

Name Dropping

By Jacklyn P. Boice and Mary Ellen Collins

Donors' names—gratitude etched in stone or opportunities used for raising funds?

While not exactly the Battle of the Alamo, emotions are running high in San Antonio, Texas, over how to recognize a donor.

City residents have been embroiled in a heated public debate surrounding the proposed renaming of the Oakwell Branch of the San Antonio Public Library System. On one side are those who support renaming the library in memory of Robert L. B. Tobin, an heir to an aerial-mapping company who died in 2000 and who in 1968 donated the 1.5 acres where the library sits. The mayor, city council, the San Antonio Public Library Foundation and The Tobin Endowment think the new name (the Robert L. B. Tobin Library at Oakwell or the Tobin Library at Oakwell) would be a fitting tribute to a man whose family was one of the founding families of San Antonio, and who had given millions in cash and land to the community over the years.

The ensuing debate has involved several issues, including donor intent—especially when the donor is no longer living.



James Yang/Amages.com

What's in a Name?

The library was originally named after the family estate, Oakwell Farm, named for a 16th century English manor, Oakwell Hall, built by an ancestor of Tobin, according to published articles. Opponents to the proposed renaming include some members of the volunteer Friends of the Library and the library board of trustees, which administers the libraries and has responsibility for naming the branches. They argue that if Tobin had wanted the library to be named after his family, he would have stipulated that when he made the gift.

Supporters of the proposed name change counter that line of thinking by pointing out that Tobin was “a very magnanimous person” who was too modest to “give the land to the city and ask [for] the library to be named after him,” as reported in the *San Antonio Express-News* (“Library Renaming Debate Should Be Settled Today,” Sept. 27, 2006).

“With the passage of time, most people have no idea of the link between Robert Tobin giving the land and the library today,” explained J. Bruce Bugg Jr., one of the endowment’s trustees, in

the same article. “We feel it would be appropriate to honor Robert Tobin by adding the Tobin name at this time.”

Good point. Does donor recognition have an expiration date?

Establishing Historical Links

How long is the effective “recognition” time when thanking donors? A hospital or museum may put a generous individual’s name on a new wing, and a school may carry the name of an important teacher or principal, but what happens after 30, 40 or 50 years and no one can remember where the name came from?

“People drive by a road or a building and they never pay attention to the names,” said Carol Roark, assistant manager of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division at the Dallas Public Library in an article (“Faces and Their Places: How Area Streets, Buildings and Parks Have Derived Their Identities,” *The Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 13, 1995). “There’s a lot that those names can tell you about your history, right on the street corner of your own neighborhood, if people would just take the time.”

In Miami a few years ago there was a campaign to restore the original name of Ely High. However, the school board decided that the process would be much more than simply engraving a new plaque. Realizing that most—if not all—students had no idea why their school was named Ely, members of the board required all schools named after people to use both the first and last names in school titles and to post their biographies on campus (“Facing the Past: Schools Spotlight Namesakes’ Contributions,” *The Miami Herald*, July 26, 1999). According to the article, “The motivation behind the school’s renaming as Blanche Ely High and the new board policies are the same: to show the proper respect toward school namesakes and promote them as role models for schoolchildren.”

“We need to give our children people to look up to,” said Purcell Houston in the article. Houston, a retired teacher who worked under Blanche Ely, the long-time educator who fought for equal opportunities for poor African-American children, added, “Who knows, there might be an aspiring Blanche Ely at the school right now.”

Such issues have raised important questions. Who decides what names go on public buildings? What if a donor is later discredited—does that require an “un-naming” policy? (Think of Kenneth L. Lay, former chairman of Enron, who gave millions of dollars for named professorships at institutions such as Rice University and the University of Houston.) What about naming public buildings for corporate donors? When does recognition become outright advertising? What happens when companies merge? When a building is replaced, does it carry the name of the original donor or different names if the new structure is built with funds given by other donors?

Corporate donors, in particular, are becoming increasingly important in the nonprofit sector because of a greater need for funds due to a seemingly constant dwindling of sources of income. So how do fundraisers maintain the



cause marketing

BY JOCELYNE DAW

AND CORPORATE RECOGNITION

Companies—large and small, national and local—are no longer waiting for nonprofits to recognize their work. They are putting the power of their own marketing, brands and people behind causes to create business value and communicate their own community values.

