

1. **Develop a plan that supports your financial goals.** Shift focus from media mentions to reaching the right people at the right time with the right message. Consider:
  - In what forums do you seek to establish leadership and within what time frame?
  - What are the products, services, issues that are considered “hot” by financial decisionmakers? How effectively has your firm positioned itself in these areas?
  - Do your clients include one or more major public companies willing to be mentioned or profiled in conjunction with your firm?
  - Which members of your management team will most engage the interest of venture capitalists?
  - What are your firm’s short/long term goals?
2. **Don’t neglect media.** Building relationships is the backbone of any pr campaign. Just as it’s crucial to forge them with opinion leaders and community decisionmakers, it’s often imperative to establish partnership with the right reporters. “Journalists rely on practitioners to match them with sources who can provide info representing an exact fit with readers’ informational needs, and who can keep them abreast of major industry trends.” The value of a quote or mention in a top tier business publication is unsurpassed. Also, more clout is given to objective articles than glitzy ads.
3. **Be aggressive.** PR cycles notwithstanding, companies should move quickly on several fronts. This is especially true for dot-coms who need to achieve name recognition ahead of competitors. “Distribute bi-weekly press releases to research firms writing reports on your industry as well as business publications, trade media, on-line media.” Schedule meetings with influential analysts, media, and regularly follow up with them.
4. **Adapt while staying the course.** Tech firms, in particular, need to continually change the message they communicate because their industry sector is so dynamic. When planning pr tactics, choose a vehicle with long shelf life (client case studies for media) while constantly adapting the language of your firm through more time sensitive communications vehicles (e.g., news releases.) Meanwhile, seek out speaking engagements and opportunities to adapt your company information according to qualified audiences – prospects, investors, etc.
5. **Monitor results.** An effective pr plan should include measurable goals. Evaluate the success of a campaign against these goals on an ongoing basis and adjust your tactics accordingly.

Finally, remember to remain committed to the value of public relations. “Growing a company requires being obsessed with its success – and convincing financial partners that they will be rewarded for sharing your obsession.”

## ITEM OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

- ¶ **Learning Is Easier Through Example Coupled With A Focused Message.** Keeping this in mind, Alberta (Canada) Transportation developed a program aimed at reducing traffic accidents involving children who walk to school. Liz Owens, manager of collision research & analysis for the Provincial department, developed the Walk The Walk program. Parents moving to a new neighborhood or locale walk the route to school with their children. Along the way parents point out where to cross streets, what areas to avoid, and other potential problems and ways to deal with them. The result is children see their parents modeling the correct behavior, and experience and learn important traffic safety lessons.

## BALANCING CORPORATE GIVING: DONATING TO SEPT 11<sup>TH</sup>-RELATED CAUSES WITHOUT CUTTING OFF OLD FRIENDS

Upwards of \$600 million dollars has been raised in response to the WTC tragedy – much of it from Corporate America. General Electric, for example, donated \$10 million to the families of the New York City firefighters, police and rescue workers; Microsoft is matching that with a donation for related projects; Coca-Cola has given \$12 million. **All this generosity is putting some NPOs on edge.** Will corporate donations to Sept.11<sup>th</sup>-related causes *divert funds from causes and organizations that have come to depend on their relationships* with these corporate giants? Or, will these donations come from additional monies, newly identified?

According to an analysis by the American Association of Fundraising Counsel (AAFRC) and the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana U, corporate giving has “hovered around 1% of corporate pre-tax profit for most years in the past several decades.” It suggests that **some corporations will reallocate funds – others by increasing giving.** But with the economy on the brink of a recession and layoffs looming, can additional \$\$\$ or even the money already earmarked for donations be found?

### CAUSE FOR CONCERN

According to Russell Weigand, chr of AAFRC, and the Center on Philanthropy: “The total amount of giving in the U.S. has increased every year but one for the past 40, including through wars, recessions and other crises. While the rate of growth has varied from year to year, each year Americans have given more than the previous year.” But, the Center’s dir of research, Patrick Rooney, notes that the events of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> are so unprecedented they make the true outcome unpredictable. “It’s an unusual combination where you have this catastrophe and the economy is already so soft that the catastrophe could precipitate a recession, which could then attenuate giving.” Some reactions:

### Corporate America Must Weigh Choices

Many corporations are able to give to disaster relief without diverting funds. Ford, for example, notes that it is fortunate enough to be able to plumb its reservoir of funding to come up with extra for attack victims without taking away from the monies going to the causes it traditionally supports. Same goes for Exxon Mobil. “The funds we are raising for disaster relief are on top of the existing donations we already have of \$92 million,” spokesperson Cynthia Langlands told [pr](http://pr). “We’re not taking away from our current causes.”

