

## Cause Related Marketing and its Effects on Employees

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### ■ ABSTRACT

Research is lacking concerning the perspectives professional accountants and the administrative staffs working for a global firm strongly involved in social causes have concerning cause-related (CRM). This paper discusses internal customers' (employees) feelings towards cause-related marketing activities sponsored by their employer at an important accounting firm located in Puerto Rico. The results show that internal customers strongly favor the firms' involvement in cause-related activities and that such activities not only increases the public perception of the firm, but in addition, the way the firm is perceived as an employer, by both the business and non-business communities. The main driving force supporting internal customers responses appear to be an increased awareness of worthy causes throughout our society, as well as employees urge in making significant contributions to their surrounding environment or community of which they are also part of.

**Keywords:** cause-related marketing, social responsibility, internal customers, brand equity, customer skepticism.

### ■ RESUMEN

Lo que motivó el trabajo presentado en las páginas que siguen fue la ausencia de investigaciones relativas a las perspectivas de contadores profesionales y el grupo administrativo que labora en firmas globales sobre la involucración de su empleador en causas de naturaleza comunitaria -social. En su contenido pueden conocerse dichas perspectivas para el caso de una importante firma de contabilidad pública localizada en Puerto Rico. Entre los hallazgos destacables encontramos que los clientes internos (empleados) favorecen la involucración de su empleador en dichas actividades dado que la misma apoya favorablemente la imagen pública de la organización. Los participantes en el estudio indicaron que ellos, como grupo interno, sienten

orgullo en trabajar para una institución que aporta al bienestar de su comunidad. Esta respuesta parece estar motivada por la creciente concienciación de la sociedad de la existencia de causas que vale respaldar al igual que el deseo de los grupos internos de las corporaciones, y otras entidades privadas, en contribuir al bienestar de la comunidad a la que pertenecen.

**Palabras clave:** cause-related marketing, social responsibility, internal customers, customer's skepticism, brand-equity

## INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In his book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, Howard R. Bowen, the father of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), “set forth an initial definition of the social responsibility of the businessmen: According to Bowen, ‘CSR refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society’...” (Carroll, 1999). In his “seminal work”, Bowen expresses five basic reasons for a manager to engage in what “the public expects from a company beyond profit seeking goals”: (1) managers have an ethical duty to consider the broad social impacts of their decisions; (2) businesses are reservoirs of skill and energy for improving civic life; (3) corporations must use power in keeping with a broad social contract, or lose their legitimacy; (4) it is in the enlightened self interest of business to improve society; and (5) voluntary action may head off negative public attitudes and undesirable regulations (Carroll, 1999).

Of course, the social responsibility perspective has its critics, such as Milton Friedman. According to Friedman, these are the expectations of businesses and managers: business is most responsible when it efficiently makes money and not when it diverts its energy on social projects. In a free enterprise, the manager is an employee of the firm, therefore he or she is directly responsible to the owners of the business. A manager's sole objective should be financial return in order to make as much profit for the stockholders as possible. Thus, spending on social projects diverts business profits to other causes stockholders may not even favor. Engaging organizational resources for the social

good, according to Friedman, ends up incrementing the costs of doing business. Hence, when a business becomes socially responsible, costs must be passed directly to consumers, or absorbed by stockholders through smaller profit returns (Friedman, 1970). However, Peter Drucker "...took upon himself to propose a 'new meaning' of CRS (Corporate Social Responsibility) with the idea that profitability and responsibility were compatible notions and that business ought 'to convert' its social responsibilities into business opportunities" (Carroll, 1999). Keith Davis coincides with Drucker when he concludes that "Society wants business as well as all other major institutions to assume significant social responsibility. Social responsibility has become the hallmark of a matured, global civilization.... The business which vacillates or chooses not to enter the arena of social responsibility may be found that it gradually will sink into customer and public disfavor" (Keith Davis, 1973). Davis cites economist Paul Samuelson as saying: "a large corporation these days not only may engage in social responsibility, it had damn well better try to do so" (Keith Davis, 1973). But, in their study Xueming Luo and C.B. Bhattacharya (2006) warns "that firms are not always able to benefit from CRS actions...When firms are not innovative...CRS actually decreases their market returns...Managers should understand that a misalignment of CRS with internal factors can be detrimental and can lead to decrease market value....'doing good' has complicated implications...customer satisfaction plays an important mediating role in the relationship between CSR and firm market value (i.e., stock-based firm performance)...."

