



BEYOND BELIEF NETWORK

Beyond Belief Network Event Guides: Approaching Businesses for Assistance

In the course of doing charity work, it is often helpful to partner with local businesses who may have more resources or a bigger community footprint than your group. This guide provides field-tested tips for successfully approaching business partners whether your goal is to solicit money, goods, event space, or services. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, so trust your instincts and experience.

Finding Potential Partners

- Expect to hear “no” for an answer most of the time. You only need to hear “yes” during a small percentage of your encounters for a successful event or project.
- Going to a business in person will yield better results than calling or emailing.
- Better yet, if a community member has a personal relationship with a business, consider asking them to reach out on behalf of your group. This may be more successful than flipping through the yellow pages and cold-calling.
- Keep a spreadsheet of which businesses you’ve contacted and where you left the conversation when you talked to them last. If multiple volunteers are helping, use a Google document or something similar that everyone can update.
- Do your homework and research the business before you approach them. If you’re courting a chain or large corporation, investigate any charitable giving and community partnership programs they might have.
- Be sure to contact businesses well in advance of the date you need to see results. A few weeks is a good minimum; a couple months is even better. This process takes time, both for you to contact businesses and for them to make a decision.

Making the Pitch

- Have an idea of what you’re asking for beforehand, but be open to counteroffers from a receptive potential partner. Make sure that your pitch includes what benefits your group could provide the business, if any (e.g., advertising, extra business, etc.)
- Know the specifics of what your service or charity event is supporting. Have a relevant and eye-opening statistic or two at your disposal to illustrate the importance of your work. Make the beneficiary the focus of your conversation, rather than your local group.

- Consider producing a visually appealing brochure that you can leave for potential partners which tells them more about your cause and your group, as well as directs them to resources for further information. Foundation Beyond Belief has a brochure you can request. We also have flyers and other promotional materials on our [resources page](#).
- Be aware of the employees you're dealing with. Often the person working at the counter or front desk won't be able to help you directly.
- If the person you need to speak to isn't available, ask how to best contact them. Have information to leave, or make plans to come back at a more convenient time.
- If the conversation ends without resolution, communicate that if you do not hear back you will be following up within a certain timeframe. Stick to it.

Planning for the Future

- Thank businesses for their time, even if they decline to partner with you. Leaving a good impression will keep the door open for their involvement on another project.
- Show your appreciation. A partner will be more likely to work with you in the future if you perform a gesture as simple as sending a handwritten thank you note.
- Show your appreciation publically by tagging them in a post on your community's social media outlets as a supporter of your charitable endeavor.
- Businesses are occasionally concerned that partnering with humanist groups in particular will damage their business or reputation, so let the humanist community at large know about your successful partnerships. If we patronize businesses who support us, we'll be better able to convince additional businesses to help in the future.

Questions or Concerns?

If you need help with planning your event or have additional questions, the best way to contact Beyond Belief Network is to use the contact webform, which enables us to track the resolution of your question: foundationbeyondbelief.org/contact-bbn. You can also email us at bbn@foundationbeyondbelief.org.