

10 Challenges Businesses Experience Working with Nonprofits

1. Nonprofits are often not receptive to engaging in creative programs with higher levels of business involvement – beyond just asking for checks. – *Niki Leodankis, Kimpton Hotels*
2. Many nonprofits can't succinctly describe what they do - their mission or message. . They can't get to the point and spend too much time describing their program models. Many don't follow the submission instructions for grant applications. – *Amy Hall, Eileen Fisher*
3. Nonprofits often don't give us back any information on the impact of the support we provided. –*Gregor Barnum, Seventh Generation*
4. Many nonprofits are risk-averse. They are playing not to lose rather than playing to win. Such risk-aversion has a negative impact on innovation. –*John Sage, Pura Vida Coffee*
5. There can be profound cultural difference between nonprofits and businesses in how work is approached. Nonprofits sometimes have trouble understanding business demands. –*Seth Goldman, Honest Tea*
6. Timing and organizational culture difference can be challenging. The business focus on business often is hard for nonprofits to understand as is the fast pace of business and the push to meet quotas. Also, both partners may have stereotypical beliefs about each other which can get in the way. –*Mary T'Chach, AVEDA*
7. Many nonprofits are not savvy about marketing their partnership with a business to their supporters and the community at large. While one business motivation to engage in relationships with nonprofits is to enhance their visibility and marketing efforts, nonprofit partnerships don't necessarily lead to a direct sales opportunity. –*Seth Goldman, Honest Tea*
8. Nonprofits may not have the patience required to build the relationship with a business. You need to start slow. –*Rodney North, Equal Exchange*
9. Getting nonprofits to understand where the company is coming from and differing definitions of deadlines. – *Clayton Adams, State Farm*
10. So few nonprofits take inventory of their power. For example, their supporter networks and communication tools are one nonprofit asset of value to businesses. Mentioning your business in their newsletter, on their website, a thank you at a board meeting or bring their board to your restaurant for a meeting can all be ways to help you get increased exposure. –*Jessica Newman, Rock Bottom Foundation*

And...don't forget to say thank you to your business partners! –*Leslie Sheridan, The Added Edge*

*From interviews conducted by Susan Hyatt for her book,
GOOD Strategy: How Smart Companies Support the Community and Grow Their Business*

