

APPROACHING BUSINESSES

TAILOR YOUR APPROACH

- ✓ Your approach to businesspeople should depend on how you know them and who they are.
- ✓ You may already know your prospective partners socially, you may be their customer, you may just walk in and introduce yourself, or another business partner might refer you.
- ✓ There is no single way to get the relationship started – the question is how you carry it forward.

Let's assume you're starting from scratch.

1. INTRODUCE YOURSELF PERSONALLY

- ✓ Walk into stores and offices around the park(s)
- ✓ Ask to speak to the owner
- ✓ Let them know you are part of a parks volunteer group, and that you just want to introduce yourself and tell them more about what your group is doing

In the course of this introductory conversation, try to learn something new about the owner's business. Try to:

- ✓ shake hands and look him/her in the eyes
- ✓ be relaxed, calm and confident
- ✓ tell him/her that you're part of a group that works in the park and that you'd like to offer her advertising and product sampling opportunities at future events
- ✓ get his/her contact information (mailing address, phone, email)
- ✓ tell him/her you will let them know when things come up
- ✓ thank him/her for their time, and
- ✓ give him/her a business card or a way to be in touch with you

2. SEND A FOLLOW-UP NOTE

Follow up your first conversation with a short note or email, just to tell them that you enjoyed making their acquaintance and that you look forward to letting them know about future opportunities to get their business involved in the park.

3. DROP IN PERIODICALLY

Drop in periodically to say hello. Reiterate a friendly curiosity in their business.

4. SEEK SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS

Once you have a specific project or event to discuss, approach your business acquaintances with a specific proposal. Give your contact a call early in the day, and be sure to have the following information on hand:

- ✓ day, date, time, and duration of the project
- ✓ the contact people from the neighborhood
- ✓ how many people you expect to be involved
- ✓ how you imagine the event will look
- ✓ how you'd like him/her to help
- ✓ what he/she gets out of the deal

Finally, tell him/her you'd like to send her a proposal.

5. SEND A WRITTEN PROPOSAL

- ✓ Follow this phone conversation with a proposal letter **within a day of your conversation**, reiterating the points you made in the phone conversation and describing the ways the business can support the effort (see attached samples).
- ✓ Emphasize any relevant information about the people who are involved, how many people will see the event, and any other information you think might be of interest.
- ✓ Close by saying you look forward to answering any questions, and send it off.

6. CLOSE THE DEAL

- ✓ One of the most difficult aspects of getting businesses involved is "closing the deal," when the businessperson finally gives a commitment to support your project.
- ✓ Sometimes this happens right away, but more likely it will come about as the result of good-natured approach, and good old-fashioned persistence.
- ✓ Try to keep after your contacts, but do it in a light-hearted way. If they aren't ready when you talk to them, don't take it personally!
- ✓ Calmly ask your contact when might be a better time to get back to her, and thank her for their time.
- ✓ Keep the conversation light, and always try to find the appropriate follow up step for each conversation. Then take it!

7. SAY THANKS

- ✓ One of the most important elements of a cordial relationship is the thank-you note.
- ✓ Send a thank-you note (see attached sample) within a few days of the event.
- ✓ If you can, include pictures and/or other souvenirs, such as a program.

8. KEEP THE FIRES BURNING

- ✓ Keep this cycle going; meet-and-greet, touch base periodically, introduce specific projects, send specific proposals, follow up with phone calls, gain commitment, and send thank-you notes.
- ✓ Drop New Year's cards in the mail.
- ✓ Be social.
- ✓ Consistency will yield results.