

# Donation FRUSTRATION!!!

We've all been there... Someone you have never met from an organization you have never heard of asks you for a donation item to support their cause. That ask is followed up by another, and another and yet another... Businesses want to be supportive, but where does it end? Where do you draw the line? How do you decide what to donate? How do you decide who to donate to? Hopefully, this brief synopsis will help you tackle one of those little business annoyances we all deal with.



**Set a policy-** Does your business or organization have a donation policy covering who you donate to and what you give? Is your staff aware of this policy? Setting some standard rules concerning what you donate, who you donate to and what your expectations are is important for consistency and your sanity.

**Develop priorities-** You typically can't give things away to everyone that walks through your door asking for a hand out. Are the people asking a customer? Does the organization fit your market niche? Will they provide obvious business exposure? Will items be at an event where your target market is present? Will your donation help further your goals? Put together the ideal type of organization you would donate to, and make your employees aware of your decision process.

**What to give-** Gift certificates are the most common gifts, simply because they require someone to visit your business or organization to use them. Plus, only about 80% of all gift certificates are redeemed, and those redeeming gift certificates typically spend an average of 20% over the value of the certificate. Those numbers improve when providing gift CARDS as opposed to certificates. Remember to contact suppliers, parent companies and partners to secure donation gifts. Partnering with a supplier sometimes enables you to donate great stuff for little or no cost. DO NOT donate damaged or substandard items as it can damage your business image. Also, consider giving items as "leads" to inform the public of categories of items they may not be aware you carry. Cash donations are popular, but not always in a businesses best interest. Although, when you work with your accountant (*like Pool & Wright*), sometimes a well placed donation can be to your advantage during tax season.

**What do you get out of it?-** Is this an organization that supports your business or customers? Will your business receive some sort of recognition for participation? Do you get some sort of data from participants to target as customers? Philanthropy is good, but it's not a bad thing to ask "what's in it for me?" If people are asking your support, it's OK to ask that they reciprocate.

**Record your gifts-** Have a defined policy that allows for the collection of receipts for later use. Train your staff to accept receipts as part of the gift giving process. A little policy work and training can save management A LOT of time working with individuals asking for donations.

Any suggestions you have that we didn't cover here? Let me know what you think, and if you have any good suggestions or policies concerning donations please share them!

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