It seems obvious that both, advocates and critics of the social responsibility of business, have long lists of arguments for their perspectives. Since this paper deals with one of the issues associated with social responsibility within the business context, i.e., cause-related marketing (CRM), it might be appropriate to initially suggest that companies, in order to successfully develop a brand image as one that does care for a cause, its contributions must be consistent and believable. Sporadic "payoffs" will not do the trick (Simic Brønn and Bellu Vroni, 2001).

Varadarajan and Menon (1988), the firsts to write an academic article on the concept of cause-related marketing (CRM), defined it

as “... the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives”. Varadarajan and Menon also argue that “CRM can be view as a manifestation of the alignment of corporate philanthropy and enlightened business interest”. “It is a marketing program that strives to achieve two objectives - improve corporate performance and help worthy causes – by linking fund raising for the benefit of a cause to the purchase of the firm’s product and/or service”. However, Hoek and Gendall (2008) seem to suggest that “Unlike sponsorship, which is a not always linked directly to sales or other behavior, donations depend on the carrier brand’s sales; consequently, both the cause and the commercial partner have an incentive to maximize sales of the carrier brand.”

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), nonetheless, resembles marketing more closely than altruism, due to the fact that in the former both parties involved benefit from the exchange (Simcic Brønn and BelliuVrioni, 2001). Hence, CSR, most probably, should be integrated as part of the company’s mission as well as communicated to the stakeholders adequately. Customers that are aware of CSR and its benefits are less likely to be skeptical about the honesty of the organization in sponsoring social causes (Simcic Brønn & Belliu Vrioni, 2001). In order to support the argument concerning the positive relationship between companies that adopt corporate social responsibility as part of its mission and their results, the authors of this article include some examples that are briefly described below:

## **CENTEX HOMES**

This company is considered as the only builder to rank among the top 10 on Professional Builder’s “Giant 400” list each year since its inception in 1968. It has also been honored with the No. 1 ranking for three consecutive years on Fortune magazine’s list of “America’s Most Admired Companies” in the engineering and construction category. Already committed to environmental responsibility, Centex Homes desired a venue to more publicly position itself as committed to envi-

ronmental stewardship. The Point Group (firm dedicated to identifying and developing CRM opportunities) identified and recommended Centex Homes a national cause-related marketing relationship with The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of habitat and native lands. To date, Centex Homes is the only homebuilder to maintain a CRM relationship with The Nature Conservancy for which it donates approximately \$35 for every house it end up selling. In return, The Nature Conservancy developed multiple direct marketing programs stating Centex's support. This relationship resulted in donations of \$600,000 and \$700,000 for the first two years of the program. Both organizations have agreed to extend their relationship for an additional three years. In support of its commitment to The Nature Conservancy, Centex was bestowed with the highly prestigious Conservation Leadership Award. This award recognizes efforts developed and implemented by corporations that have shown leadership in, and dedication to conserving natural resources. In addition, independent customer survey results show positive customer response in excess of 96 percent for the Centex Homes program. Building upon this cause-related marketing initiative, Centex Homes has been able to demonstrate the importance of land, home and people within its organization in a very positive way (Jones, 2003).

### **McDONALDS AUSTRALIA**

In Australia, McDonalds sponsors an event, called the McHappy Day, which takes place in a specific day selected by the local company every year. During this specific event, several McDonalds restaurants are staffed by celebrities, and for each hamburger sold that day, \$1 ends-up being donated to the Ronald McDonald House and other children's charities. The results are used by McDonalds in their public relations campaigns to nullify any negative publicity generated against the company, as well as to present McDonalds, as a useful member of the surrounding community (Ping, 1993).