Consider this. When Unilever's Dove®, which produces beauty-care products, launched the "Campaign for Real Beauty" and positioned its product advertising behind the cause of women and self-esteem, it was doing more than marketing the company's products. It was publicly showcasing its community commitments and demonstrating what it stood for. The Dove Self-Esteem Fund (DSEF) is a network of local initiatives linked in strategy and direction by a global steering group (www.dove.ca/doveselfesteemfund). In each country, the fund supports a specific charitable organization to help foster self-esteem. In the United States, for example, the DSEF partners with Girl Scouts of the USA to support *uniquely ME!* which promotes improved self-esteem among girls ages 8–14 in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Aldo, a global fashion footwear and accessories brand, partnered with YouthAIDS, an HIV/AIDS education and prevention initiative (www.psi.org), and uses its brand and marketing power to encourage customers to purchase and wear an AIDS tag. The "Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil" campaign seeks to break the silence about HIV/AIDS and educate and empower young people. Aldo donates 100 percent of the net proceeds to help fund YouthAIDS HIV prevention initiatives.

The Southcentre Mall in Calgary, Alberta, placed full-page ads in local newspapers promoting its support of local charities that received all the proceeds from the mall's Christmas gift-wrap program, Santa photos and other special holiday events. In addition, consumers who purchased a pink apron, pink sweater, pink blender or many other pink products in the mall during the month of October supported breast cancer research.

Welcome to the new and growing public face of corporate social responsibility and community involvement: cause marketing. Cause marketing is a modern marriage between marketing and social belief. It aligns the credibility and brand of a cause and the public's desire to support it with a company's marketing expertise and brand—for mutual benefit.

Cause-marketing initiatives have grown more than 65 percent in the past three years. Today, more than \$1.4 billion is spent on cause marketing in North America, and it provides more than \$4 billion of marketing support for causes annually. (For more data, see the Cause Marketing Forum at www.causemarketingforum.com.)

Market research has proven that cause-marketing relationships give companies a competitive advantage, highlighting what they stand for in the community. As a result, the best people want to work for them and customers, suppliers and retailers want to do business with them.

Corporate experts predict that a cause component soon may become an integral part of any responsible marketing campaign. At the same time, nonprofit leaders foresee that cause marketing will grow as companies increasingly support the community—providing great opportunities for nonprofit organizations.

Done right, cause marketing can advance a nonprofit's mission by generating additional revenue, disseminating information, reaching a whole new audience with key messages and bringing valuable corporate marketing expertise. Campaigns that are longer-term also can help to change behavior and attitudes. Think of the success of programs to cure breast cancer through cause-marketing initiatives.

There will be challenges, as corporations

seeking a cause-marketing relationship have literally hundreds of thousands of nonprofits from which to choose partners. What do charitable organizations need to do in order to become the "cause of choice?" To stand out in the crowded and competitive philanthropic marketplace, nonprofits must break through the clutter by developing their own integrated reputation management and cause-marketing-focused platforms and strategies. Successes include the American Heart Association's "Go Red for Women" initiative (www.goredforwomen.org), the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's "For the Cure" pink-ribbon campaigns (www.cbcbf.org) and the Food Bank for New York City's Bank-to-Bank Partnership Food Drive (www.foodbanknyc.org), all created to develop stronger corporate relationships and to benefit from companies' brands and marketing expertise to advance charitable organizations' missions and provide business benefits.

Nonprofits also need to be proactive in seeking collaborative partners, look to combine assets and create value with organizations, execute on what they promise and communicate effectively what they are doing.

Corporations want partners that can align with their goals, have the capacity to undertake cause programs, bring tangible assets and are ready to collaborate. Whether nonprofits are actively seeking cause-marketing relations or reacting to approaches from corporations, they must be innovative, flexible and, most importantly, marketing and results oriented.

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Be sure to take part in the AFP Audioconference "Cause Marketing for Nonprofits: Partner for Purpose, Passion and Profits" presented by Jocelyne Daw on Feb. 6, 2007. For more information, visit www.afpnet.org/education_and_career_development/audioconferences.

delicate balance between philanthropy and the appearance of selling out to the highest bidder?

The Price Is Right

Back in San Antonio, because The Tobin Endowment also had pledged \$100,000 for library upgrades, those who oppose the renaming of the library have accused the family endowment of trying to “buy” the naming privilege. The endowment quickly rejected these allegations, saying that the \$100,000—for lighting, carpet and updating—would be offered regardless of the naming decision.

