

## How to Expand Your Business' Visibility with Cause-Partnering

Have you ever heard the term “cause-partnering” used before? Have you ever “partnered” your business with a cause in some way? Then you’ve had a “cause-partnering” experience. You may have sponsored an event, sent some volunteers from your company to help out with a project, or promoted a nonprofit cause through your web site. If you’ve ever promoted a product and donated a portion of it to a cause, then you’ve done something called “cause-marketing”. This is different from *cause-partnering*. *Cause-partnering* can incorporate the use of *cause-marketing* but it doesn’t have to. Cause-partnering has many ways it can be carried out but cause-marketing is about attaching a cause’s brand to your product for the purpose of helping that cause fundraise. This process also helps to get the word out to a broader audience about your business and product.

Cause-partnering is becoming a very important source of in-kind and regular donation revenue for nonprofits. The Madoff Ponzie scheme derailed many foundations that nonprofits depended upon for large grants. The overall drop in donations due to the down economy is still lingering for human service causes. Federal and state grants are being cut for all kinds of nonprofit efforts, too. In the future, we may also see the charitable tax deduction lowered or be removed entirely. We still need nonprofit causes to thrive because they fill the gap of assisting people to the point of achieving self-reliance. Many tackle social issues that the government or no one else will. The people helped by these causes could have been or could potentially become your customers through cause-partnering.

Given this difficult financial period, the business sector becomes a very important piece of the funding equation for community service nonprofits. The economy is still in recovery, especially the housing market. There are tens of thousands of people, families and kids, who are struggling to make ends meet. Many are homeless because of foreclosures. Those homeowners may have been your customers at one time, and they still can be if we pull together and help the human service nonprofits whose job it is to assist them at rebuilding their lives. What can you do to help nonprofits when the economy is affecting you, too? The good news is that you don’t have to invest a lot to help.

Nonprofits are looking for any, and all, types of in-kind help, especially from business. Can you think of a way your business can help? NICE trains both nonprofits and business on how to partner with each other. NICE can give you the inside scoop on how you can be a hero in your community and in business, like many of the businesses who helped the nonprofits in the book *The Power of One* (below). Were it not for business supporting and believing in those efforts, which range from countering crime to revitalizing neighborhoods, those organizations wouldn't be thriving nor replicating their innovations across the country as they are today.

But, it isn't a one-sided equation either. Let me show you how you can build a win-win scenario by partnering with a cause and possibly launch a partnership even this month. What I often find, when a business attempts cause-partnering, is that they think only in narrow terms. They think they either need to co-sponsor an event for the cause or send their employees over to volunteer at the cause one weekend a month or maybe they hand out a flier at their business once in a while. All of these things are good, but if those things are individually good things to do, why not go a step further and do all of them or add to those efforts? Too often business sees doing something as just "doing its part" one time a year without realizing the benefit of doing it more often. I've heard a business say, "Well, we give to the Cancer Society, why do I need to do anything else?"

When businesses think this way, they're missing the whole opportunity! A business should be thinking about offering to help in multiple ways. Why? They'll actually get more leverage in free advertising, build more goodwill in the community about their business, build greater loyalty with their existing clients, and attract many new ones. The biggest reason is that they'll build a bigger client base. The more a business gets its name "out there", the more potential clients they attract. Right? The only other way is through expensive advertising. And, most of the time any extra costs in donating goods, services, or money ends up coming back as a tax deduction, much less expensive than paying a PR firm. You can give your business mass exposure to new audiences through cause-partnering. Business is about being creative and innovative, right? We need that creativity and innovation from every business in order to bring back our economy for everyone's sake.

In America, who are the real purchasers? Women are! Women care about causes and give to causes more than men, especially human service causes. What do I mean by human service causes? These are causes that revolve around kids, the elderly, the needy, education, neighborhoods, and crime. These are

causes that help people directly. Who buys from you? People do. And who are the other top purchasers out there? Gen Y and Gen Xers. These generations are also tuned into “community” and in “giving back” so they’ll likely support what you do in a big way.

Recent research shows that 55% of the American public has in the past, and is likely to purchase in the future, a product primarily because it promotes a cause. This is huge! This means that if you decide to partner with a cause, align with them or promote a product on their behalf, a large number of your customers will buy that product just because it’s associated with a cause. I’m not talking about partnering with an effort like Breast Cancer Awareness. Big companies can do that and that’s great for them. Instead ...

