



CORPORATE VOICES
for **WORKING FAMILIES**

10 Tips

To Engage Business in Afterschool



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- **Make the Business Case for Afterschool**
- **Have Clear Vision, Goals and Strategies**
- **Know Exactly What to Ask For**
- **Understand Business Culture and Avoid Jargon**
- **Find the Right Champions**
- **Get Business Peers to Help Recruit Others**
- **Measure and Report on Results**
- **Keep in Touch and Keep it Brief**
- **Encourage Businesses to Draw from Multiple Resources**

Making the Business Case

There are many businesses out there that want to help their employees, but their primary goal is profit. You have to help the business understand that providing afterschool will help their bottom line. Unless the business benefits, there is no compelling reason for a business to be involved. It is important that you do your research, present facts to the business and communicate those facts in a way that addresses the business needs. The good news is that there are many reasons why business should help, below are some examples:

Why Afterschool Programs?

- Supports the needs of current workforce's child care needs
- Workers experience "after school stress"
- Helps develop the future workforce
- Good investment in our economic future

Supports the needs of the current work force

- Gap between child's school week and parent's work week can be as many as 25 hours.
- Nationwide, between 2 - 6 million children under the age of 13 regularly care for themselves.
- A LifeCare, Inc. poll showed that 47% of employees say they have no before- or after school plan in place for children.

Workers experience afterschool stress

- Recent polling shows that 87% of working mothers worry about children's safety after school.
- Connection between high employee stress due to after school concerns and decreased productivity and increased rates of absenteeism.
- Estimated that 80% of employees with children miss work because of child care problems.

Helps develop the future work force

- Supports core academic subjects
- Cultivates a range of 21st century essential skills
- Provides hands-on learning opportunities
- Develops leadership skills and a sense of citizenship
- Strengthens positive relationships with peers, adults, and the community
- Provides opportunity for career exploration and vocational education

Have Clear Vision, Goals, and Strategies

Businesses' success depends on their ability to reach clearly identified goals with profitable results. Framing your request in language business uses and understands will increase attention to and support for your efforts.

It is important to remember:

1. To explain the purpose of your efforts,
2. To articulate your long term view of what will result;
3. To explain the way you intend to accomplish your goals, and
4. To indicate factors of success.

By doing this you are communicating to a business like another business would. They will understand your 'business plan' better. When you act like a business in presenting your goals and plans, businesses are better able to see how their involvement helps accomplish the goals. As a result, you are more likely to succeed in recruiting these businesses as partners.

Know Exactly What to Ask For

In order to obtain business involvement with afterschool, it is not only vital to understand why afterschool matters to business, but to know how a business can best contribute. Asking for the wrong thing can lead to disappointment or create a missed opportunity. A business can contribute by providing:

1. financial support,
2. developing workplace initiatives,
3. making in-kind contributions,
4. supporting public awareness activities,
5. engaging volunteers,
6. providing technical expertise,
7. serving as champions, and
8. influencing public policy.

Small commitments at first may lead to

deeper involvement over time. Don't be disappointed; be flexible.

It is important to make your requests specific. Some companies will be willing to write a blank check. However, most will want to contribute to a specific activity for which they can be given public recognition. The best way to find out what a business is willing to do, is to research extensively the businesses past community involvement.

Your research should look at:

1. Their pattern of giving.
2. Past recipients of their support.
3. Type of support preferred (volunteer time, money, expertise, etc.)
4. Company policy or stated commitment on philanthropy or community priorities.
5. Decision-makers and time constraints.

Examples of things you can ask for:

1. Specific activities to underwrite
 - a. Field trips
 - b. Sports activities
 - c. Art classes
 - d. Furnishings
2. Branded Components (Annual parents event; public awareness festival; contest or special event)
3. Computers
4. Donations of funds
5. Volunteers/Mentors
6. Workplace initiatives
7. Participation in public policy activities

Understand Business Culture and Avoid Jargon

Business has its own language and customs that you must learn, understand, and respond to. Present the business case using business language. By using their language you are more likely to get a commitment from business partners.

There is nothing more off-putting to a business leader than attending meetings full of afterschool jargon. When speaking to a business leader, be clear and concise, and try to avoid as much afterschool jargon as possible. Know their industry and use terms that a business uses, but only use terms that you fully understand to avoid a gaffe.

