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Moving forward by giving

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Peggie Pelosi spent her life in sales, not by choice but by necessity. This mother of five knew she has a special purpose in this world, but couldn't figure out what it was. During her last sales job with a small public American company, USANA Health Sciences, the board of directors wanted Pelosi to "unstick" their company's operations.

Their product was great, same with their marketing, yet their corporate culture was lacking. Pelosi realizes that creating a place people would love to work at was going to be difficult, but through instilling a sense of philanthropy, Pelosi hit on a successful formula.

Pelosi looked at her company's product, nutritional supplements, and wondered how they could give back to the community. By teaming up with the Children's Hunger Fund, not only did the company reduce malnutrition in refugee camps in Uganda by supplying food and building homes, but also helped further the company's financial success.

Having a group of employees sent over to Africa and returning with video footage of the company's CEO sitting on the ground

with the children not only contributed to a large increase in company charity donations, but also had the company's share value increase by 3,000%.

"By seeing the difference their product was making, employees took a sense of ownership," said Pelosi.

Corporate spirit

Soon, Pelosi said pictures of children were adorning the walls of the company world wide as it became an important part of who they were that spirit brought forth spilled out to the customers. Suddenly, during a night in Uganda, Pelosi understand her role in life. She realized that businesses need to give back towards the community and extend their missions beyond their balance sheets.

She then set forth writing *Corporate Karma: How Businesses Can Move Forward By Giving Back* as a blueprint for implementing and sustaining corporate philanthropy programs that also deliver bottom-line results.

"Companies are beginning to look beyond profits," said Pelosi. "There's a whole

movement of corporate responsibility and holding companies accountable. There's also an interesting new demographic of young people who are looking towards businesses to make a difference. These young people are even willing to work for less money for a socially conscious company."

Pelosi left her sales job to form Orenda Connections, a company that is dedicated to helping other companies connect with charities and philanthropy opportunities. What *Corporate Karma* argues is that companies don't need to spend a lot of money to implement a philanthropy program, and that the wave of good karma ultimately will cycle around and provide good fortune for the company.

"First and foremost, for a corporate philanthropy program to work it must come from the top of the company. The CEO or president needs to be the one holding the torch because the speed of the leader is the speed of the pack," said Pelosi. "Also, by creating committees that engages every department of a com-

pany makes sure everyone has a role and people support which they help create.

"Second, there needs to be a decision of what relevant cause to partner with. If you have a construction company and the owner's pet project is funding breast cancer, chances are since it's not relevant; it wouldn't be as successful. What you need to look for is a cause that's relevant to the business such as sheltering the needy.

"Next, by giving a hands-on opportunity for employees to volunteer, it brings real spirit back into the corporate culture. By developing programs from payroll deductions to volunteering, the employees become involved. Then the cause or charity benefits from the partnership, employees feel a sense of purpose and then the companies benefit."

The gift of charity

One company that Pelosi points to as a good example is LensCrafters's Gift of Sight program. By giving free vision care and eyewear to those in need, all of their employees become involved with it and has proven successful for the company.

Pelosi said that 100% of the book's net profits are do-



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Businesses are often looking to give back to the community, but don't know how to go about doing it in the proper way to ensure that everybody is happy.

nated to a number of foundations and humanitarian organizations that support local and international leadership and economic development programs for women and children. For more information Corporate Karma visit www.orendaconnections.com.