## **BENEFITS AND SKEPTICISM: TWO PERSPECTIVES ON CAUSE RELATED MARKETING (CRM)**

### **BENEFITS**

According to Steven Van Yoder, “nothing builds brand loyalty among today’s increasingly hard to please consumers like a company’s proven commitment to a worthy cause.” Thus, “CRM can become a cornerstone...” in an entity’s marketing plan. CRM activities should highlight an entity’s reputation within its target market and can positively differentiate an entity from competitors and provide an edge that delivers other tangible benefits, including: increased sales, visibility, customer loyalty, enhanced company image, and positive media coverage. For Van Yoder, CRM is a way to merge an entity’s profit center with its “passion center” and build a business that mirrors its personal values, beliefs and integrity. If the cause resonates with the target market, “the activities will generate tremendous goodwill, and media attention can be its side effect...” (Van Yoder, 2003).

Cause Related Marketing (CRM) can enhance financial, human, and social capital for both the corporation and the nonprofit organization if it is done correctly. It provides a way for businesses to tie corporate strategy with social responsibility, whereas nonprofits receive economic resources, managerial advice, technological and communications support and volunteers. The proven commitment to a worthy cause builds brand loyalty among today’s increasingly hard to please customers. CRM activities should highlight the firm’s reputation within the target market (Simcic Brønn & Belliu Vrioni, 2001).

Besides the above benefits, linkages with a non-profit can generate positive media coverage, build a reputation of compassion and caring for a company, enhance its integrity, enhance employees’ motivation and productivity, and create public preferences (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997). A favorable reputation may enable firms to charge premium prices, enhance their access to capital markets and attract better applicants and investors. Empirical evidence suggests that the greater a firm’s contribution to social welfare, the better its reputation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Reputation, closely related to brand awareness, aids in brand differentiation and ultimately helps a firm gain (through a good reputation) or lose (through a damaged reputation) competitive advantage (Kay, 1993).

## **SKEPTICISM**

“Skeptics are described as those who doubt what others are saying or doing but may be convinced by evidence or proof. Skepticism.... is a cognitive response which varies depending on the context and the content of the communication” (Mohr, Eroglu, and Ellen, 1998).

Today’s marketplace is characterized by homogenous products and services. To combat this homogeneity, many companies are resorting to the use of CRM as a communications tool. The point is to attract consumers wanting to make a difference in society through their purchasing. However, consumers are looking closely at companies who make claims regarding their involvement in social issues. There is a level of consumer skepticism that often makes consumers doubt what a firm is saying. This skepticism can lead consumers to reject claims made in CRM campaigns; it can affect their purchasing behavior, and could even lead to stronger actions (Simcic Brønn & Belliu Vrioni, 2001).

The expected changes in company’s image because of CRM campaigns appears to depend a great deal upon how customers perceive the reasons for a firm’s involvement in cause-related programs and the amount of help given to the cause through the firm’s involvement (Webb and Mohr, 1998). Mohr, et. al., suggest that consumers with a high level of skepticism towards an entity’s intentions will be less likely to respond positively to advertising campaigns as opposed to consumers with a low level of skepticism (Mohr, Eroglu, and Ellen, 1998).

Organizations that develop a long term commitment to a cause, though, can overcome customer skepticism towards CRM. If customers view the firm as being committed to a non-profit organization, and not just a “contributor for brand image,” then they will believe that the organization truly cares about their role as a socially responsible firm. Thus, CSR must be integrated as part of the company’s mission as well as communicated to the stakeholders. Customers that are aware of CSR and its benefits are less likely to be skeptical (Simcic Brønn & Belliu Vrioni, 2001).

