

Money Isn't Everything

Employees find skills just as valuable to nonprofits

by Valliere Jones, contributing writer

Although everyone feels the impact of the current economic downturn, nonprofit organizations feel it more acutely than many. With fewer donations coming in, their ability to serve communities is limited.

However, donations are not the only thing nonprofits need – as limited as Avnet employee budgets may be, there are many other things employees can do to help these organizations continue to make a difference.

“Nonprofits often need computer, marketing and strategic planning skills. By thinking outside the box, employees can find additional ways to help,” says Teri Radosevich, vice president of community relations and public affairs at Avnet. “Consider the skills you have that could benefit a nonprofit organization – they are every bit as valuable.”

Ken Marlin, technology consultant manager for Avnet Technology Solutions (TS), has put the computer skills he uses on the job to good use for a number of community efforts, including the Avnet Tech Games, where he helps with all nine competitions for Arizona college students.

But the organization that benefits most from his expertise is Sanborn Elementary School, where his son and daughter attend. Ken has participated in the Sanborn Dad's Club for five years, not only creating and managing a Web site to inform members about upcoming events, but also using technology to help the club raise money.

“I love donating my time – especially if I can use my computer skills to help good causes,” he says. “I use my tech skills to manage the annual golf tournament Web site, set up a small network of computers to help process the auction payments, run the awards presentation and display videos of the kids at school.”

Ken's efforts contribute to the \$20,000 Sanborn Dad's Club raises at the golf tournament, dinner and auction and because the work is second nature to him, it doesn't require too much of his time. “Although I put a lot more work into the site when I first created it, I now spend only a few hours a month on it,” he says.

Charlie Tombazian, vice president of solutions marketing and development at TS Americas, has likewise found a few hours of his time accomplishes a great deal for local nonprofits. In addition to serving on the board of Florence Crittenton of Arizona for three years during the 1990s, he has facilitated strategic planning sessions for Arizona Foundation for Women, Parenting Arizona and Phoenix New Day Center.

“Don't assume organizations have it together or have access to skill sets you possess – much of their leadership is expected to raise funds and are either focused on that or are busy running the day-to-day activities of the non-profit,” he advises. “Avnet employees have skills we have developed over the years that would greatly benefit many nonprofit organizations.”

In Charlie's case, he draws on 25 years of strategic planning experience to help organizations develop a vision of what they want to accomplish and how best to achieve their goals. "I use the same tools and processes as I do at work to help them identify where they want to be and the specific steps they can take to get there," he says. "It's inspiring to help board members and staffers connect their individual passions to what they want to do for their non-profit organization."

He has also noticed his volunteer work reflects positively on Avnet. "We're representatives for Avnet in the community – organizations think of us as individuals, but also appreciate that the company is being a good corporate citizen," says Charlie. "Because they know I work for Avnet, they see our company as serving the needs of the greater community at the same time. It's a win-win for all parties involved!"