



Business Professionals' Attitudes Toward Corporate Philanthropy and Service During a Recession

February, 2009

- When companies give away their resources to the community, is it perceived as a sign of weakness or strength?
- Is it wrong to give money to charity when you are laying off employees?
- If employees are spending time on service, does it mean a company is not lean enough?
- Is it responsible for companies receiving government aid to continue philanthropy and service programs?

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A Special Report from the Taproot Foundation, February 2009

Summary of Findings

This may be the most challenging environment in history for corporate philanthropy.

Corporations are accepting enormous loans from the government, laying off large numbers of employees and stocks are quickly declining. Public trust in companies has taken a hit and shareholders and the media are watching Corporate America's every action with increased scrutiny.

When companies give away their resources to the community during times like these, is it perceived as a sign of weakness or strength? Is it wrong to give money to charity when you are laying off employees? Is it responsible for companies receiving government aid to continue philanthropy and service programs? If employees are spending time on service, does it mean a company is not lean enough?

These are the types of questions that the Taproot Foundation posed in a recent survey of over 400 business professionals across the country—a proxy for the employees, customers and shareholders of companies. Our hope is that their answers will help our partners in corporate philanthropy navigate through these challenging times.

What emerged confirmed the complexity of managing a corporate community investment strategy today. Below are our summary findings based on the respondents' input:

- 1. Taking loans and support from the government should not prevent companies from continuing to make grants and engage in service.**
- 2. Philanthropy and service during workforce reductions should be maintained but must be positioned carefully.**
- 3. Corporate community investment should not discontinue in less profitable times.**
- 4. The recession should not compel companies to narrow their giving focus.**

The detailed results of this survey have been included for further reference, grouped by subject. This data may help you build a case for ongoing funding for your department, strategically invest your limited resources, or frame your position to internal and external stakeholders. Whatever the use, we hope that this information will help make the difficult task of leading corporate philanthropy and volunteerism programs during a downturn a little easier.

Thank you for your leadership in these challenging times.



Survey Results: Attitudes on Corporate Philanthropy and Service During a Recession

On Leadership

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
A company that still gives money to charity right now is clearly blind to the reality of today's economic conditions.	3%	12%	84%
Executives should give more of their personal time & money now.	68%	22%	11%
Corporate giving and service are luxuries only for times when a company is profitable.	14%	15%	71%
Companies that invest in philanthropy and service are the ones that are confident that they will survive the recession.	46%	37%	17%
In a recession companies should avoid seeking publicity or recognition for their charitable contributions.	14%	23%	64%

On Government "Bailout"

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Companies receiving support from the government should not be participating in philanthropic activities.	17%	19%	63%
Corporations that take loans from the government can help to rebuild trust with Americans through their ongoing philanthropy and community service programs.	60%	23%	18%

On Giving Focus

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Philanthropy should focus primarily on safety-net organizations during a recession.	21%	36%	43%
Corporate philanthropy should only be focused domestically right now.	22%	23%	55%
There is a greater need for corporate giving internationally than domestically.	13%	37%	50%
Arts and culture organizations are just as important in a recession as in times of economic prosperity.	74%	14%	12%

On Volunteering vs. Giving

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Nonprofits currently need the skills and talents of corporate professionals more than they need corporate funding.	34%	37%	29%
Providing funding is the best way for companies to help nonprofit organizations right now.	32%	36%	32%

Survey Results: *Attitudes on Corporate Philanthropy and Service During a Recession*

On HR Value

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I would be proud of my company if it gave time and money to charity right now.	75%	19%	6%
Today unemployed professionals are more likely than usual to take an employer's investments in the community into consideration when choosing a job.	30%	29%	42%
Employees are lucky to have jobs now and it is unnecessary for companies to offer volunteer programs to keep them engaged.	10%	16%	74%
Giving my time and money to those in need helps me stay positive when things are not going my way.	73%	21%	6%

On Workforce Reductions

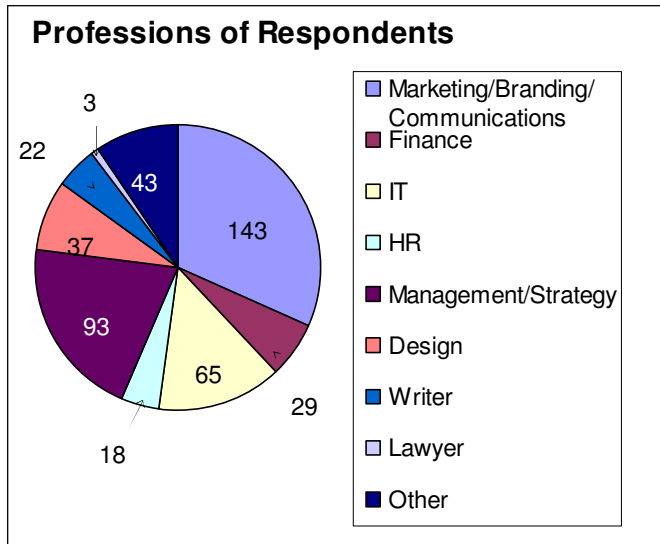
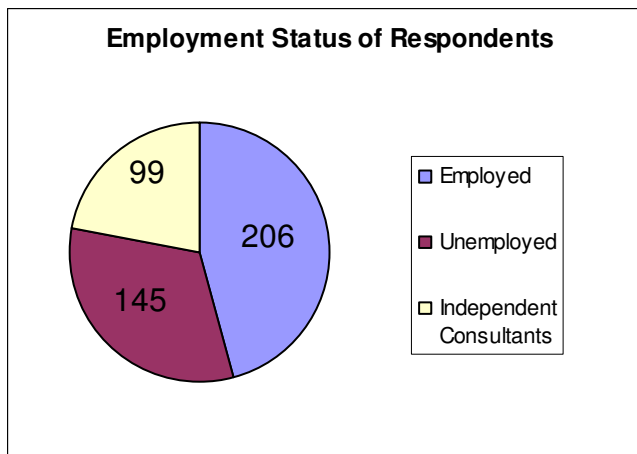
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
It is wrong for a company to give money to charities if at the same time eliminating jobs.	26%	29%	45%
Volunteer activities hurt employee morale when a company is doing layoffs.	10%	19%	71%
Companies should take care of the people it lets go before it worries about helping other people in the community.	39%	31%	30%
If a co-worker just got laid off, it would make me angry if my company didn't cancel a planned service event the next week.	19%	26%	55%
My employer should retain my job before it gives another penny to philanthropy.	27%	32%	42%
If employees are spending time on volunteer projects it is clear that the organization is not truly operating as lean as it should be.	8%	14%	79%

On Personal Investment

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
No matter how bad my finances get, I will always give to charity.	40%	25%	35%
The needs of others during these times has inspired me to do more in the community right now.	54%	32%	13%
When I have less money I replace my charitable giving with more volunteer time.	63%	24%	13%
I am doing less now in the community than I was a year ago.	14%	17%	68%
I am less likely to buy a ticket to a charitable event this year compared to last.	48%	26%	26%

About the Survey

This survey was conducted in February, 2009. The 450 respondents are business professionals across seven US cities, all registered with the Taproot Foundation.



The Taproot Foundation was founded in 2001 to create a multi-billion dollar market for high-quality pro bono services. It works to achieve this vision by delivering hundreds of pro bono projects every year to nonprofits, enabling other organizations to run effective pro bono programs, and inspiring all business professionals to give what they know.

