

# Giving back is important

Companies should think about charity even in tough times

## VIEWPOINT

By ROBERT MADONNA

Given the economy's continued struggles, sluggish markets and high unemployment - not to mention the usual summer doldrums - it's not surprising that the last thing many businesses are thinking about these days is charity.

That's a huge mistake.

As Wilford Brimley used to say in the Quaker Oats commercials, "It's the right thing to do." Sharing good fortune and success is never a bad thing. But there's (a lot) more to it than that. Quite simply, it's good business, especially for smaller companies. Being part of a community is vital for small business. One way to ensure that your business

grows and is recognized is to help build a cohesive, growing community.

Of course, there are other benefits.

For one thing, you have the opportunity to support causes in which you believe. If you can tie your business purpose to a particular charity that's great, but if you can't, pick a charity or organization that invokes your passion. For example, a children's clothing store can support child safety, prevention of child abuse or another cause that makes sense to back.

In addition, when you donate money, time, products or services, charity and nonprofit groups normally provide some form of promotional opportunity. Any time your business name is included is a

win/win. Think about how many Little League teams have business names on their uniforms. Consumers are more willing to support businesses they feel are making a difference in the community.

In general, getting involved with a nonprofit organization is a great business strategy. As you get to know others and work with others for a cause that you believe in, you will have fun and become a part of the group. You will be involved and that can help you in marketing your business, not to mention your personal brand.

Back in May, more than 40 members of the Greater Philadelphia Senior Executive Group, or GPSEG - a nonprofit

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professional association of senior-level executives committed to the exchange of business contacts and ideas - donated time on a Saturday to support the Cradles to Crayons organization at

its West Conshohocken warehouse.

GPSEG sees real value in events such as this, with participants that helped a worthy organization, forged excellent business contacts and developed strong relationships with the nonprofit world, all while having fun. You never know where you might find a valuable contact.

In this era of social networking supporting a nonprofit expands your network of contacts both from a personal and professional level. Nonprofits seek and require help from the business community to grow their mission.

The bottom line - getting involved with local nonprofits - is a win for the community, a win

for employees, a win for businesses and, last but not least, a win for the growth of nonprofit missions. And, like oatmeal, it's good for you.

*Robert Madonna chairs the GPSEG Nonprofit Subgroup and is a partner and executive vice president of sales and marketing for McCoy Enterprises in West Chester.*