



CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

WITH SMALL AND MIDSIZE BUSINESSES

Did you know that in 2009, 69 percent of business support for the arts came from businesses with annual revenues of less than \$1 million dollars and that another 24 percent came from businesses with less than \$50 million in annual revenue? And that 56 percent of the surveyed companies reported that they'd never been asked to support an arts organization? *

[The BCA Report: 2010 National Survey of Business Support for the Arts](#)

The following tips will show you how to tap into these opportunities and develop lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships with small and midsize businesses.

How do you find the right fit?

- ▶ Make a list of potential partners. Consider small and midsize businesses you deal with regularly, contacts from your board and business supporters, members of the Rotary Club and your local chamber or supporters of other nonprofit arts organizations.
- ▶ Learn more about the businesses goals and think about how partnering with your organization can help them achieve these goals.
- ▶ Get to know owners and executives of businesses to establish a relationship. Get to know their products and services and their customer base.

Get involved in your community.

- ▶ Participate in local “community visioning” meetings. Make sure the quality of life, educational and economic development discussions include arts and culture.
- ▶ Join the local chamber of commerce or other gathering places for small and midsize businesses. Remember you are a small business too.
- ▶ Consider serving on committees or offering to host meetings at your facility.
- ▶ Talk with representatives in the Mayor’s office and economic development groups in your community about the economic and intrinsic value of the arts to the community.



Talk about the advantages of arts and local business partnerships.

- ▶ Small and midsize businesses are uniquely positioned to collaborate with the arts in a very hands-on neighborly way.
- ▶ The arts make your community an appealing place to live, work, and drop by for a visit.
- ▶ [*The Arts & Economic Prosperity Report*](#) shows that the proximity to arts venues increases local business exposure to a new customer base and brings a significant increase in event-related spending.
- ▶ Working with the arts offers ways to heighten the public's awareness of a business' products, services and core values.

Tell your story.

- ▶ Make it compelling – speak about your organization and its value to the community.
- ▶ Illustrate with individual success stories.

Remember it's more than cash.

- ▶ Partnering comes in many different forms and small businesses are commonly in a better position to offer products, services or employee volunteers, rather than cash. Make lists of non-cash assistance needed or desired by your organization for each business based on their products and services.
- ▶ Remember that both parties should realize a return.
- ▶ Think about what your organization is able to offer each business in return for its support like ads in programs or event publications.
- ▶ List non-cash supporters in your programs, newsletters, website, annual report and on posters.
- ▶ In addition to reduced rate or free admissions, consider offering special workplace programs, board training or volunteer opportunities to engage the employees.

Say thank you many times.

- ▶ Have the executive director or board member call the business owner personally or send a hand written note.

Build on each of your relationships.

- ▶ Make sure your donors know their support is appreciated.
- ▶ Invite them to get to know your staff and your business operation.
- ▶ Invite them to behind the scenes visits and special events, educational programs or community outreach programs.

Need more ideas?

- ▶ Host events for local businesses to network with other area businesses while learning about the value of the arts. Offer opportunities for their employees to go behind the scenes, attend rehearsals or previews.
- ▶ In some communities there are numerous chambers of commerce that cater to culturally specific groups and other niches. Offer to co-sponsor workshops on topics that are relevant to your local community. If your chamber has a leadership program, offer a session on the role arts and culture plays in the community.
- ▶ Work with local journalists who cover non-profits or arts for your local business journal and keep them apprised of stories that tie to business and art collaborations.
- ▶ Budget to participate in events or luncheons presented by local businesses. You have to invest a bit to make the contacts you need.

Continued ▶



- ▶ Offer businesses the opportunity to purchase memberships, tickets for a performance or special exhibition, and merchandise to be used as thank-yous and holiday gifts for employees, customers and clients.
- ▶ Offer employees and their families reduced rate or free admission to performances, exhibitions and special events.
- ▶ Offer businesses a welcome package for new employees and their families to introduce them to your organization.
- ▶ Distribute a business's product or coupons for free or discounted services or products to your audience members and visitors.
- ▶ Suggest ways in which a business can incorporate your organization's artists and use your facilities for business events and meetings.

Want to hear more?

Watch our [on-demand webinars](#) to learn how to PARTNER.

Visit, www.partnershipmovement.org

