

Good business
A marketplace for companies and nonprofit organizations
Handbook

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1 The marketplace

The scene: an event venue in the middle of town. Representatives of nonprofit organizations and business enterprises are gathered, waiting expectantly.

After a few words of welcome, the organizer of the event strikes a gong to signal that negotiations regarding charitable initiatives can begin.

Providers and customers rush into the marketplace venue and make their way to the trading areas marked “getting started,” “concept/advice” and “networking.” Representatives of companies and nonprofits start their conversations. The first agreements are finalized: Companies donate their skills, employee hours and/or material resources to help their partners achieve their charitable objectives. Some of these nonprofits return the favor by offering companies their assistance.

Several providers and customers have not yet found suitable partners. Now the intermediaries step in and help bring participants together for their mutual benefit. If they are unsuccessful, the moderator calls out offers from either side in another attempt to establish connections between the two sides.

The trading session is nearing its end. The moderator announces that it is time for participants to wrap up their negotiations.

After an hour and a half the gong sounds again, signaling that trading is over. An announcement is made indicating the number and monetary value of the charitable projects that have been negotiated.

The participants take a break to relax and have a snack. Some of them are still busy working out a “post-trading” deal and arranging to cooperate on additional projects.

Finally, they all file out of the venue, euphoric and inspired. As they leave the hall, their comments make it clear that their expectations have been exceeded. For many of these companies and nonprofit organizations, the groundwork for a possible long-term partnership has now been laid. Certainly all of the participants are planning to return next year!

2 How is a marketplace organized on site?

First: Someone, the **initiator**, comes up with the **idea** that a “good business” marketplace would be a useful tool for encouraging partnerships between companies and nonprofits.

Second: The initiator looks for other **interested parties**.

Third: All interested parties are invited to a meeting, resulting in the establishment of an **initiative committee** that approves the plan to hold a marketplace.

Fourth: Out of the ranks of the initiative committee the **organizer committee** is formed, which assumes responsibility for the organization and financing of the marketplace. It sets the goal for the marketplace and establishes its framework, as well as ensuring that it has the necessary budget.

Fifth: The organizer committee selects from its ranks an **organization group** (or a “hands-on organizer”), which undertakes all necessary preparation, runs the marketplace and conducts a follow-up when it is finished.

2.1 *The initiative committee*

The following institutions and/or individuals should definitely be part of the initiative committee:

- o An institution with mediation skills and solid knowledge of the community and of important players in the nonprofit and business sectors.
- o Two to three business enterprises – ideally companies capable of having a signal effect on their peers – from a variety of industries and of different sizes or types. The more varied the participating companies, the broader the effect within the business community.
- o Two to three institutions or organizations (nonprofits, umbrella associations, community offices for civic engagement, and so on) with access to the target nonprofit sectors (social services, education, culture, the environment, sports, immigrants, etc.) and to important multipliers within the community.

2.2 **Organizer committee**

The organizer committee assumes the (financial) risks, assists the organization group by opening doors and represents the marketplace project vis-à-vis the public.

It is particularly important to make sure that the **organizer committee** includes several deeply committed companies as well as competent and involved individuals with substantial decision-making authority (who do not constantly need to obtain approval from someone else).

2.3 *Organization group*

The **organization group** is responsible for implementing the project at the operational level. It should be made up of individuals who have the necessary skills and are able to invest the time required. The head of the project should be an experienced representative of an intermediary agency or similar institution, since such “infrastructure institutions of civil society” play a key role in local communities and generally have the necessary organizational experience gained by organizing volunteer days or similar projects.

3 Supporting players

Potential supporting players for the marketplace:

Individuals who are active on a volunteer basis, for example as part of a project group working on the marketplace event. They can contribute their skills as well as their private and professional networks to this effort.

Companies that are already involved in social initiatives and want to encourage other companies to become involved as well. They can mobilize their business contacts and provide manpower, infrastructure and perhaps also financial resources.

Nonprofits – institutions or associations – that are interested in developing an opportunity structure for civic engagement partnerships in the region. Their contributions may include their networks, media contacts, public relations resources, premises, technology and infrastructure, as well as manpower.

Public entities – the community, but also the state – can provide financial support for (first-time) marketplace initiatives within their catchment areas, and they can provide resources ranging from infrastructure (premises) and contacts to multipliers and manpower (for example through a community office of civic engagement).

Foundations that focus on civil society and its development can provide support for the launch phase or help cover the special expenditures the initial implementation of a marketplace entails.

3.1 *Ambassadors*

Ambassadors for the “Good business” marketplace help establish contact to potential co-organizers, sponsors and/or participants in the marketplace.

Particularly well suited to this role are individuals who are established in the community, the business world or the world of foundations and have an extensive network of contacts.

