



**Signature Program Toolkit:
Branding Your Community Involvement**

CONTENTS:

- 1. What is a Signature Program?**
- 2. Types of Signature Programs**
- 3. Signature Program Elements**
- 4. Front End Planning**
- 5. Determining Your Focus Area**
- 6. Determining Your Program Structure**
- 7. Selecting a Non-Profit/NGO/Charity Partner**
- 8. Program Planning**
- 9. Communication**
- 10. Employee Engagement**
- 11. Implementing Your Signature Program**
- 12. EF Contact Information**



1. What is a Signature Program?

A Signature Program is a community investment strategy designed to generate the greatest possible social impact through a strategic and comprehensive effort that may incorporate volunteerism, financial investment, additional corporate resources and in many cases products and services, for specific social benefit. All these resources directed to a strategic focus will increase the opportunity for your company to generate branding and recognition.

Signature Programs are major investments for a company and if well managed can last for several years (Sears Canada has had a partnership with Boys and Girls Clubs for over 40 years!) – community legacies for the company. The longer the program is active and relevant, the more the community recognizes the corporation’s commitment. However, in order to be truly successful, these programs do require thorough research, planning, detail and commitment. The most effective Signature Programs have a direct connection to the values, market, products and mission of a business (although the use of products is not a requirement).

Ultimately, a Signature Program will distinguish your corporation from other companies, and it will help to build a unique corporate identity that enhances and goes beyond your core business

NOTE: This toolkit is North American in scope, so we will account for regional differences in terms by using “organization” to refer to non-profits, NGOs, charities and charitable organizations.

2. Types of Signature Programs

Signature Programs can be one of the following:

A. General Strategic Focus:

A corporation can decide to focus its Community Involvement Program on a particular sector - see Determining Your Focus Area for more details. It can then choose to just showcase the sector as its focus and choose several organizations within that sector to support. The external communications will focus on the chosen sector and the community is not necessarily aware of what organizations are actually being supported.

THE BODY SHOP.

The Body Shop

http://www.thebodyshop-usa.com/values-campaigns/index.aspx?cm_re=Tyra_SummerEssentials-_-Navigation-_-values

For years The Body Shop supported Environmental causes in keeping with its business philosophy of no product testing on animals. It subsequently focused on Women's causes as well and now focus on stopping sex trafficking and the spread of HIV.

B. Unique Program featuring a Charitable Sector:

Alternatively, a corporation may decide to take its strategic focus and create its own cause which can support a variety of organizations. The focus is the corporation's own program and it may involve getting consumer support for this cause as well.



Youth Voices, Adobe System Global Signature Program

<http://www.adobe.com/aboutadobe/philanthropy/youthvoices/>

Youth Voices is Adobe System's Foundation's global signature philanthropy program designed to provide youth in underserved communities with the critical skills they need to become active and engaged members of their communities and the world at large. Adobe's creative software products are used in the program, enabling the youth in the program to express themselves through technology and Adobe employees work with teachers to train them on the products.



Tim Hortons Summer Camps

http://www.timhortons.com/ca/en/difference/the_camps.html

Tim Hortons, a donut and food franchise, started its own summer camp programs to enable children to experience time away from home in a country setting. These food outlets are well entrenched in local neighborhoods across Canada and now in the United States as well. Focusing on children as the target group for this corporation makes logical sense as the activities it supports are community based. Tim Hortons has further expanded its program with support to local community kids' soccer and hockey teams. It is important to note that the focus never strays from children and healthy activities.

Types of Signature Programs, con't.

C. Strategic Partnership

A corporation can choose to concentrate its focus on one particular organization. It does not mean that all its donations are solely limited to that particular organization but rather for external communications purposes, this organization will be the highlight of its Signature Program.



Research in Motion (RIM) Blackberry and Free the Children

<http://weday.freethechildren.com/buildavillage/>

RIM formed a relationship with Free the Children, a Canadian-based global charity mirroring RIM's Canadian roots and RIM's global reach. RIM's support will be directed to a few elements of Free the Children's activities including building two villages, one in India and one in China. This will be in addition to a myriad of activities in its own business location of Waterloo, Ontario.