Gary Ruskin, executive director of Portland, Ore.-based Commercial Alert, said it is fine for nonprofit organizations to thank donors, but civic spaces should be named for “civic heroes who reflect social values,” not because of agreements worth hundreds of thousands of dollars (“The John Q. Public Memorial Anything,” *The Sunday Oregonian*, Jan. 22, 2006).

High schools are among the latest playing fields for corporate involvement in the community. When they needed money to complete the new football stadium, officials at Vernon Hills High School north of Chicago sold the name of the \$1.8 million facility. It is now Rust-Oleum® Field.

As reported in the *Chicago Tribune* (“Naming Rights Sold—This Time, at High School Field,” Aug. 14, 2002), the \$100,000 donation by Rust-Oleum Corp., a Vernon Hills paint manufacturer, helped pay for the field’s lights, scoreboard and refreshment stand. The company also will provide paint to maintain the field’s outdoor equipment. Under the 20-year agreement, the company’s name will be displayed on a plaque on a pillar near the entrance to the stadium and in the pressroom.

Dean Bonham, CEO of the Bonham Group, a Denver-based international sports marketing company that negotiates naming rights, said in an article that such deals work for schools and cities because “it costs them nothing to create this revenue.” For companies, it’s “the best marketing platform available.”

Nevertheless, companies may find themselves between the proverbial rock and a hard place: Each year they contribute billions of dollars to nonprofits, provide charitable organizations with the means to help fulfill their missions and garner the trust and confidence of the general public that admires—and increasingly expects—such corporate social responsibility (see sidebar on cause marketing). Yet some may see corporations’ efforts as nothing more than opportunistic commercialization and advertising.

As far as Rust-Oleum Corp. is concerned, the stadium project was a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community. Without such assistance, possible alternatives included dropping some sports teams, increasing the fees to play or raising taxes—none of which appealed to the parents of school students or the Vernon Hills school board, which unanimously approved the Rust-Oleum deal.

Not all school boards agree. After a review of its naming policy, the Calgary board of education decided that it would not name schools or parts of schools because someone had donated money “to allay fears that schools with names such as McDonald’s High or Starbucks Elementary would crop up” (“Public School Names Not for Sale,” *The Calgary Herald*, Sept. 22, 2004). However, the policy does allow for donors’ names to be attached to educational initiatives, such as reading programs, or to be placed on plaques.

The critical point here is having a naming policy in place to avoid controversies.

Naming: Have Policies in Writing

In 1996, the Los Angeles Library Commission changed its naming policy to delete an oftentimes controversial provision that reserved naming honors for million-dollar donors (“Library Revises Rule to Allow Naming Branches After Leaders,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 10, 1996). Under the new policy, geography would be the No. 1 criterion, but facilities also could be named for a “recognized leader, living or deceased, who has made prominent contributions” to

areas from American literature to history to industry or for “a community leader, living or deceased, who has made significant contributions” to the library system and who serves as a role model. Most important, the new policy laid out a clear process for naming new branches or changing names of existing facilities.

Similar lessons have not been lost on the Oakwell Branch of the San Antonio Public Library System. Although half of the library system’s 22 libraries already have been named for individuals, the bitter naming debate has revealed the need for a naming policy, according to Kaye Lenox, president and CEO of the San Antonio Public Library Foundation.

“There are some processes in place for naming branches, but no guidelines,” she explains. “There needs to be a clear policy and a set of criteria against which to measure proposed names. We’re the fundraisers, and we need to have a vote or be at the table.”

She adds that this controversy may serve as a cautionary tale to others. “Many other local nonprofits have been watching this very closely, and there are probably more naming policies being written right now than there ever have been.”

As of September 2006, members of the library board had tabled their discussion until January 2007 so they could research how other cities have dealt with this issue.

Stay tuned. 

Resources

Several naming policies are available on the Internet, including the following:

- 600-21 Naming of University Properties, Academic and Non-Academic Programs, and Facilities of the University of California

<http://policies.ucsf.edu/600/60021.htm>

- Montana State University policy for Naming of Buildings and Uniform Administrative Process for Naming MSU—Bozeman Buildings and Property

www2.montana.edu/policy/naming_of_buildings_policy.htm

- Naming Libraries Policy of the Washoe County Library System in Nevada

www.washoe.lib.nv.us/mod.php?mod=userpage&menu=1548&page_id=34