

9. Ten ideas on building relationships with your business supporters

[CoOp research on youth organizations and SMEs cooperation](#) showed that SMEs owners are really interested in developing a long-lasting relationship with the NGOs they support. One of the most important and common areas that came out of the interviews and focus groups conducted in the five countries with SMEs owners and representatives was related to the issue of trust. Thus, in four countries (Ireland, Norway, Poland and Romania), the SMEs owners or representatives insisted that the youth organizations should make sure they spend the necessary time on developing a trustworthy relationship with the enterprises, and that they present to the companies a trustworthy cause or project.

Ten ideas for donor cultivation

Below you can find **10 ideas you could use to build your organization's relationship with the local companies**, current or future supporters of your programs and activities. When we made the list with the activities, we thought these activities being dedicated to a specific person you are in contact from the company, such as the CEO, the SME owner or the CSR/Marketing person, as relationships are built by people with people.

Send **highly personalized emails** about your ongoing activities and recent results, and also take the opportunity to ask about their activities; if the relationship is close enough, you could also have a call to update each other. These emails will keep them informed about the organization's progress, and reminded them about the good deed they did.

Invite them to **your networking events**: they might be interested to network with other company-donors and business partners you have and make them their partners. Invite them to the networking events that make sense for the marketing and development objectives of the company.

Invite them to be part **of a task force to address a community problem or an organizing committee for an event or a campaign**: use their expertise, make their work relevant and meaningful for your work, and do not waste their time. This will help them in being more connected to the needs and challenges your organization addresses in the community, and they will feel that they are part of the solution and that they can make a difference with their expertise.

Invite them to **deliver speeches or give workshops for the young people you serve**, and talk about the topics they are experts in. For instance, they could tell the story of their professional success that could motivate the young people you work with. This will make them emotionally connected to your cause, feeling that their personal story can be easily connected to your cause.

Send them **personalized greetings on birthdays, holidays, or important events of their companies**. For instance, you could send a short video wishing him/her the best, a video made by some young people who were helped thanks to his/her generosity.

Publish the company's or their names and pictures in the organization's recognition materials (annual reports, websites, newsletters, etc.). Find the channels that are more relevant for the marketing objectives of the company.

Find nice **opportunities to give them small gifts**, such as the organization's merchandise products or products made by children/young people you serve, that will serve as reminders of their involvement in your cause, increasing their loyalty.

Invite them **to your annual gala or the annual event** of the organization, but make sure the event is meaningful for them through the people that attend the event, but also through the role you give them in the event or through the award/recognition you show them during the event.

Ask them to become **mentors of young people** you support through your programs. This will give them the opportunity to learn more about the needs your organization addresses, and to also connect emotionally to your cause.

Ask for an advice by email or in a face to face meeting. For sure, you encounter many problems that an expert like a CEO, SME owner or a marketing/CSR person will be able to solve for you. Do not waste their time, give them relevant "puzzles" that only they could solve for you and show them how their solutions, their advice helped the people you serve and the organization. This will help them feel that their expertise is appreciated and useful outside of their regular job, and it will help them find more about your way of operating and about your organization's values.

This tool was developed based on the CoOp project partners' experience in working with companies and getting their support for programs dedicated to youth.