

small fish, big fry

For small charities, corporate partnerships can feel imposing and beyond reach. But while they might be small fish, **KIM SUTTON** says small charities can still take a big bite out of corporate philanthropy

Corporate partnerships offer endless possibilities for fundraisers to get creative and tap into potentially transformational levels of income. They are also one of the fundraising streams that small charities have traditionally seen as off-limits, the domain of larger charity brands and big fundraising teams.

Small charities often believe that these relationships can only be forged by large charities, with developed brands and with lots of resources to offer. So often, the case studies featured at conferences and

in trainings on securing successful corporate partnerships feature high-profile collaborations between large companies and large charities. This all helps to propel the myth that small charities are less likely to be able to secure high-level strategic partnerships themselves.

But, as with most myths, it's just not true. Small charities might not be able to secure equally lucrative partnerships with the same types of companies as the

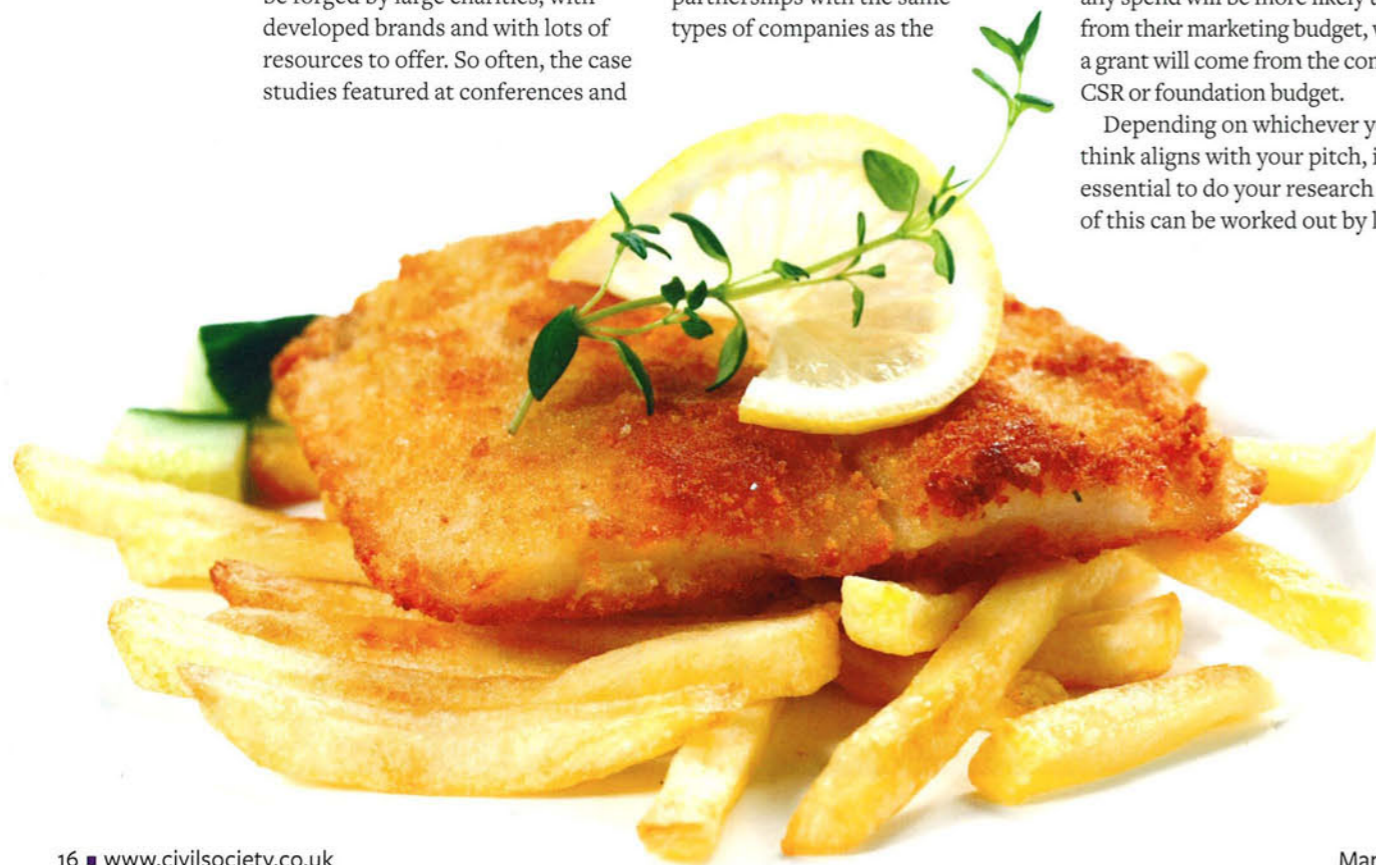
big charity boys, but they can definitely secure partnerships that are right for them.

