like: 'About Us', 'Corporate Information', 'Social Responsibility', 'Community Involvement', 'Company Giving'. These often appear in menus at the head or foot of the page away from the main thrust of sales and customer service that often dominates commercial websites. Corporate information may even be on a separate website.

When you find the information, they may not list contacts or how to go about applying to them for funding or help. Use their general contact information. Phone their helpline or head office contact number and ask for those dealing with charitable or community programmes. You may be given a series of numbers to ring before you get through to someone who can help. The harder it is for you to contact the right person, the harder it will be for others and the less competition there may be for any funds that are available.

A brief chat about yourselves with those responsible for funding will help in deciding whether it is worth pursuing an application and save you time and effort avoiding inappropriate applications. Those who have sought guidance before making applications will often be remembered and if you follow their guidance and advice, it is likely your application will be more seriously considered than applications that arrive unsolicited. Ensure you know the name of your contact. Address correspondence to them reminding them of your telephone conversations or any other contact you have had with them.

If their approach appears to be made on a local basis, contact their local operation, factory, branch or store. Apart from structured programmes there are often small budgets and local means for helping the community that are left to the discretion of the local manager. Tell them what you are trying to do. Ask them what help they can give. They may prove much more helpful to you than just giving you a donation.