It is essential for the success of this program to have equal buy-in from both parties and the goal of the partnership is to combine core competencies of the two organizations to deliver maximum social benefit.

D. Cause Marketing

Signature Programs and cause-related marketing programs may share similar attributes. Although both programs result in positive social change, a key differentiator however is cause marketing is more singularly focused on marketing and other signature programs are about combining key community investment practices and business competencies to deliver maximum social benefit.

Cause Marketing features a particular product of a corporation. The benefit to the organization is tied to the sales of this particular product. Cause-related marketing is most commonly about the marketing benefits, relationships and business value.



Yoplait and Susan G. Komen Foundation

<http://www.ventureneer.com/vblog/pink-ribbons-show-power-cause-marketing>

Thousands of pink ribbons adorn Yoplait yogurt lids, and this is a highly visible way for Yoplait to show the public that they are supporting the fight against breast cancer. The goal of this program is to call attention to their product by consumers who care about this cause and will purchase their yogurt over a competitor's through solidarity around this issue.

3. Signature Program Elements

A successful Signature Program is/has:

- Strategic
- Comprehensive
- Values based
- Executive commitment
- Alignment with business market(s)
- Significant buy-in from both parties
- Ability to leverage products and services
- Logical tie-in to corporate mission

Signature Programs are not a PR exercise, but rather the demonstration of a serious commitment to a program.

Signature Program Spotlight



FedEx and Safe Kids Worldwide

<http://fedex.com/us/about/responsibility/community/safekids.html>

FedEx Express is an industry leader in safety, which makes an alliance with Safe Kids Worldwide a perfect fit. Safety, volunteerism and community involvement are core values that FedEx and Safe Kids Worldwide share. Safe Kids Worldwide is the first and only international nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury – the number one killer of children ages 14 and under. Its programs and initiatives advocate safety, promote the overall health and welfare of children and encourage communities across the nation and around the world to be more involved in the safety of their children.

4. Front End Planning

Before beginning your planning, engage your company's executive team to determine the level of interest and commitment, and gather its input for true engagement. It is also important to secure an Executive Champion for the program whom you check in with after each step for continued buy-in and support.

Together, you can determine:

- Your [Focus Area](#)
- If you want to start your own program, with a logo and tag line and an organization to support within this framework
- If you want to form a strategic partnership with a particular organization
- The vision for the company's community involvement and perception of the company by the community

This information will help you to establish an initial strategic direction and parameters that you can use in the [Program Planning](#).

The next step is to form an internal committee to work in conjunction with you and the Executive Champion that includes people across business lines and functions to:

- Define the specific business objectives, employee objectives and community outreach objectives you wish to achieve through your Signature Program
- Consider specific regional and global goals
- Put all these objectives into a grid and assign priorities to each of these objectives
- Determine how these goals will be measured and tracked

Through this process, you will be able to establish criteria for your new Signature Program.

Signature Program Spotlight



10,000 Women, Goldman Sachs Global Signature Program

<http://www2.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/10000women/index.html>

10,000 Women is a five-year investment by Goldman Sachs to provide 10,000 underserved women around the world with business and management education.



5. Determining Your Focus Area

If your company has not already established a preference for specific social benefit area, begin to narrow your focus.

First pick a sector:

- Arts
- Civic
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Religion
- Social Service
- Sports

Some strategies for the selection process include:

- Eliminate any sectors that do not reflect the goals and criteria you have established
- Rate the remaining sectors against your criteria. (One or two should stand out as those closest to what your company wants to achieve with its Community Involvement Program.)
- Brainstorm causes that align with your core business, a specific business strategy or goal and with your corporate values.
- This cause within your chosen sector will become your strategic focus

Consider:

- Is the focus area an immediate or urgent need currently addressed by your corporate community engagement program, foundation or other program of your company?
- Is the focus area something that can leverage products or customers?
- Is the focus area based upon a strong partnership with an organization?
- Does the focus area reflect the previously established criteria and both corporate and social goals?