Others who are not following suit should consider whether it’s smart to risk long term relationships with NPOs by diverting significant monies. If an organization already has established and clarified a strategic philanthropic policy, choices may not be as difficult as anticipated (see box on pg.2). **But without clearly stated goals and policies, changes in giving may backfire.**

- Alumni Giving.** The director of development at a major university, who requested anonymity, also notes the distinction between this and other events. "It's not just 'September 11<sup>th</sup>,' it's 'September 11<sup>th</sup> and its aftermath,'" he told prr. But, unpredictably enough, a drop in giving to his school was punctuated by a sharp rise. "There was an immediate slowdown, but then we began to see memorial gifts coming in – on behalf of those who died in the attacks." He says his department changed its activities, tailoring them to victim aid. "We wanted to help and we did. Fundraising (for the school) just didn't make sense. We held phone-a-thons, not to help the university but to help the victims." December will tell how the attacks took their toll in terms of funds diverted from the school. "It's like any other sector of the economy. **I'm sure there will be a reaction.**"
- Worldwide Relief.** Alfred Ironside, spokesperson at UNICEF (NYC) thinks his NPO has innate advantages. "We're an international organization with global reach," he told prr. That means UNICEF is not completely reliant on US giving. Also, the mission of UNICEF – security and stability for kids worldwide – **dovetails with what people are feeling right now.** "People want to support causes which are helping children to see a better world."
- Local, Targeted Charity.** Nancy Lublin, exec dir for NYC-based Dress for Success, a nonprofit that provides business attire to low-income women seeking employment, told a philanthropy magazine that a donor who had planned to make a 7-figure donation to her group backed out to re-route funds to the attack aftermath. "I don't know how nonprofit organizations that are not connected to disaster relief or national security are going to make it," she says. **Despite the setback, she too had a surprise:** the generosity of hundreds of people who have offered to give her NPO the clothes of businesswomen who died in the World Trade Center.

**"The New Philanthropy: Strategic, Integrated, Employee-Driven"** (pr 10/26/92) is "the centerpiece of relationship-building with key publics," Pat Jackson wrote in pr reporter. His thoughts on philanthropy:

1. Efforts are focused on projects/causes that promise a strategic payback
2. All philanthropy is coordinated: donations, gifts in kind, volunteers.
3. Employees drive the programs – publics relate to people, not organizations
4. Getting credit, though with modesty, is a must

Implications for Management:

5. Using contributions budget to support the boss' pet charity is out
6. Grantmaking approach is out; participative decisionmaking is in
7. Opinion leaders' interests are more valuable than mass concerns

Problem areas and how to avoid them:

8. Focusing may mean cutting off longtime donees – but keep the relationship alive, ie, forming an *alumni ass'n* of all past donees
9. Owned projects return more value. But when the whole community bands together to rebuild the rec center that burned, forget the rules and give. In fact, take the lead – another form of ownership!

"The donation that ends with writing the check shortchanges both donor and donee."

**NPOs BEGIN POSITIONING TO INDIVIDUAL GIVERS**

Anticipating changes in personal giving, many nonprofits are positioning themselves with individual givers. Letters are being sent and calls made to somehow link their causes

with the tragedy. Ironside, for example, says UNICEF's appeals, in the wake of the attacks, highlight the commonly held, aforementioned sentiments about relief for kids. And consider Amnesty International, an organization known for working to free political prisoners. It writes that it is working to "speak out against impunity for the perpetrators; demand that those innocent of crimes be protected and respected; insist that justice is not justice if it fails to adhere to international human rights norms..."

For those whose work is unrelated to such issues, AAFRC offers the following:

1. **Recognize what your volunteers and donors may be thinking right now.** Many will make generous donations to the relief efforts. You may want to **acknowledge and support this** through messages on your Web site and at your facilities. These same donors will continue to support your organization, as they have in the past, because they care deeply about the work you do.
2. **Don't cancel or postpone planned activities** unless there are truly valid reasons for doing so. While a special event may seem very inappropriate today, postponing it may result in lost revenue needed to carry out your mission and serve constituents' immediate needs. Remember also that **special events can bring people together when they most need a sense of helping and community.** Think about how the event might be reshaped to acknowledge what your audience may be feeling, and consider allocating some of the funds raised to relief efforts.
3. **Don't interrupt your organization's direct mail and telemarketing cycles.** You may need to revise the timing, but don't cancel the fall schedule of appeals. You may need to rethink the content of your letter or phone message to stress those aspects of your organization's work that matter most at this particular time. It is never inappropriate to reflect on those values and ideals that are at the heart of what you do.
4. **Don't stop planning or fundraising.** While the saying may seem trite, it embodies serious wisdom: **the best time to raise money is when you need it most.** And if your needs are well presented – if you have engaged your Board and other key stakeholders in identifying and articulating these needs – your program will generate the support it deserves.

If an individual's – or organization's – commitment to a cause is based on a clear understanding of the NPO's vision – and **bound by strong relationships** – then concerns about defections should be unwarranted.

**TECH COMPANIES, DOT-COMMERS FLUMMOXED BY THE PR PROCESS, WHICH THEY VITALLY NEED TO GAIN VENTURE CAPITAL**

"We need pr" is becoming the mantra of dot-com companies as well as fast-growth tech organizations, says Dawn Ringel, svp David E. Gumpert Communications (Needham, MA). And public relations is key, not only for staying in business, but for engaging investors and building relationships with them.

"Many of the companies choosing to increase visibility are mystified by the pr process," notes Ringel. "As we've seen in advertising, some companies make the mistake of 'throwing money at the problem' by hiring big name firms at huge monthly retainers." She offers **basics for organizing and managing communication campaigns to attract investment:**