



Getting More Marketing Mileage from the Holiday Season

By Kristen L. Lewis

'Tis the season for both sharing and having a grand old time. Holiday charity campaigns are an annual tradition in most firms. And while the intent may ultimately be to help the less fortunate, there is no reason why you can't also get some publicity for your company. At the other end of the spectrum, holiday parties can be indulgent celebrations. By planning ahead, however, you can make sure that quality connections are found while whooping it up. Here are some tips to make the most of the holiday season:

Drive business with a toy drive. Offer your office as a drop-off location for a professional or industry association's toy drive. Not only do you get the free advertising, but you'll have local business people dropping by your office.

Canned goods "can" be good. Ask for canned food donations in lieu of registration fees at a seminar, or make it a "cover charge" to attend your office party. If a local radio or TV station runs a massive canned food drive each year, participate. The companies that donate large amounts are given free publicity. Seize local opportunities like that and put the muscle of your entire firm behind it.

Party on. Holiday parties thrown by banks, law firms and other potential referral sources are known mostly for their food and drink. Take back the holiday party season by assigning professionals to specific events. Set business card and follow-up goal minimums in order to make sure that they attend and get to know some valuable people.

It may be in the cards. In lieu of expensive holiday gifts, send a nice card with a statement about a significant donation your firm is making in the name of clients and friends this year. Not only is the end result more economical, but you will be positioning your firm as socially responsible in tough times.

Adoption is a beautiful choice. In the same vein, look into adopting a road, a park, a community service program, or a school, as a demonstration of your commitment to the local community around the holidays. You may even hold a clean-up day (in sunnier climes), volunteer at a soup kitchen, or complete a related community project around the holidays.

It all comes down to a plan. Try your best to be strategic in your charity choices. There are so many causes competing for your time and money. Instead of spreading your resources in small amounts to many different charities, consider supporting one or two in a really big way. Not only will these organizations benefit more, but your firm will stand out in the mass of donors.

No matter which path you choose, make sure you tell people about it. There's no harm in sending a press release and photo to a community paper, or putting the story into your client newsletter. And photos are a must for your website – let your clients, prospects, friends and recruits see the positive role you play in the community.

While many firms slow down their active business development during the holiday season, it's a great opportunity to make connections and contribute in a meaningful way to the community. Find the avenues that make sense for your team, and have a great time while making a real difference.

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