**Think**

National cause > National company

Local cause > Local company

What I’m suggesting is isolating a cause that exists in your particular community. Your clientele knows about them. They have a good reputation. This is why cause-partnering is definitely a benefit to small business. They’re reputation builds yours and vice-versa. In fact, cause-partnering is even more important to small business since big businesses can better afford PR firms. Small business needs to identify inexpensive ways to market products to their community.

Have you ever tried partnering with a cause without success? Or are you unsure this idea is really for you? We can help you avoid the concerns and pitfalls of cause-partnering. Below are some ways that cause-partnering can work for you and help you avoid potential misunderstandings. If you have cause-partnering experiences to share, we’d enjoy hearing about them at NICE Network. If you have questions about a potential or existing partnership with a nonprofit, need more insights as to how to go about partnering, or would like help with a more formal partnering agreement, we would be happy to help you in any way we can. Give us a call!

## Cause-Partnering

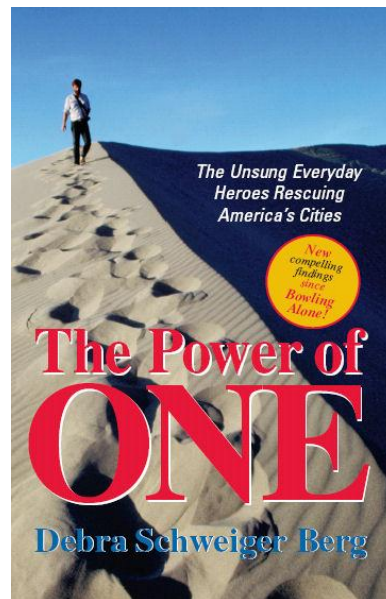
### The Best Ways to Partner with a Nonprofit to Build Your Profits and Goodwill

- **Free ad placement on their website**, at fundraisers, and/or promotional materials when you provide services or products (at a discount or free).
- Partner via a **“cause-marketed product”** or service of yours. They can help you sell the product too! A certain percentage of proceeds will go back to the cause and you’ll make \$\$\$.
- Sponsor or co-sponsor a **fundraising event** for the cause that exposes your business to an entirely new group of people.
- Place their **logo on your website with a link back** to their site and vice-versa. (Improves search engine traffic for both of you.)
- When you provide discounted or free services to them as a donation, ask for a **free mailing to the cause’s list of volunteers/supporters** on your behalf naming you as a major supporter or announcing your new partnership. The email should have your contact information and services.
- Give promotional handouts to the nonprofit to provide at their location to **expand your market for your product/service** with the causes’ logo prominently displayed on it as a supporter.
- **Partner with your cause on a parade/float** effort for the next big local event. This shows your business in a good light and gains you exposure to a large number of people at once.
- Request **Facebook promotion of your business on their Facebook Fan Page** in exchange for services or product you provide them. **The most beneficial way to do it: Video is hot!** Have them feature either a video they’ve produced with your business spotlighted as a major supporter or one you’ve produced about your business with them featured. Or both! This is a big opportunity since it broadens your exposure to a whole new market. Video is viral, offers a message to a public with a short attention span, is clickable, and appeals to every age. Everyone loves video! Promote your video on your website, at conferences, and expos, too!

**The National Institute for Civic Enterprise, LLC**, affectionately known as the **NICE Network**, is a social enterprise, a business that has a social mission as its core purpose. The primary mission of our social enterprise business is to speed up solutions to America's social problems through partnering. At NICE, we are supporting and training human service nonprofit leaders to learn how to partner their resources and ideas with similar causes as well as *cause-partner* with business. NICE markets and sells products, such as books and contract services, to raise resources rather than to depend heavily on grants. We also foster cause-partnering relationships for our sustainability thanks to several loyal businesses who donate time and services to us at a low-cost or no-cost rate.



[www.NICENetwork.org/cause-partnering.html](http://www.NICENetwork.org/cause-partnering.html)



Learn how other businesses have partnered with causes in their communities.

<http://www.nicenetwork.org/nice-resourcesbooks.html>

To learn more about how to set up a cause-partnering relationship, things to do and things to avoid at the outset, as well as the best ways to implement the partnership, please contact us at NICE Network for more information. We would like to learn about your company and how we can assist you going forward to make cause-partnering a positively profitable and worthwhile experience for you!

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