Ambassadors need to have a thorough understanding of the marketplace idea and must be willing to offer their name to promote it. For example, they might provide a list of individuals or organizations to write to, using their name. They might sign a letter that has been prepared for them. Or they might invite a representative of the initiative or organizer committee to give a presentation to an interested network, association or organization (such as the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) or the Marketing Club).

3.2 ***First Ambassador or patron***

A prominent individual (perhaps the mayor, the president of the IHK or the chairman of the board of the largest company in the area) might take on the role of “**First Ambassador**” or **patron** of the marketplace, offering his name and reputation to promote the idea of the marketplace and to underscore the legitimacy of this initiative.

4 Key players in the marketplace

4.1 Providers

Providers might include, in particular, companies that

- already have experience in the area of civic engagement and are interested in expanding their involvement;
- are interested in civic engagement and are looking for relevant opportunities, and that see the marketplace as an opportunity to get their bearings and gather new ideas; or
- are represented at the site of the marketplace and want to become involved in this particular region.

4.2 Customers

On the **customer side**, participants might include, in particular, nonprofit organizations that

- are able to approach companies with self-confidence and deal with them on an equal footing;
- are experienced in recruiting volunteers; perhaps they even have prior experience with civic engagement involving private industry;
- can offer a variety of nonprofit activities for companies and/or their employees that can be undertaken with relatively little time and/or expense;
- are interested in developing a long-term civic-engagement partnership with a company and can propose specific tasks or projects; they must also have the patience to be content with individual, self-contained projects – in other words, they need to be capable of taking what is offered without insisting on more;
- are involved in finding solutions to the specific problems facing the community;
- understand the fact that a donation of skills may be of greater strategic relevance than a financial donation.

4.3 Intermediaries

Intermediaries become involved when suppliers or customers are unable to find a partner or, despite fundamental interest on both sides, they are unable to agree on a specific arrangement. In order to fulfill their role, intermediaries need to have a good overview of the players participating in the marketplace. They also need to have a good sense of both the nonprofit scene and the corporate world. Intermediaries may focus on a certain trading area, position themselves at an arbitrary location in the marketplace and wait for someone to approach them, or specifically focus their efforts on participants who are clearly having difficulty moving forward.

4.4 Moderator

The moderator presides over the marketplace program, announces the interim results as agreements are reached, calls out requests for nonprofit or corporate collaborators and in other respects promotes the dynamic nature and success of the marketplace.

4.5 Reviewers and experts

Reviewers and experts examine the agreements that are reached and review and/or calculate their monetary value. They record the essential data that are to be included in an overall summary of the results of the marketplace and, as a neutral third party, sign a statement confirming the agreements that have been negotiated.

4.6 Special tasks

Additional participants are needed for service responsibilities as well as special tasks. Included under **service responsibilities** are audio engineering, copying tasks and documentation (for example, using a data projector to show data on the agreements that have been concluded). Depending on the situation and participants involved, **special tasks** might include **personnel to assist the blind** or **sign language interpreters** for the hearing impaired, as well as **VIP support staff** who are assigned during the event to assist prominent guests or individuals who play an important role for the marketplace organizers.

4.7 Marketplace leadership

Finally, one or two members of the organization group serve as the **marketplace leadership**. They are not involved in operational activities, but monitor the progress of the event and offer suggestions, as necessary, to the moderator or intermediaries. For example, the hectic nature of the marketplace may prevent those involved, including the intermediaries, from noticing that company representatives are having no success trying to connect with representatives of nonprofits in the “networking” area. The marketplace leadership monitors such situations and reaches out to the relevant staff to ensure that the problem is corrected.

5 Marketplace rules: Seven steps to a successful partnership

1. Go to the trading area that is appropriate for your needs as a provider or customer.
2. Communicate with the other participants. Determine whether the goods and/or services being sought and offered match, and identify possible win-win situations.

Move quickly to complete your conversation so that others will have a turn as well.

Specific name tags will help you distinguish corporate representatives offering goods and services from the representatives of nonprofits who are seeking such goods and services.

If you need help finding a partner, look for an intermediary, who will be wearing a special vest.

If your target partner is already engaged in negotiations, indicate your interest and set a time to talk.

3. Requests for financial support are not permitted at this marketplace. Please abide by this rule.
4. Exchange business cards with the people you have spoken with, so that you can contact each other after the event.
5. If you are able to arrive at an agreement, fill out the form that is available on the tables.
6. Take the completed and signed agreement to the table of the “review and confirmation team.” The team will review the agreement, estimate its monetary value and record the information you have provided; each partner will receive a copy.
7. Following the marketplace, provide additional detail about the agreements you have concluded and make the necessary arrangements within the subsequent three weeks.