



Creating a Dialogue for Partnerships between .ORGs and .COMs

*“We want to advocate for you. Don’t be afraid to come,
reach out to us, tell us your stories.”*

~ Lauren Stanley ~

Managing Partner, Big'z & Sip

What is it about working with nonprofits that works for you?

What doesn't?

In our recent survey, “Business Preferences for Giving Back to the Community,” our group at [KMAC & Associates](#) asked those two fundamental questions. Those questions – along with the answers we received - set the tone for our look at nonprofit giving and the business community.

By overwhelming numbers, we learned that **relationships** and **dialogue** make the difference.

They’re everything.

With strong, sustained relationships, the partnership works. Dialogue, conversation, investments happen.

But when relationships are ignored, taken for granted, or set aside, it’s a deal-breaker.

That’s not good news for nonprofit organizations.

As we talked with small and medium-sized businesses, we learned something fundamental to creating win-win partnerships between the business world and the nonprofit world: we have to stop thinking of businesses as “donors” and we have to start thinking of them as “partners.”

In a donor-driven world, it’s all about “give, give, give.”

In a partner-driven world, it’s about “give and take.”

360 Degrees of Philanthropic Insight

Our study shows people want to be more involved in an organization; they want to learn about the mission and outcome of the group they support. As I told participants at the AFP San Antonio conference last month, **“small-and-medium business owners live in this community. They raise their families here. They want the community to be a better place.”**

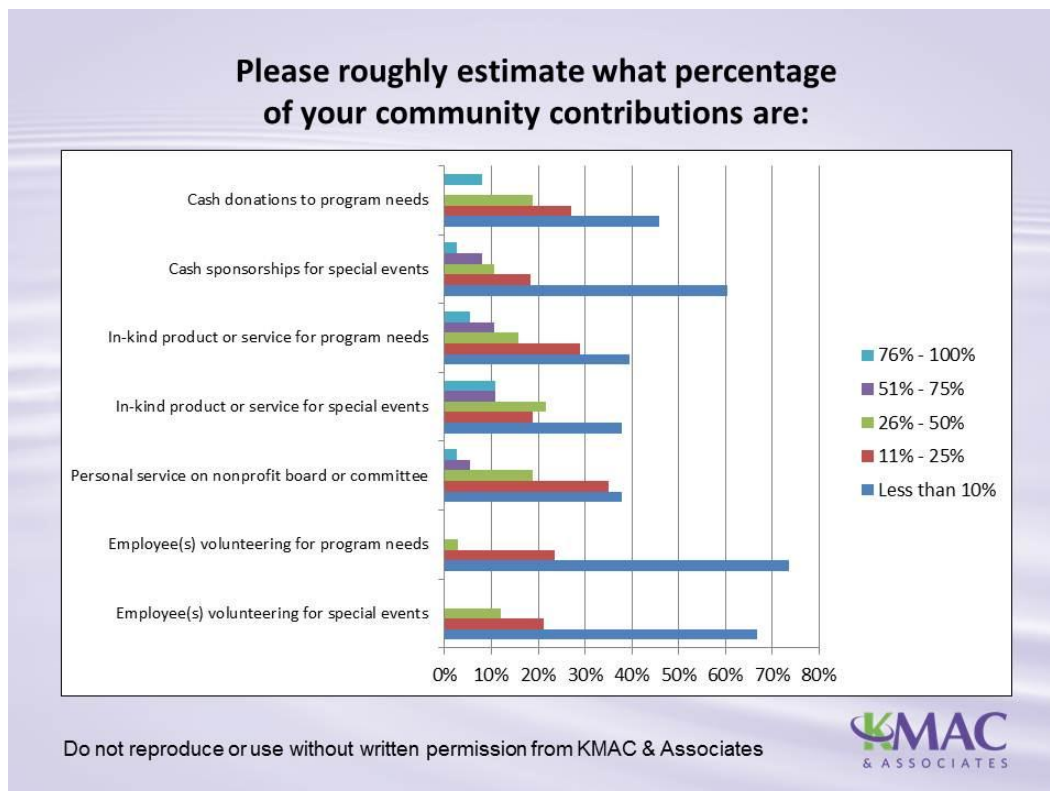
In other words, the small-and-medium sized business owner is **invested** in the success of our community.