In today’s competitive marketplace, however, altruistic intentions alone can no longer justify charitable giving. Sophisticated customers and stakeholders are looking at the behavior of the firm: are they

donating just to gain good will, or are they truly concerned about particular issues? Hoek and Gendell (2008) suggest, that “although strong brand-cause congruency may enhance consumers’ attitudes to the brand and cause, our research suggests it does little to affect consumers’ choice behavior...”

For their part, Simcic Brønn & Belliu Vrioni (2001) suggest that firms regard their current contributions not as outright donations, but as investments that are intended to benefit them as well as the recipients of such donations. Firms must search for partners with similar agendas and whose goals can be better served by partnering with their business.

### **SOME PUBLIC OPINIONS ON CAUSE RELATED MARKETING**

In 2008, a total of 1,071 adults living in the United States responded to an online survey known as the Cone Cause Evolution Study. Cone, in association with the Fuqua School of Business of Duke University, wanted to know whether or not corporate alignment with a social cause can impact actual consumer choice of brands and, thus, drive sales. One of its most interesting findings is that it “revealed that consumers continue to have high philanthropic expectations for companies struggling amid the current economic crisis. More than half (52 percent) of Americans feel companies should maintain their level of financial support of causes as well as financial support to nonprofit organizations...” (Cone, 2008). Other findings of the Cone study include:

- 85% of Americans say they have a more positive image of a product or company when it supports a cause they care about (results remains unchanged since 1993)
- 85% of respondents felt it is acceptable for companies to involve a cause in their marketing (compared to 66% in 1993)
- 79% of respondents said they would likely switch from one brand to another, when price and quality are about equal, if the other brand was associated with a good cause (compared to 66% in 1993)
- 38% of respondents had bought a product associated with a cause in the last 12 months (compared to 20% in 1993).

Another study dealing with the public's view of firms involved with cause-related marketing activities was conducted in Asia by Chéron (2008). He interviewed a total of 417 students from Sophia University in Japan and 312 residents in Singapore thru an online survey. To the question regarding as to "why do you think companies organize charity donation campaigns...?," respondents answered, as follows:

- "rewards sought for the firm itself"
- "rewards sought for firm, but partly for others"
- "rewards sought for others, but partly for the firm itself"
- "rewards sought solely for others"

In terms of the managerial implications of his research, Chéron suggests that "long term commitment to charity is needed by organizations in order to manage cause-related marketing better...."

A 2001 New Zealand (NZ) survey conducted by a group of marketing students at Victoria University (overseen by AC Nielsen and sponsored by Ford and Flannery Marketing consultants) looked at actual buying behavior of customers. They found out, among other things, that support for a 'cause' did influence consumer's buying behavior. People were not only prepared to change brands, buy they also actually did so. Of the total of total of 324 participants who were interviewed within the Wellington region (5.4% error rate), 41.7% responded that they had actually purchased a product or service from a company because of cause-related marketing practices held by such companies, and 84% of participants in the survey agreed that cause-related marketing did change their image of a brand. Of those products or services people had previously bought given a company's support of a particular cause, 3 out of 4 of the highest rated brands were those identified as supporting a local (NZ) cause, and such support had prevailed over a significant period of time (Kay, J. 2003).

As previously shown, even with the above positive responses from the public, there is still a level of skepticism among the public towards CRM, as the Chéron study seems to suggest. Two possible reasons for the public's skepticism towards the sponsorship of CRM by a company are: first, that some private organizations have not answered the following questions before engaging in such programs and activities:

What do we want from the partnership? (credibility, enhanced reputation, brand loyalty, etc.). What are the program objectives? How will the program be evaluated? (e.g., assigning firm employees to track the sales or promotions). And, the second reason for the skepticism comes from customer's distrust and cynicism toward advertising, which is a component of the marketing mix used in CRM campaigns (Rebollo, 2007). The fact is that some research results seem to suggest that total corporate philanthropy increases in small but significant ways following negative media. Stakeholders might interpret CRM incursions by firms having negative media exposure as part of the organization efforts to swindle their way out of difficult situation (Werbel and Wortman, 2000).

