



## Align Your Giving & Create Strategic Partnerships

By Amy Kauffman

I love to see pictures of peaceful newborns all snuggled up in a blanket. It's just like it should be.

When my daughter was just a few days old I was having a really hard time getting her to sleep. She was fairly content for the first few hours of being awake, but her eyes were huge and it looked as if they couldn't close. She looked like she wanted to sleep, but after six hours of not sleeping, I knew something wasn't right!

Being a first time mom I was still in the clueless clan about child rearing so I decided to take her to my parents house to see if they could help.

My mom whisked her off as soon as I got there to try and get her to sleep while my dad and I brainstormed possible causes.

His first question to me was, "how much caffeine did you have today?"

"Hmm, I just had black tea. Oh, regular black tea. Oh, regular black tea is caffeinated. Oh boy, yep that was it."

I had never noticed the effects of caffeine on my body, but I had just birthed a sensitive little body and she wasn't faring so well with the stimulant.

Caffeine didn't align with my newborn. It confused her body. She was tired, and wanted to sleep, but couldn't.

Giving to charitable causes that don't align with your brand is like giving a newborn caffeine. To put it plainly, it just doesn't make sense. You must align your community engagement with your company purpose.

It's important to align your brand with organizations (nonprofits, community causes, etc) that make sense. The partnership should provide mutual benefit. Both entities should be able to announce their partnership on social media and have everyone who reads about it say, "that makes total sense why they would partner!"



One of my favorite examples of this is with the brand, Red Duck Foods. (Shameless plug - they make all kinds of amazing organic sauces and condiments! Check out [redduckfoods.com](http://redduckfoods.com).)

I had a call with Red Duck Foods several months back. They were giving to everyone and anyone with no strategy behind their giving.

The first thing they needed was have a team meeting and decide what categories of giving made sense for them to give to based on their brand and purpose.

The team met together and had a great brainstorm session.

Two weeks later I had another call with them to hear about their meeting. In a short time of brainstorming it became apparent based on their brand and purpose that they cared about zero food waste efforts. That's what they wanted to give to. That and only that. Now, that's still a broad category when you think about it, but for the first time they had very clear parameters around their giving.

They felt relieved and excited to live out these newly articulated values!

About 50% of the companies that I talk with daily have giving focuses/priorities and the other 50% are those who are still giving to every Tom, Dick and Harry who asks them.

If you have giving priorities mapped out already - well done. I will still challenge you to run them up against your company purpose (Refer to the PDF Clarify Your Company's Purpose) and make absolutely sure they align with each other. If you find one of them doesn't align, talk to your leadership about it. See if you can tweak it to make sense with your brand, or eliminate it altogether.

If you're still running your charitable giving pretty ad hoc, let's equip you to create giving priorities and align your giving with your purpose.

All of our application forms at Givily are white labeled to look and feel like our clients and include a question on page 1 to be sure the applicant aligns with the giving priorities of the given client.

By clarifying your giving priorities and telling donation seekers who your brand desire to partner with, this saves you AND THEM time.

We've got an archaic notion that we're mean if we filter anyone out at the beginning. Instead, we've wasted people's time that we have no intention of supporting. How kind is that?

When I was in the nonprofit industry, I talked to several others in the field who LOVE to show up to a brand and know IF they give, WHAT they give, and WHO they like to give to. If they don't fit the bill or need what they offer, they'll ask someone else. That simple. It's not mean.



Make no mistake - people love alignment, even if they get cut out of the pie! Because (drum roll please) it makes sense!

If you don't have giving priorities, it's time to get some. It's that straightforward.

Here are some live examples some of our clients are using:

- Children
- Literacy
- Culture & the arts
- Environment
- Health & Wellness
- Women's organizations
- Running
- Homeless
- Mentoring

Based on the purpose of your company, what might some aligned giving categories be? Take 5 minutes and brainstorm who you think your company should be giving to.

Brainstorm a list of giving priorities here:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Next, set up a group meeting with others who you need buy-in from, or create a google doc where everyone can throw their best ideas in it. Put a deadline on the doc and make it in the next 48 hours. You need 2 minutes in a google doc from any relevant party on this. Then make some decisions. You don't need to trim your giving priorities back to three. You can have five, but you probably shouldn't have 10.

What did you decide are your top giving priorities:

---

---

---

---

---



Okay, so now that you've got your giving priorities aligned, it's time to use them as a filter. Put these giving priorities on your website, on your hard copy donation request submission form, or the footer of your email. Put them anywhere and everywhere someone is trying to ask for something. It won't filter out everyone, but it's a grand start. If nothing else, you'll have good recourse to deny someone if your giving priorities are clearly detailed out to the public.

At this juncture I think it's important to spend time talking about philosophies of giving. I've heard a lot of stories and seen a lot of scenarios, and I believe that everything falls into one of the following three categories:

Giving to give  
Giving to get  
Giving that's mutually beneficial

Let's define each of these categories.

Giving to **give** looks like a lot of emails, asks, yeses, warm fuzzies, ad hoc and harried staff. Giving to give lacks intention, brand awareness and a focus on using donation as a powerful marketing strategy. I see a lot of this. There is a lot of heart used here.

