

Philanthropy makes good business sense

THE biggest misunderstanding most people have about philanthropy is that it is something you do for someone else.

Of course, others do benefit from your charitable efforts; but most people who volunteer their time and



JOHN CANNITO
REAL ESTATE
INSIGHTS

or money usually end up discovering they get a lot more than they give — the same holds true when businesses support philanthropy and volunteerism.

By most estimates, U.S. corporations donate over \$20 billion a year and 85 percent of companies have formal corporate giving programs. According to Non-Profit Source, in average companies, 30 percent of employees volunteer their time and 50 percent volunteer in the top quartile of businesses.

Obviously, corporate America considers philanthropy an important part of doing business.

I can only speculate as to why other companies are charitable, but I know for a fact that at PENTA it's because we believe it makes us a better company. Giving back to our community is such an important part of PENTA's culture that we created the PENTA CARES Foundation to make our giving more effective.

But why is it so important to us?

We've always been a company that values our people, partners and communities; but telling the story behind the creation of PENTA CARES is the best way to explain why philanthropy and volunteerism are so important to PENTA.

First off, creating PENTA CARES wasn't a leadership idea.

Our executive team didn't sit in a strategic planning session and determine it was good for business.

We didn't do a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis or set goals with milestones, action items and deadlines.

It was a grassroots movement created by the people at PENTA as a way to better organize their efforts. Put another way, the people at PENTA were giving their time and energy to so many community organizations that we had to create the PENTA CARES Foundation to support them.

We had so many employees (and their family members) interested in donating their time that we started PENTA CARES to give them a more efficient way to contribute. We didn't make people interested in volunteerism in order to create a foundation; we created the foundation to support our people's passion for giving. Of course, we added PENTA's financial contributions to the mix, and the PENTA CARES Foundation has become an integral part of our culture.

The PENTA CARES story is important because it perfectly explains why philanthropy and volunteerism exist at the core culture of a good business. They exist at the core because good businesses are made up of good people, and good people care about the world around them. We live in the community and our business is dependent on the community; it's only natural that we want to make our community better.

Winston Churchill said: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

At PENTA, our interpretation of that would be that giving is what makes life fulfilling. And since businesses are basically groups of people working toward a common goal, then corporate giving must be what makes business fulfilling as well.

There are other benefits, of course. Philanthropy creates goodwill with our clients and partners. It also makes the company more attractive to talented employees. But those benefits pale in comparison to the real reason that giving is central to PENTA's culture. The real reason is that PENTA people are our greatest strength, and those people believe in giving back.

John Cannito is the president and CEO of The PENTA Building Group.