### **CRM AND THE INTERNAL CUSTOMER**

When involved with social programs and community related activities, employees of an organization stand as one of those customers (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000) that need support from employers because they could face skeptics of their contributions. Involvement in cause-related marketing activities is generally, considered a personal connection or sort of a bridging experience for an individual, and it is often conceptualized as of personal relevance (Grau and Garretson, 2007). It seems reasonable to expect that internal customers feel duly involved when they give their time and money to CRM activities since both require personal sacrifices. Otherwise, other possibilities are available for both or each resource(s). Jill Ford, from Forward Thinking, a research firm from New Zealand, thinks that CRM activities are a win-win situation for all parties involved. According to Ford and her group, some of the advantages of engaging in corporate volunteerism are the following:

**CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM: WIN/WIN FOR EVERYONE**

<b>Community Organizations</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Corporations</b>
Benefit from:	Benefit from:	Benefit from:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of employee volunteers</li> <li>• Professional skills of employee volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychic rewards</li> <li>• New experiences and people</li> <li>• Increased teamwork with colleagues</li> <li>• Improved management and technical skills</li> <li>• Pride in company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened workforce</li> <li>• Increased employee morale and loyalty</li> <li>• Increased employee job satisfaction</li> <li>• Enhanced reputation</li> <li>• Potential for increased sales</li> </ul>
Employees' experience		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources (equipment, training, people power)</li> <li>• Matching grants</li> </ul>		

Source - "Source: Promoting Public Causes, Inc.TM, www.publiccauses.com" (Please see: [http://www.sponsorshipinfo.co.nz/SITE\\_Default/SITE\\_crm\\_and\\_sponsorship/Cause\\_marketing\\_.asp](http://www.sponsorshipinfo.co.nz/SITE_Default/SITE_crm_and_sponsorship/Cause_marketing_.asp) for full source. Retrieved December, 29, 2008)

This article discusses this latter group perspective toward CRM. The authors wanted to know if internal customers (employees) are interested in committing themselves with social and community problems as part of their professional agenda, and whether or not they see appropriate having their employer engaged in such activities. Research is lacking concerning the perspectives of professional accountants and the administrative staff working for a global firm strongly involved in social causes.

Specifically, the authors wanted to obtain opinions from professional accountants and administrative staff toward engaging in behavior (their participation in CRM activities) that asked to provide their talents, time, and efforts without being paid for. Will they be motivated to do so? Will they be willing to cooperate? The authors also wanted the opinions of these internal customers toward their employer involvement in cause-related activities. Do they endorse such involvement? To look for answers to the questions above the authors conducted a descriptive survey among a group of professional accountants and administrative staff working for a major accounting firm in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## METHODOLOGY

All 100 professional and administrative staff of one of the “big four” accounting firms located in Puerto Rico, involved in cause related marketing activities for the last 17 years, were surveyed for their views toward their organization and their own participation in a number of activities that help non-profit institutions. This population was contacted by internal emails, thanks to the fact that one of the authors was a staff member of the organization. Attached to the electronic message was the survey instrument (questionnaire). It included 9 dichotomous (yes or no) and 4 open-ended questions and was tested for construct validation prior to its final design. Participants of the validation process, understood, and were able to answer all questions included without difficulty, thus allowing the authors to proceed with the questionnaire as designed. Besides the validation process, the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), which measures internal consistency reliability for questions with dichotomous choices, as those included in the questionnaire employed for the survey, was also calculated using SPSS computer software. The KR-20 coefficient obtained was .875 for the nine items that hold yes or no as answers. This result shows that the items included in the questionnaire, employed to measure internal customer’s opinion toward cause-related activities sponsored by their employer, are correlated, and thus measured the construct employed. As per the message, it explained the purpose of the research and asked for cooperation in filling the survey questionnaire. Members of the population were contacted twice during a four weeks period in order to encourage participation in the study. Responses of those who finally participated in the research were tabulated using SPSS computer software. The organization itself granted permission for the survey.

