

Radio's Powerful Voice

A media company's business principles are helping solve community problems across the land.

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Transcript

[S. Harris] A social entrepreneur for me is one that takes business principles and then reapplies them to solve community problems. We've done that to some extent with community outreach, with Emmis, where we have taken our expertise and media and tried to find new ways to form community partnerships that help nonprofits, help the corporate partners, and allow us to use our expertise to do campaigns that otherwise wouldn't be done.

We've done a variety of programs, from book drives to financial literacy to reporting crime tips, anything where there's a real public message that can be beneficial to have radio behind it, as a megaphone driving more people to be involved and volunteering and donating books and connecting to community resources.

Right, what's different about community outreach is that we are pairing, in large part, businesses and nonprofits together in strategic ways. So a business wants to do good in the community, but can benefit if they receive exposure or some type of awareness for that involvement, and that's the unique role that Emmis plays as a media company is that we can shine that positive light on corporate citizens for the work they're doing, but also at the same time give exposure to nonprofits that typically don't have access to media and marketing campaigns. So by being in the middle of a business/nonprofit partnership, we can meet the sales goals of a business and the public awareness needs of a nonprofit at the same time providing a campaign that's valuable to our listeners.

I think as people experience the link between doing well and doing good and realizing you can do both simultaneously, whether as an individual or as a business or a community organization, I do think more people get excited about it. At first blush, most think you can't, without some sort of a tradeoff, but as you help businesses experience that, as you help managers experience "Hey we can make money doing this and it's the good and right thing to do" they get on board. Each person has a little different button to get them excited--some, it is all about the bottom line, some it is all about community, some it's all about using media in a different way, but I think for each person as they experience that creative link between doing well and doing good, we are able to get more people around the table, more support, and more partnership.

Local example, a couple of years ago, Indianapolis Public Schools was in need of libraries, take home libraries, so that kids could have access and exposure to literacy materials in the home. So, we were aware of IPS's need, and we brokered a partnership between Barnes and Noble and Chase Bank. Both were interested in driving traffic to their stores, but also had a heart to help IPS. We were the matchmaker that brought them together, and then created a campaign where we used our radio stations to engage the entire community in a book drive. So we sent people to buy books at Barnes and Noble, donate used books at Chase Bank locations, and were able to create classroom libraries in every single IPS kindergarten, first, and second grade classroom.

So, we are the group that brings them together, we design the campaign. We're very hands on in that process, and in the end, hopefully create a campaign that drives a community result.