6. Determining Your Program Structure

Now that you have selected your sector and your cause, you can choose the best methodology for your program. Decide if you want it to be a:

- General Signature Program
- Unique Program
- Strategic Partnership
- Cause Marketing Campaign

Although you can certainly choose to have more than multiple methodologies, it is better to select one to begin and branch into the other aspects once that is underway and running well.

Be certain that you have buy-in to your decisions from the Executive Champion and, at this point, from the entire executive team, before proceeding any further.

Signature Program Spotlight



Family Online Safety Initiative, Symantec Global Signature Program

<http://www.symantec.com/about/profile/responsibility/cyberawareness.jsp>

Symantec, worldwide leader in security software, has a signature program focused on cyber security for consumers, parents and youth. Symantec developed a [Family Resource Web site](#) to help parents protect their children on the internet, encourage their employees to volunteer by educating youth about internet risks via their Symantec Employee Evangelism Program, incorporate the community through the [Norton Community Watch program](#) and more.

7. Selecting an Organization as a Strategic Partner

Let's assume you have decided to go the Strategic Partner route. The selection of an organization as a partner is the most critical component of developing a successful Strategic Partnership. Through this venture, you are pairing your vision, goals and integrity with an outside organization, so you must thoroughly vet and consider the organization's:

- Credibility
- Compatibility with your company
- Agility
- Program Impact
- Alignment of its mission with your goals
- Capacity to support its end of the partnership
- Opportunity for employee involvement and/or volunteering (if wanted)
- Alignment of core competencies
- Other strategic partnerships it is currently engaged in
- Scalability and sustainability
- Locations in the areas you want to have programs

When you have your list of potential partners, complete the following for each:

- Investigate their financial integrity (990's for the US and CRA form T-3010 in Canada, both available on line using these links: [US](#) [Canada](#))
- Reach out to their current sponsors and partners for feedback on their experiences working with the organization
- Engage EF in the States and Sue Bochner + Associates in Canada as a resource to tap into our networks to assess the organization's reputation and credibility
- Using the criteria you established to select a sector, objectively rate each candidate against your criteria

Some companies choose to tie their Signature Programs to athletes or other celebrities. This can provide extremely high visibility for a program. However, celebrity relationships come with significant risk as well. When a public figure is in good standing, the program can receive a certain cachet, but if the celebrity becomes embroiled in a scandal, unfortunately, that disgrace can carry over into the perception of the program.

Once you have selected a potential partner(s), it is important to do a site visit to ensure your comfort with the selected organization and its staff.

8. Program Planning

The planning process for a Signature Program is equivalent to the planning required for any business venture. The planning will have to involve the company and the partner organization equally, as both have an equivalent investment in the success of the Program.

Initial planning can be done on wipe boards. Eventually, all of the ideas will need to be converted into written documents that include the following:

- Clearly articulated description of what the program is, who benefits, how it will be executed and how each partner is being credited/recognized
- Detailed outline of the commitments each partner is making for the vision, work and follow-through
- Key staff that will be responsible for the project and how accountability will be employed
- Clear list of who is providing which resources
- Visits to the specific locations where you plan to implement the program
- Budgets
- Timelines
- PR plan
- Milestones
- Length of program
- Evaluation

Realistically, it will take about three to six months to reach the point of identifying and securing a partner and another three to six months to formulate the program to the point where it can be piloted. Your Executive Champion is an essential liaison with organization's executive leadership during this time.

Signature Program Spotlight



DemandTec Retail Challenge Signature Program

<http://www.demandtecretailchallenge.com/>

The DemandTec Retail Challenge originated in 2005 as a local competition in the San Francisco Bay Area and has now expanded to many regions nationally. Its goal is to present math, science and business concepts creatively through an online simulation giving students a taste of how retailers and consumer products manufacturers make pricing and inventory decisions. Students compete to win a monetary scholarship to help further their education and for a chance to partake in the Grand Championships at NASDAQ in New York City.