## FINDINGS

### SAMPLE PROFILE

Out of a total of 100 questionnaires sent, 39 (39 % response rate) were received through emails. As Table 1 shows, 62% of respondents were males, while 38% of respondents females. Most of those who

participated in this study worked for the auditing department (77%), while 15% of respondents did it for the tax area, and 8% of participants worked in administrative duties. Close to 80% of respondents indicated they have been involved with cause-related activities of their employer through the donation of time, money, or both.

**TABLE 1- GENDER OF RESPONDENTS**

Gender	Number of Respondents by Gender	Percentages of Respondents by Gender
Males	24	62%
Females	15	38%
Totals	39	100%

**RESPONDENT’S AWARENESS OF THEIR EMPLOYERS INVOLVEMENT IN CRM PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

A total of 36 (92%) respondents were aware of the firm sponsored cause-related marketing activities. This high percentage speaks favorably about the firm efforts in communicating to its internal customers the firm’s involvement with its community. But being aware of the employers involvement with the community in worthy causes, might not mean that the internal customers themselves are also interested in participating or are directly involved with their employee in assisting those in need. The next paragraphs provide perspectives to this issue.

**TYPE OF INTERNAL CUSTOMER’S INVOLVEMENT WITH SPONSORED ORGANIZATIONS**

Table 2 shows that 79% of those responding the survey are active participants by donating part of their money, time, or both, to serve in community organizations sponsored by their employer. This implies that approximately a total if 86% of those who said they were aware of their employer involvement in worthy causes, are also participants in those activities. Awareness, though, does not necessarily lead to behavior. Close to 14% of those aware of their employer participation in CRM activities decided not to participate in such activities sponsored by their employer.

**TABLE 2: TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT IN CRM ACTIVITIES BY INTERNAL CUSTOMERS OF THE ACCOUNTING FIRM**

Type of involvement	Number of internal customers involved	Percentages of internal customers involved
Donates time and money	19	48%
Donates money	10	26%
Donates time/service	2	5%
Not involved	8	21%
Total	39	100%

**TYPE OF ORGANIZATION/ACTIVITIES SPONSORED BY INTERNAL CUSTOMERS**

Close to 74% of survey participants give money to United Way<sup>1</sup>. The accounting firm matches the money donated to United Way by its internal customers at the end of each year. Impact day is an activity held by the firm in which employees provide a one day professional service to a charitable institution while receiving their regular pay from the accounting firm. Other activities include visiting/or handling gifts to orphan children, particularly during Christmas time.

**INTERNAL CUSTOMERS EXPECT MORE CRM ACTIVITIES FROM EMPLOYER**

Table 3 shows that 79% of those surveyed expressed that their employer should do more than what it actually does in terms of CRM activities. As Jill Ford, from Forward Thinking, writes, “CRM activities are a win-win situation for all parties involved not only because it increase employee morale, loyalty and job satisfaction, but also because it enhance the firm’s reputation, and potentially helps to increase sales...” (Ford, Jill, 2009).

<sup>1</sup> United Way is a private non-profit organization that financially supports 146 Puerto Rican community based institutions. Money for its support of these institutions comes from individual donations collected and matched by employers, corporate contributions, and other sources. [www.fondosunidos.org](http://www.fondosunidos.org), retrieved September 22, 2009.

**TABLE 3: INTERNAL CUSTOMER’S OPINION CONCERNING SPONSORING OF CRM**

Should there be more of CRM activities by employer?	Number of internal customers responding yes/no	Percentage of internal customers responding yes/no
Yes	31	79%
No	8	21%
Totals	39	100%

**BRAND EQUITY ISSUES**

Brand equity deals with feelings, images, and perceptions held by markets toward brands (markets considered in this case are both external and internal). Since brand equity implies adding brand value, chances of increasing both purchase intentions and purchase behavior improve. Thus, management must deal with brand equity as they deal with other assets within their organizations: doing their best to gain additional equity, every instance and through each effort (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Let’s look at the areas within brand equity that were included in this research.

