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## "Do-Gooding"

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Being a "do-gooder" is good business!

I'm not exactly sure what led me to become a do-gooder almost twenty years ago. Perhaps some of us don't develop a social conscience until we reach 40. I can, however, pinpoint the timing—it coincided with a career change that thrust me into contact with lots of other do-gooders. Who knows, maybe it's contagious!

Let me define my terms. A do-gooder is someone who is involved in volunteer and non-profit activities—things like Big Brothers, the American Cancer Society, SCORE, Kiwanis, Habitat for Humanity and the like. In short, the stuff you do for free.

For the most part, activities like these involve a significant time commitment, minimal appreciation or thanks, and the kinds of tasks that, under normal circumstances, no one could pay you to do. Why, then, do we volunteer?

I spoke earlier about social conscience, and I really do believe that we all have a certain responsibility in this life to "give back" something in return for our blessings and good fortune. Call it whatever you want, but I think such involvements make us feel good about ourselves, help us to justify our existence and enable us to sleep better at night.

And, it's also good business!

First, let me make it clear that in no way do I advocate do-gooding for the sake of increasing your business. I suspect if that's your only motive, it won't work—people will see through it very quickly. What I have discovered, however, is that the vast majority of do-gooders are very successful. It seems the more organizations and projects they're involved with, the greater their success, both personally and in business.

What appears to take place is that by doing their do-good work, individuals gain a great deal of visibility and exposure in their communities, especially in the eyes of the other do-gooders they work with. The next thing that happens is relationships begin to form, networking takes place, and presto, you've got new business associates who, even if they're not customers themselves, work on your behalf by telling others about you.

I've learned it's impossible to predict how these things work sometimes. For example, a number of years ago I volunteered to help generate some publicity to raise funds for a 14-year old Manchester, N.H. boy who had suffered a devastating head injury playing hockey.

Without going into great detail, I spent countless hours promoting the kid's cause. Not only were we successful in raising funds for his rehabilitation, but it resulted in my developing valuable media contacts at our local network television affiliate, the Boston Globe, People magazine and with the Boston Bruins organization. I even got a chance to talk with Hollywood people about a possible TV movie, which unfortunately never came to pass.

That was all fine and dandy. But nothing could have topped the feeling I got when I saw this boy,

just four months after having been given a 20% chance to live, walk back into school, on his own, to see his friends.

If that's not good business, I don't know what is!

David Wood is a copywriter, newsletter publisher and marketing consultant, Deering, NH.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540