Business leaders do not know afterschool programs like they know their business, but will want to understand your net income, participant costs, internal accountability, cost/benefit ratio, or return on investment, etc.

You have to understand that businesses move quicker than most public and non-profit entities. Be ready to act if a decision comes quickly. That being said, businesses can be very cautious about making new commitments. This reluctance may be daunting to those unfamiliar with the business climate. This is where it pays to have done your research and homework, talking to key leaders who can help you understand a company's history and style of involvement. This process of developing trust can take a while, but don't give up.

Once a compelling argument is made and a connection to a business is proven, businesses move fast and they will expect you to keep up with them.

A business usually avoids controversy. Reassure business that afterschool as an issue is a widely supported from a variety of community sectors, law enforcement, education, parents, non parents and political leaders and especially other businesses. Afterschool enjoys strong community consensus, and the business can have confidence that it is a popular initiative.

Find the Right Champions

Finding the right champions is very important. This is where having done your research will pay off. You need to find support from people who have a passion and a reason to care about afterschool. The people you want to go after have to be at a high enough level in the business to influence the decision makers. Look for people who have a personal reason to care, maybe they have children or grandchildren who are in afterschool care, or a passion for music, fine arts, scouting or sports.

Support of the CEO of a company would be ideal, but one has to be realistic. It may not be possible to get their personal support. Recruiting a senior level person truly committed can be as influential and have access to the company decision-makers. There are executives with children in afterschool programs that can empathize with the struggle of finding quality afterschool care.

Emphasize to the champion that this is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. Remember Tip #1 - Make your business case.

Offer a site visit to a business donor/ champion. Invite the business leader to come meet the students and see what is going on at the site. Make sure the event is well planned and the business leaders are able to see what the program has to offer. Remember to have banners or posters with the logo of the business thanking them for their generous support to the program.

Get Business Peers to Help Recruit Others

Tip 6 is an extension of tip 5. Peer-to-peer recruitment is the most effective way to get the best champions involved. Everyone feels more comfortable joining an effort in which someone just like them has already participated and recommends to others. They may be able to recruit a trusted colleague, people that they know and with whom they enjoy working. Business peers already know how to speak the language. One will have greater success if one asks business people who are connected to the program in some way to help recruit others. They can also serve as advisors to you on determining which arguments or business cases might work best with their business sector colleagues.

Measure and Report Results

Businesses rely upon data to make decisions

and to survive as an enterprise. They will expect the same from your program. They will want to see that your program has accountability standards, internal controls and a data collection system. They will also want to see that the money or services that they are giving you will be used in the most efficient, effective way possible.

Many businesses use data to assess the impact of their investments. Prepare reports that give the data that demonstrates the community's need for afterschool programs. This rationale is necessary for the business to invest in your program. Track progress and provide it to your partners on regular intervals. It may lead the business to become an on-going contributor.

Keep In Touch and Keep It Brief

Less is best. The last thing a business leader wants is more paper on their desk or email in their inbox. If you inundate people with materials they are unlikely to read it. Keep your communications as brief as possible, try using a bulleted summary or a short issue brief. If they would like more information, give them a contact person for more details. No business leader is going to have the time to read lengthy documents. Try to communicate with the business leaders assistant to find out their preferred form of communication. It can never hurt to ask what is best for them.

Encourage Businesses to Draw from Multiple Resources

Community leaders can work proactively with businesses to broaden their awareness of all the ways businesses can help and how different kinds of involvement might help achieve multiple business goals. Effective leaders can often help larger businesses consider how they might leverage multiple internal resources to support their community investments. Encouraging larger businesses to link and/or coordinate programs and funds from their employee benefits, charitable giving, and community relations departments with funding from a corporate foundation helps businesses gain cost efficiencies and focus more resources on their community investment goals.

2. On written materials, letterhead, etc.
3. On the website
4. In the Newsletter
5. Annual Reports
6. Awards
7. Public Awareness events
8. Media events, press releases

Publicly Recognize Business Contributions

This last tip is very important, businesses like to be recognized for doing the right thing. Most businesses want a positive public image in the communities in which they are operating. It supports their overall financial success and relations with their workforce. Being recognized with awards, media attention, and public acknowledgements can often lead to an even deeper level of involvement.

There are many ways to recognize a business, some example are:

1. Banners supporting the business at the site

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