As Table 4 shows, 90% of those who responded to our survey think that sponsoring cause-related activities is a positive tactic since it helps to improve the public image of the firm as a socially responsible entity. This finding follows Grau and Garretson as well as Ford’s perspectives on the significance for internal customers of employer’s engaging in cause-related activities.

**TABLE 4: CAUSE RELATED ACTIVITIES: ITS IMPACT ON THE BRAND**

Views of respondents toward employer’s sponsorship of cause-related activities	Number of respondents as per their views regarding employer’s sponsoring of cause-related activities	Percentage of respondents as per their views regarding employer’s sponsoring of cause-related activities
Perceived as a socially responsible organization	35	90%
A form of publicity that creates goodwill for the firm	2	5%
Does not improve public image	2	5%
Totals	39	100%

Following Ford's thinking that engaging in cause-related activities is a win-win situation for all parties involved; 80% internal customers who responded to the survey stated they would recommend their firm as an employment option based of its involvement in these activities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings discussed in this article are not to be generalized to other organizations employing highly trained professionals such as public accountants (CPAs), lawyers, engineers, and the like. However, it is probably reasonable to assume that a number of these professionals are willing to participate in cause-related activities through their talents, money, time, and efforts, since findings of our research and the literature available leads to this assumption. The fact seems to be, as per our findings, that an organization that is involved in community related activities is perceived by internal customers as a socially responsible institution. If such perception prevails throughout a firm engaged in cause-related activities, then, according to Ford, we can expect improvement in internal customer's morale and loyalty towards its employer, thus impacting internal brand equity. As our findings showed, 80% of the internal customers who responded to our survey feel comfortable working for an organization that appears to care about issues affecting their communities. Hopefully, an internal customer feeling comfortable with his or her organization might not only remain longer with his/her employer, but most probably will be more productive, and, hence, more willing to pay attention to customer service, thus satisfying the expectations of its external clients more positively. In highly competitive world markets, retaining the best talent available is a must.

Of course, such improvement will not only be felt inside the organization. The Cone Study reveals that most of its respondents are having positive images and are willing to switch to brands belonging to those organizations associated with a "good cause". Thus, as Kotler and Keller suggest, by getting involved in good causes, management will be doing what is expected of them: "doing their best to gain additional equity...."

Management, though, should not forget the fact that skepticism toward the honesty of those giving a hand in cause-related activities might be present. Particularly, internal customers, faced with skepticism from third parties as well as among themselves, 10% of those responding to our survey showed such feelings. They might feel that participation in cause-related activities will not be adequately acknowledged, or will only mean benefits for their employer, and, thus, getting involved, in terms of time consumed and efforts expected, is a worthless endeavor. So, dealing with skepticism should then be part of the strategic issues taken into consideration by private donors, such as corporations, when formally engaging in helping causes. As Chéron suggests, companies should have a purpose and objectives before engaging in cause-related activities because of still prevailing public's mistrust toward the good intentions, particularly, of institutional donors involved in such behavior. But, as Chéron indicates, with strategic planning, companies might help themselves by anticipating probable negative "side-effects" of advertising campaigns that are part of cause-related activities as well as of any other issue that might bring difficulties to the company.

Management should be aware of the fact that skeptics would be around when corporations and other private entities get involved in socially related activities. But, that by itself should not be a deterrent when deciding on pursuing such behavior. Many people are in need of help and are thankful when a hand is given. Business professionals in particular are always welcome in the non-for-profit community because of their expertise with managerial issues, financial capabilities, and strategic perspectives, areas where, most probably, charity organizations lack talents. Lack of management talent in these organizations will inevitably represent inadequate use of funds and distrust from those donors that make it possible for it to exist. So, besides being a helping hand, business professionals with strategic expertise might mean a difference when stability, growth, or even existence of a non-for-profit organization is at stake. For those giving a hand, it could mean personal growth, feeling proud, and their contribution to the reinforcement of brand equity of the institutions they represent.

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