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Latest news from CAF

Company agenda or community benefit?

When it comes to their community investment policies, companies are complex, opaque and difficult to penetrate according to the latest research commissioned by CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) from the SMART Company,

The research, *Getting engaged: Achieving closer working relationships between companies and local communities* outlines the barriers, benefits and solutions to better corporate community investment.

Launched this week at the CAF Corporates and Communities Conference ahead of National Giving Week, the report is based on a series of interviews with community leaders from across the UK.

According to the research, company donations, sponsorship and gifts-in-kind are an important source of support for voluntary and community organisations. Yet despite its importance, there is a gulf of misunderstanding and cynicism between the sectors.

The community sector doubts the motivations of companies that become involved in local community issues, believing that such activities are simply a 'fig leaf for companies to hide behind'. Rather than supporting 'harder' issues, such as drugs, young offenders or asylum seekers, community leaders think that corporates are most interested in short-term, 'softer' funding opportunities that will provide them with positive media coverage.

Community leaders also believe that companies fail to communicate the type and level of CCI they offer, leaving them heavily dependent on personal contacts to find out what support opportunities are available.

However, community leaders also acknowledge that they don't always present themselves in the best light, treating business as 'the enemy' and producing substandard business plans which fail to articulate their vision and purpose.

Despite a lack of understanding between the company and voluntary sectors, community leaders are generally positive about corporate involvement. And far from feeling like 'inefficient money grabbers', the community sector believes it has a lot to offer companies in terms of specialist knowledge on diversity, community issues and best practice in return for business expertise.

Getting engaged: Achieving closer working relationships between companies and local communities is launched ahead of National Giving Week (18 - 24 October 2004) led by CAF, which aims to encourage people and businesses to make regular, tax-efficient donations to the causes they care about.

To obtain a copy of the research email: mgraley@cafonline.org or call Tel: 01732 520 125.