9. Letter of Agreement

When you have reached your decision about a partner, and all of the details have been discussed, it is time to incorporate those discussions into a Letter of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding, spelling out clearly the obligations of both parties. This step is essential to the success of the partnership.

Some elements to include:

- Brief description of the partnership
- Length of the partnership with a very clear end date
- Renewal possibilities and timelines for that
- Obligations spelled out for both the organization and the corporation
- Deliverables and timelines
- Logo use for both parties
- Confidentiality
- Evaluation

Some corporations require that the Legal Department vet and approve documents like this.

Once the Letter of Agreement is signed, it is a perfect time for your Executive Champion to host a gathering at your offices to bring together the senior staff from your company and your partner organization to celebrate the partnership and officially launch the implementation phase.

10. Communication

Spreading the word about your Signature Program will have several facets:

Within your company:

- Key staff
- Executive sponsor and executive team
- Program team

With the partner organization:

- Key staff
- Board of Directors
- Volunteers

With the public:

- Your PR/Marketing department
- Partner's PR agency
- Your PR agency
- Social media
- Press releases
- Websites

Signature Program Spotlight – Cause Marketing



Gap - "Recycle Your Blues" Campaign

<http://www2.gapinc.com/GapIncSubSites/csr/MakeADifference/Gap.shtml>

As part of a partnership with Cotton Incorporated, the brand encouraged customers across North America to turn in their old jeans in exchange for 30 percent off a new pair. This year, the "Recycle Your Blues" campaign collected more than 270,000 units of denim, which will be used to create fiber insulation for more than 540 homes.



11. Employee Engagement

Although it is not necessary that a Signature Program contain an employee engagement component, it often can, and this is an opportunity to take advantage of a wonderful opportunity to involve the staff. Employees can participate in:

- Events
- Product giveaways
- Donations of time and talent

Encourage regional offices and headquarters divisions to undertake initiatives related to the Signature Program by providing them with a dedicated source of internal funding. See [Regional Office Signature Program Case Study](#) for an example.

If your organization has global presence and a global employee base, a corporate philanthropy program will ideally include all corporate offices and allow for all employees, irrespective of location, to participate. See [Global Signature Event Case Studies](#) for examples.



12. Implementing Your Signature Program

The timeline will probably require at least three to six months from the time you identify your partner organization until the time you can launch your program. Before that launch, it is essential to be sure that all partners and all relevant departments within each organization are fully prepared to embark on the endeavor.

A “soft launch” is often prudent, starting with a pilot site or two, to insure all systems are in place and to expose any unexpected challenges. Only once you are certain that the program is running smoothly, and with all of the PR fanfare that your Signature Program can garner, you officially begin your campaign.

Although the launch is the end of a long planning process, it is only the beginning of the Signature Program itself. In order for it to be successful and reflect positively on the company and the organization, it will require ongoing:

- Executive support
- Staffing
- Funding
- Growth strategies
- Communication
- Evaluation
- Adjustments
- Reporting
- Marketing/PR

Finally, an evaluation process will determine the impact the program is having. Here are questions to ask:

- Is it meeting both your business and social goals?
- Are the outputs (i.e. volunteers) and outcomes (i.e. decrease in X or increase in Y) what you were hoping for?

As with any new project that your company starts, a Signature Program needs to be accomplishing what it is intended to do. Evaluate the program against criteria previously established. Your partner should be part of the evaluation process and together both organizations should set benchmarks for each year the Signature Partnership is operating.

When all else is equal, customers increasingly want to do business with companies doing good. Signature Programs are an excellent way to visibly and effectively benefit the community while simultaneously achieving business goals.



13. Contact Information

Diane Solinger
Entrepreneurs Foundation
(408) 656-7878
dsolinger@efbayarea.org
www.efnational.org

Sue Bochner
Sue Bochner + Associates
(905) 659-0555
sue@sue.bochner.com
www.suebochner.com