According to the businesses who participated in our survey, the top three causes that they support in our community are:

Human Services	61%
Education	58%
Health	47%

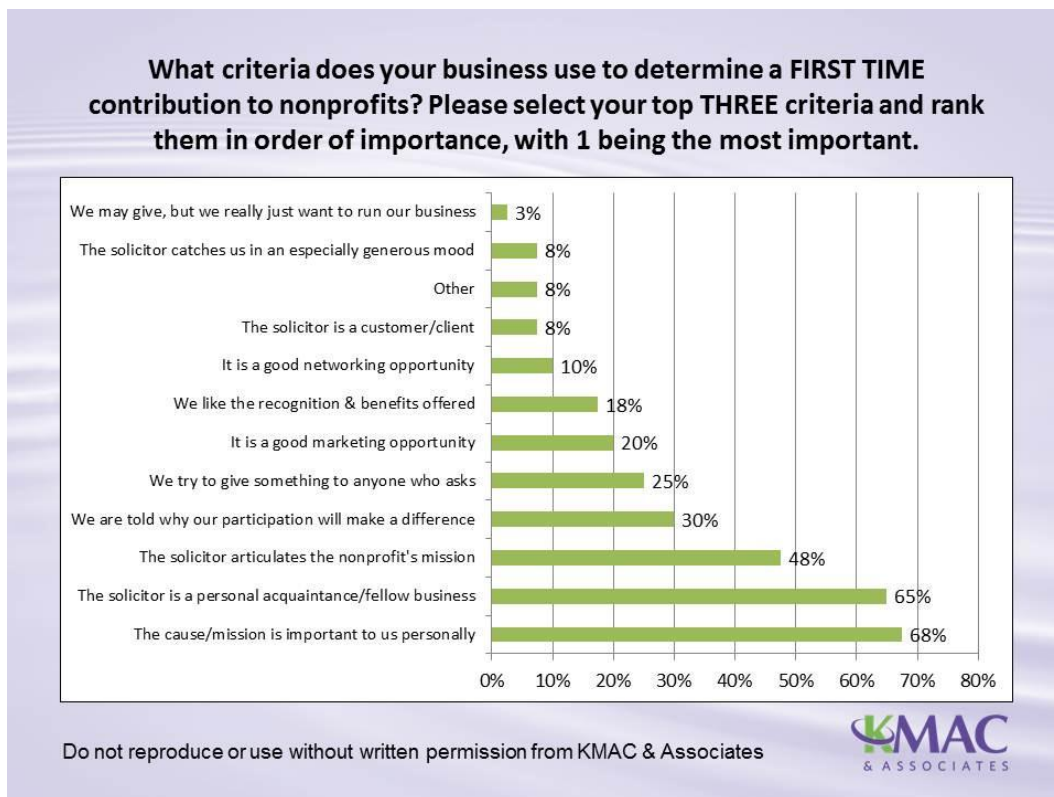
These are big issues for our community. And the organizations who work toward helping improve those causes matter to the small-and-medium sized business owners. They want to see our community succeed. And they’re willing to work at it.

Our study shows volunteer work, committee participation and board service account for a great deal of the community contributions made to our area. It’s proof that people are invested. They’re willing to roll up their sleeves and be part of the solution.



Our study showed us something we intuitively understand: the business community here wants to be part of the nonprofit community's success: they want to be involved and invested, but they also want to see the **return** on that investment. Our partners in community giving want to see the outcomes of their investment and their work. In fact, at the heart of why a business decides to make a first time contribution to a nonprofit organization lies the importance of personal relationships:

- “We are told why our participation will make a difference”
- “The solicitor articulates the nonprofit’s mission”
- “The solicitor is a personal acquaintance/fellow business”
- “The cause/mission is important to us personally”



During our panel discussion with four members of the local business community, they echoed our findings:

“There are people out there who are passionate about what you are doing. You need to find those passionate people because they’ll be the ones who will raise more and bring in more volunteers for you.”

~ Stacy Seaborn, Director of Catering – Sheraton Gunter Hotel

“We want to make a difference in the community. Giving back to the community is about long-term perspective.”

~ Ryan Berg, Vice President, Lee Michaels Fine Jewelry

“We fundraise for you! My brother loves to raise money for children’s organizations; I love being in the trenches. We are all about creating those relationship events where people have the experience that ties them in and keeps them in.”