So how do you identify and secure partners that are right for your small charity? The key for sustainable and successful partnerships is knowing how to find mutually beneficial symbiotic relationships. The old 'win-win' situation.

Initial steps and considerations.

One of the very first things to work out is, are any funds for the partnership likely to come from the company's marketing or CSR/foundation budget? This matters. If you are planning to seek sponsorship or collaboration on a product then any spend will be more likely to come from their marketing budget, whereas a grant will come from the company's CSR or foundation budget.

Depending on whichever you think aligns with your pitch, it is essential to do your research (most of this can be worked out by looking



at the company website) and consider some key issues.

- **Common interest.** Does your charity focus on an issue of interest to the company?
- **Geography.** Geography can often work in small organisations' favour. Are you based, in or operating in the same area as the company's office or a geographical area that they would like to start operating in?
- **Audience.** With your local roots, you may find you have access to vital audiences for businesses. Are you working with a beneficiary group that they would like to work with too?
- **Publicity.** Media coverage is very important, particularly for projects funded from marketing and CSR budgets. Are you able to demonstrate how you can secure and deliver on this and how you have done this in the past? Keep a folder of previous clippings to prove you know how to generate media interest.
- **Brand.** Brand awareness levels can also match up nicely. Do you and the company have a similar size in terms of public brand awareness and presence? You could both be known locally but keen to raise your profiles at a similar rate. Will working together help you both achieve this more quickly than you would separately?

Some top tips for small charities

Small charities need to be extra sensitive about some issues when looking at trying to forge a partnership with a corporate.

- Consider what the company needs.
- But while considering the company needs, don't forget your brand has great value to the company. Value your own organisation. The partnership will help the company demonstrate its effective triple bottom line (social, economic and environment) to its key stakeholders.
- Evaluate your resources. Effective partnerships can be very time-consuming, especially in the planning and initial stages of implementing. Be sure you have the available staff time to keep the company happy. In our Satya

Jewelry partnership (see box), where we had a very short time frame and an international time zone to deal with in order to get the products ready for Christmas, I was often responding to emails and getting design proofs back to them up until midnight.

- Spend your time finding out who can help you, not talking to anyone who'll answer a phone. Identify the key decision-maker and aim to get direct contact with that person.
- Personal referral is best. Do some organisation treasure-mapping to identify who you know and whether they might know someone within your target company who can make a referral for you to the right person.
- Use your senior staff. Best case scenario is that the approach to the individual within the company comes from a respected peer of equal status; so a chief executive-to-chief executive, senior fundraiser-to-head of CSR, marketing manager-to-marketing manager. If your organisation doesn't have a fundraising or marketing department or anyone holding an equivalent title don't worry. Just do your research so that you know what the company is looking for and are able to come across with confidence and can speak with authority.
- Be flexible (as long as it doesn't cause mission drift for your organisation). Two weeks before the jewellery launch, Satya asked the FSI if we could ring-fence the raised funds to contribute for our work with children and young people's charities only. We knew that this was important to Satya, their foundation and their previous giving, so we said no problem and worked quickly to get them a list of the types of charities we support, and to implement the right internal monitoring system to report back to them.
- Once the partnership is confirmed issue a written partnership agreement that clearly sets out the commitments and expectations of both parties – logo usage, agreed monetary proceeds, frequency and methods for payment to the charity, marketing and PR

An FSI case study

The FSI's most recent partnership is with Satya Jewelry NYC to produce a limited edition 'Nurturing Potential' jewellery collection designed to reflect the FSI logo and ethos.

We were able to approach Satya for a partnership with a good understanding of how we could both benefit from a tie-up.

- Although the FSI is a small charity, we work with more than 700 charities nationally across the UK. As a company entering the UK market for the first time, with a view to expand across the UK in the future, it made sense for Satya to make the widest impact on the UK charity sector as possible.
- Many of the charities we support work with, or focus on, children and young peoples, including charities which work internationally – a long-term interest for the company and its charitable foundation.
- Both organisations have a 'do good' ethos.
- Satya's collections centre on various symbols, and our work to help small charities reach their full potential resonates with the lotus symbol, which represents infinite potential. Therefore, for this reason the collection was designed around the lotus symbol.

activities, and circumstances under which the agreement would be cancelled. Have this signed by both organisations.

- In order to secure a long-time partnership that best meets the objectives of the company, be sure to clarify agreed outputs and outcomes at the start, agree procedures for monitoring returns, and ask about the level of involvement they would like to have in the programme, eg project visits, speaking at events etc.
- Keep you donor near and dear. Remember to go beyond the expected 'thank you' by sending unexpected updates via email or newspaper clippings with messages such as "we saw this and thought of you" or "we just secured this coverage" and inviting them to events that might interest them. ■



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