## **CPA**

## Practice **Advisor**

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have.

This is a critical time of the year for many nonprofits and agencies who rely on year-end donations to survive. While donations are great – and many accounting firms will want to support their local nonprofits with donations – marketing professionals in CPA firms know the secret to a solid community relations program is to do more than just support a charity effort through a corporate contribution.

Sure, that helps the less fortunate or a social service agency, but what does it do for the accounting firm? Not much, other than a 6 pt-type mention in the agency's annual report.

Don't get me wrong. A "philanthropic" firm is great. I wish firms gave more money than they do give. Yet, it's still not enough.

A solid community relations program is built on more than money. In community relations, members of the firm actually participate in an agency's volunteer effort. For example, in addition to giving a check to Habitat for Humanity, the firm should schedule a day to go, as a group, to help build a house. This is roll-up-your-sleeves work, and while everyone may not be able to hammer or paint, there are lots of other jobs to do at the building site.

Most firms adopt one agency as its cause for the year in order to built a rapport and relationship with the agency. Other firms work with several nonprofits at the same time. It really doesn't matter, as long as the firm participates in the community itself.

What does this get a firm? An enhanced reputation. The firm will be known as a benevolent firm, willing to assist those less fortunate. The firm sheds its corporate image and becomes kindler, gentler ... and a friend to the community.

We're moving into a time of the year when those less fortunate need our help,

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