~ Tracy Tylman, The Tylman Team, Access National Mortgage

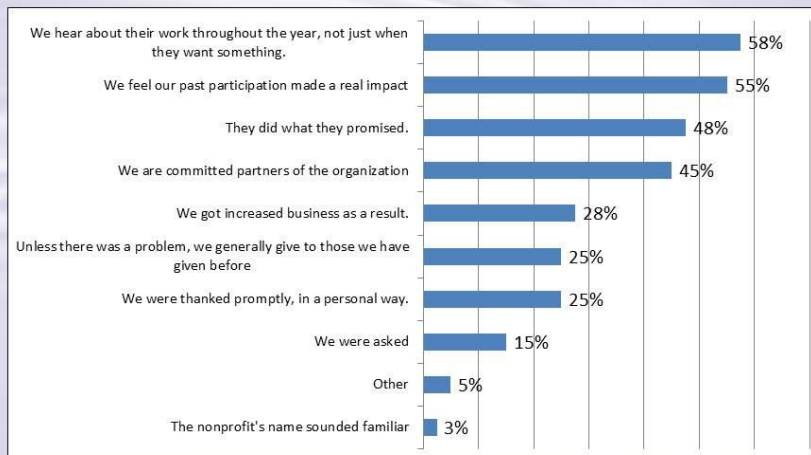
“We find it beneficial personally and as a family to give back to a community that has allowed us to be successful in our business.”

~ Lauren Stanley, Managing Partner, Big’z Burger Joint & Sip

Our study also showed that, if developing a relationship with the business is key to landing the initial contribution, **nurturing** that relationship is what keeps that support coming year after year. The top reasons businesses give for repeat contributions are:

- “We hear about their work throughout the year, not just when they want something”
- “We feel our past participation made a real impact”
- “They did what they promised”
- “We are committed partners of the organization”

What criteria determines REPEAT contributions? Please select your top THREE criteria and rank them in order of importance, with 1 being the most important.



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During our presentation at the AFP San Antonio Conference, we asked the business panelists what they expect from their contributions.

The answers don't necessarily include shiny plaques, or costly thank-you gifts.

Our panelists – and the survey participants – talked about a simple understanding and acknowledgement of the services provided. Businesses who buy into your mission and support your efforts hope you'll do the same by supporting their efforts as well. "It's nice when an organization we supported turned around and recommended our business when the opportunity came up," said Tracy Tylman of The Tylman Team. A personal touch goes a long way toward building on that initial investment. "Send thank you notes, birthday cards, anniversary cards," said Ryan Berg of Lee Michaels Fine Jewelry. "That personal connection really makes a difference."

When asked what defines a successful partnership, business owners know what they need:

- Mutual respect & understanding
- Becoming personally involved in the organization's mission
- Being each other's champions
- Fostering the relationship throughout the year
- Following up on results
- Ensuring it's a win-win relationship for the business and the nonprofit

The small-or-medium-sized business owner may not have a million dollars to give today, but cultivating that relationship may mean a larger gift down the road. It may lead the business to further your cause by widening the circle for you through introductions to others.

"Relationships lead to other, fruitful connections that build on themselves," said Tracy Tylman. Stacy Seaborn from the Sheraton Gunter Hotel echoes Tylman's words. "The smaller an organization, the more important the personal outreach and the personal relationship."

In conclusion

Our team at KMAC & Associates believes very strongly that cultivating personal relationships will help nonprofit organizations strengthen their base of support. Similarly, businesses that focus their charitable giving on missions that speak to them on a personal level find more satisfaction and a closer connection to the recipients of their contributions.

Two of the most common challenges facing nonprofit organizations:

- Getting their Board more involved in relationship-building
- Increasing their organization's community awareness

So, ask yourself, **"Who Cares?"**

Who are the people who care about your mission?

Who cares enough about your mission to be an evangelist for it? To sing its praises? To introduce you to their like-minded colleagues, friends, employees? To widen that circle of influence?

Now, ask yourself, **"What is your relationship with those people?"**

As you consider the answer, consider that it may be time for a shift in paradigm.

It may be a time to create a "new normal" for your organization, and move forward with a new passion for personal relationships.

And The Winners Are...

Each business who participated in our survey was entered into a drawing. Two entries were chosen to receive a \$250 donation to the charity of their choice in their names. The businesses selected are:

[Madeline Slay, Madeline Anz Slay Architecture, PLLC](#) -

Benefiting [St. PJ's \(St. Peter – St. Joseph Children's Home\)](#)

[Teryn Grater, ATKG LLP](#)

Benefiting [Spina Bifida Association of Texas](#)

Thank you to Madeline, Teryn and all of the businesses who participated in the survey. Nonprofits, let's step up and take note of what they shared with us!