5 strategies to build an alliance for social good

An alliance to vaccinate millions of children is an example of how business and social initiatives can work together to build a better world.



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- **An alliance between CaixaBank's social foundation and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (Gavi) raised 31 million euros and led to the vaccination of 5.4 million at-risk children.**

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- **From the experience, five key recommendations are offered to help build efficient and sustainable corporate alliances for the public good.**

"La Caixa" Foundation (the social entity of Spain's CaixaBank) has, through its collaboration with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (Gavi), contributed 31 million euros to vaccinating at-risk children around the world.

Since its creation in 2000, Gavi has helped vaccinate over 1.2 billion children in the world's poorest countries. It works to strengthen health systems and immunization services, so that those countries will be able to manage immunization programs on their own.

Since La Caixa began collaborating with Gavi in 2008, it has collected donations from employees and clients that have gone toward vaccinating 5.4 million children.

This is a noteworthy case, according to IESE's Joan Fontrodona and Diego Arias, authors of a report on the vaccination partnership (in Spanish). "It is rare to encounter cases like this," they state, "in which an institution leverages its commercial strength to achieve a goal that is not directly related to its own financial results."

5 lessons from La Caixa experience worth emulating

La Caixa managed to get the program going by leveraging CaixaBank as a financial institution, as well as its employees and clients. The goal was to model best practices and social responsibility, serving as an example for other organizations to follow.

From the initial teething problems of the partnership to the creative solutions employed to overcome them, the authors draw five key lessons:

1. Set a focused, concrete target: A specific objective is easier to identify and quantify, thereby fostering a sense of belonging among the stakeholders involved. In this case, La Caixa opted for an initiative consistent with its well-known commitment to social causes. To narrow it down, it requested an action report that specified the scope of the aid to a specific country and disease.

2. Report in detail: Reporting not only ensures that the money collected is being used efficiently, it also provides transparency and builds trust. It's vital to strengthen relationships with donors. Here, Gavi and La Caixa reported their donations in detail and internally audited

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the program.

3. Treat donations as products: The most effective way to organize fundraising in the workforce is to make it clear that the organization considers donations as important as any commercial product the company offers. When collaborators and customers know that their donations are as important as sales for the organization, commitment is boosted and links between stakeholders are reinforced.

4. Design and use nonmonetary incentives: Offer experiences rather than monetary incentives; these create more identification with the cause. Here, public recognition and experiences relating to the cause were offered to the collaborators who collected the largest number of donations. A committed employee can become an agent of change within the company.

5. Set an example and communicate effectively: If you want others to donate, your organization should be the first to step up. Set an example and then ask others to join you. You should also strategically communicate the work you are doing, less to enhance your own reputation than to promote the cause. Good communication skills are key in this area: No one will be impressed if you just communicate to boost your ego.

A commercial and moral partnership

In a more recent study, Fontrodona and Arias reflect on philanthropy in the business world, again drawing on this partnership between Gavi and La Caixa. They distinguish between giving unconditionally (the moral dimension) and giving in exchange for something (the business dimension). Analyzing the different phases of the collaboration, they conclude that both moral and business logics are required in establishing a sustainable partnership based on solidarity.

These twin logics coexist and influence each another. In La Caixa, employees are trained to offer their customers the chance to donate with the same enthusiasm and tactics they use to promote other products. Although this was a business relationship, employees admitted that it felt more meaningful to promote a charitable cause.

Customers, for their part, had the choice to participate in an international project and become members of Gavi. For small and medium-sized businesses, this was a reputational boost; they could participate in a social initiative and benefit from it simultaneously.

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In short, the agreement between La Caixa and Gavi demonstrates that for a charitable partnership to be effective and long-lasting, it requires equal emphasis on both the moral and business dimensions.

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