

Community Partners: What to Look For



Partnerships between community organizations and retail businesses can propel causes that benefit citizens and link communities. However, it's important to consider how organizations complement each other before joining forces. Retailers should evaluate potential partners for events, fundraisers, business ventures or sponsorship opportunities.

For a hardware retailer who is interested in teaming up with other businesses or organizations in hopes of bettering their communities, and yes, their business goals, here are some questions to consider during the process.

Do your affiliations and associations align?

Examine the background of any partnership member for strong political leanings or other outside interests beyond the stated goal of the partnership. This isn't a deal breaker, but make sure you're informed.

Is your partner organization truly local?

Make sure the beneficiaries of your partnership are also the same people patronizing your business or are in a position to use your business for their needs. Food banks and school districts are good examples of hyper-local partners.

Does this partner have a strong background of following through on promises?

If your potential partner has teamed with other organizations on past projects, ask these organizations about how your possible partner has approached events or sponsorships.

Do all parties clearly understand the goals?

The end result of any partnership between businesses or nonprofit organizations should be extremely clear for everyone involved. Lay out clear guidelines for how you plan to approach the venture. If there is disagreement on what a win is, be cautious.

Will the partnership further your business goals?

It's the sign of a strong retail business to engage with others outside of its own stores and employees, but partnerships must also benefit the bottom line in some way. Make sure you're keeping your eyes on yours.

Is this organization already out in the community?

Every business must start somewhere when entering philanthropic and sponsorship partnerships, but make sure your potential partners are interested in putting in the time needed to make partnerships work.

Can you afford the time, energy, employees and money to support this partnership or cause?

If you don't feel you can live up to the obligations, discuss this with your potential partner and consider pulling out. No one expects a retailer to be involved in every cause, and most will respect your decision.