Giving to **get** is when a company donates to a cause simply because of what they can get in return such as a promotion or brand awareness. Other than the fact they are donating products, they are self-focused. The outside looks good, and the head is used for strategizing the advantages for the company, but it lacks heart; therefore, it lacks authenticity. It's a hypocritical give.

Mutual beneficial giving, on the other hand, is profitable for both sides. It benefits the organization monetarily (or with product), and helps them to promote their event, raise funds, or provide a better attendee experience which reflects well on their brand.

For the company, the benefits are increased brand awareness and built-in audiences to sample and experience a product. Those benefits are unique to each entity.

Here's what's not unique to each entity, but could be shared in a great partnerships. This is a short list to get your wheels turning.

Cross promotion - Events, Panels, Recorded clips on social media  
Business referrals  
Share/expand audience  
Resource sharing - Co-sponsorships, Space  
Lend credibility  
Collaboration



If we go back to our original definition of alignment, you will remember that it refers to a position of alliance, being a union of two organizations for mutual benefit.

Align with organizations that make sense to your brand and figure out how to partner in a way that provides mutual benefit.

Please know, as the company, you're going to need to lead this process. This is important to realize. It's not that a community organization is unwilling, it's that they are less knowledgeable, less staffed, less tech savvy, less idea savvy in general. You'll have to brainstorm a little together to build rapport and understand an organization's true needs. Narrow down a few good things that would be mutually beneficial and write out an implementation plan. There's a bit of handholding that happens here, but don't get confused. It's not the organization digging their heels in, it's a lack of knowledge and business savvy. Use this as an opportunity to educate. It will benefit an organization tremendously in the long run.

### **STRATEGIZE PARTNERSHIPS**

My daughter is three and my nephew is four. While navigating play together one day, they both wanted to play Mama and baby cheetah (you know how those made up games go). The only issue was that they both wanted to be the baby cheetah. My nephew, having a bit of cognitive advantage on my daughter due to age, asked her if she wanted to be in charge. She, of course, stated that she did! "Mama cheetahs get to be in charge." Settled. My daughter has been mama cheetah ever since and my nephew has been the baby cheetah.

Although a story of kids playing, they figured out how to create a strategic partnership that got them both what they ultimately wanted.

That's exactly what we're looking to create in strategic partnerships. We want to align with organizations that resonate with our brand's purpose and once we've found those organizations, there's a lot more opportunity for partnering than just sending along a check or product.

The partnerships we're creating in our community should be full of great cross-promotional audiences and opportunities. Both the brand of the company and the brand of the organization should benefit from their respective audiences knowing the partnership is happening. What does that look like? Come up with your own ideas!

Write a list of your ideas here:

---

---

---



There are SO many partnership opportunities!

I believe there are heaps of benefits in creating strategic partnerships in your community, or at least with organizations that align with your brand and mission, whether they are in your backyard or not.

What does partnering do for your brand? Strategic partnerships increase visibility. This is powerful. With one strategic partnership you can gain access to thousands more potential customers. Keep this in mind as we work through some of the rest of the outcomes for strategic partnerships.

Strategic partnerships strengthen each brand's value proposition. Not only are you standing on your position, but now you've got someone else standing strong on your position too. And visa versa. That's what partnering does. It's as if you're an air traffic controller waving all the traffic to look at that other brand and purpose - Buy in! Like them! Love them! They're great! We like them and trust them and you should too! And their air traffic controllers doing the same thing for you. Buy in! Like them! Love them! They're great! We like them and trust them and you should too!

Not only is someone pointing at you and giving the thumbs up (and you're doing the same in return), but strategic partnerships increase exposure to your respective values. They don't just talk about what you do, but about why you do it. And you do the same for the organization you're supporting.

If done well, strategic partnerships provide opportunities to create and offer 'exclusive' products for each other's respective audiences. There are countless opportunities here - and your customers will LOVE them!

Let's not forget the anticipated revenue boost that will come from the increase in visibility and props by another brand through a strategic partnership. The only limit to this is the limit to your creativity and implementation of strategic partnering. Employee engagement increases, company culture improves and more of the people that make your brand work get inspired!

I've only touched the tip of the iceberg on the potential for greatness from strategic partnerships, but my goal was more to get the wheels turning and inspire you to drum up your own goodness rather than spoon feeding you the exact right thing to do with an organization now that you know who aligns with your brand and who you should be partnering with.

If nothing else, have a brainstorming conversation with the organization you're supporting about wanting it to be mutually beneficial and see where it goes. Decide to take at least one point of action to support the other's brand and see how it goes. This is a great starting block.

Before we leave this conversation on strategic partnerships I think it's a good idea for you to get a head start.



Take five minutes right now and have a personal brainstorm session. Based on the purpose of your company and the aligned giving categories, what might some strategic partnerships be in the community? Be specific!

After you have a list of those brand strategic partnerships, write down a list of things that would help your brand if another organization/brand did them. Be specific with this too.

Cheers!

**Amy Kauffman**



Amy Kauffman is the Founder of Givily.

[Givily](#) is great at is making your charitable work more simple...streamlined, trackable, and reportable!

If a better charitable giving management system piques your interest, or you're interested in having Amy consult with you on determining your best impact and measurement, email her at [amy@givily.com](mailto:amy@givily.com).

