

# Corporate Incentive Travel

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## Giving Back

### Corporate Style

The "Mayan Acquaintance Experience" is a full-day VolunTeaming activity for the community at The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun.

Photo courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun

By Andrea Montello

In an era where corporate greed dominates the headlines, companies that make the effort to give back are looked upon favorably. By getting employees involved in doing good, studies show their attitude can change about their place of employment thus resulting in increased productivity. A company that cares about more than the bottom line is an attractive company to most. Especially important these days in the era of double-digit unemployment and company downsizings. Today, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is all the rage.

These programs are win-win. They not only have goodwill attached to them, but they can lessen the appearance of extravagance, imperative today, as the industry is still recovering from the "AIG effect."

These days, perception is everything. What sounds more positive? Beach Olympics or building bikes for underprivileged kids? A golf outing or creating goodie bags that are sent to troops



According to Helping Hands Rewards, founded by Hinda Incentives, Greyston Bakery is a fine example of a community enterprise that provides a win-win for all participants.

Photo courtesy of Helping Hands Rewards

events industry?" in 2007, 32 percent indicated that they had a good or high awareness. In 2008, this increased by 8 percentage points to 40 percent. This indicates that although awareness of CSR is rising only moderately, the industry is creating a higher rate of awareness of available education and resources.

The study concludes that there is growing awareness of CSR within the industry. This awareness is being matched by a higher number of CSR policies being implemented. Differences exist by experience and possibly age, whether you are European, Canadian or American, and whether you are a supplier or a planner.

Furthermore, the recently released FutureWatch 2010, sponsored by MPI in partnership with American Express, indicates that 73.1 percent of corporate planners say that CSR will be addressed for the foreseeable future.

overseas? Giving an overpriced watch as a reward or jewelry made by an artisan from a Third World country and marketed by a socially focused company?

In October 2007, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) conducted a survey of a random group of MPI members regarding CSR. In November of 2008, the same survey was sent to a second random group to see what changes, if any, have happened in regard to attitudes, understanding and practices in the community.

From 2007 to 2008, MPI sees an increased awareness of CSR issues and of industry initiatives offered to address the issues. When asked, "How aware are you with CSR issues in general," in 2007, 44 percent responded that they had a good or high awareness. This increased to 48 percent in 2008.

When asked, "As a professional in the meetings and events industry, how would you self-assess your knowledge of the CSR issues and opportunities that are facing the meetings and they had a good or high awareness. In 2008, this



"There is more awareness at the corporate level of being socially responsible. This [Helping Hands Rewards] is a perfect fit."

Michael Arkes  
President  
Hinda Incentives  
Chicago, IL

### 'Doing Good' Texas Roadhouse Style

Texas Roadhouse, a casual restaurant chain that operates more than 330 restaurants in 46 states, held a five-day program for 1,100 managing partners and spouses that included meetings, community service and fun in San Francisco in April in the midst of the AIG scandal. The group was based at The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, and The Fairmont San Francisco.

G.J. Hart, Texas Roadhouse president and CEO, revealed that the company spent \$2.5 million on the entire program and donated a million dollars in material and labor for community service projects that were done in San Francisco.

"This is a life-changing experience... Build-a-Bike is a great teambuilding experience, and you're giving something back."



Ashlee Peterson  
Account Manager  
Destination Services Corporation  
Avon, CO

"Helping Hands Humanitarian Day" activities included a United Service Organizations (USO) Stuffing Party held in Candlestick Park where 15,000 care packages were created for troops overseas. A campaign was held in all 325 Texas Roadhouse restaurants where thank-you cards were created that were then sent to San Francisco and were included in the care packages.

In addition, 12 homes were framed in conjunction with the Orange County Habitat for Humanity for injured troop members returning to the U.S. Others from the Texas Roadhouse group served lunch in a soup kitchen and refurbished the pews of an attached church.

"You have to give a little, to get a lot," Hart said. He emphasized to his employees that they serve much more than steak and potatoes: "We must serve the community."

Travis Doster, a Texas Roadhouse spokesperson, reported that in its post-program survey, this humanitarian day historically ranked as one of the group's favorite activities.

### Gearing Up For The Holidays

For the past two years, the world-renowned Broadmoor resort in Colorado Springs, CO, decided not to send its customers holiday gifts. Instead, the resort's staff, from the president to banquet captains, built bikes for underprivileged children in each customer's name.

Staff members at every level gathered for three hours in early December to complete the bikes. The Broadmoor, which opened its illustrious doors in 1918, features 744 guest rooms and suites including the brand new Broadmoor Cottages;

185,000 square feet of flexible event space; three championship golf courses; a tennis club; 25 retail shops; 18 on-property eateries, restaurants and lounges; and spa.

"Every year, we send something to our clients to celebrate the holidays," said Broadmoor Vice President of Sales and Marketing, John Washko. "With so many people needing that extra hand, we decided to make the bike donations in our clients' names. It's a fun and rewarding way to get our team involved and to do something really wonderful for members of the Colorado Springs community who may not have enough to give their children this season."

Destination Services Corporation (DSC), an Avon, CO-based destination management company that specializes in program development and event planning services for meeting planners, corporate travel companies and incentive groups around the world, helped plan the event.

The bikes were donated to Christmas Unlimited, Southern Colorado's largest toy distribution program, which helps an average of 3,500 families each holiday season. Christmas Unlimited started in 1923 and works hard to uplift parental self-esteem by providing a service that includes a simple application process and a store-like distribution system.

Over the past eight years, only 7 percent of the families helped have participated every year. During that same time, 60 percent of the families served have been "one timers" — families needing only a temporary helping hand.

"This is a life-changing experience for many. It certainly puts the holidays in perspective," explained Ashlee Peterson, an account manager for DSC. "Build-a-Bike is a great teambuilding experience, and you're giving something back. Some are surprised to learn that they can even use the activity as a tax write-off."

Humana Inc.'s Colorado MarketPoint sales team built and donated 16 bikes to Christmas Unlimited during its "All Hands Meeting" held last year at The Broadmoor. Humana is one of the nation's largest publicly traded health and supplemental benefits company. The MarketPoint sales team focuses on selling Medicare Advantage plans in Colorado.



**Humana Inc.'s Colorado MarketPoint sales team built and donated bikes and helmets to Christmas Unlimited during its "All Hands Meeting" held last year at The Broadmoor.**

Photo courtesy of Humana Inc.



**No corporate gifts this year. Instead, Colorado-based Destination Services Corporation arranged for The Broadmoor to build bikes for needy kids — a fun and rewarding exercise.**

Photo by Mic Garofolo

Approximately 40 Humana employees from Colorado attended the event that was extremely well received. "These reps come from all over the state and see each other maybe once or twice a year. This was a great way for them to spend time interacting," explained Paula Noble, a marketing sales management specialist who is also responsible for planning meetings. "Plus, this activity was great for Colorado Springs where we have an office. Humana is very big on giving back to the community and is always looking for ways to give back to our local areas."

Before each team could start building two bicycles, one for a smaller child and one for a teen, they had to answer trivia questions about the company and The Broadmoor. Once they answered the trivia questions successfully, they were allowed

to open the bike boxes and start building.

After all the bikes were assembled and examined by a safety inspector, Humana donated them and matching helmets to the charity.

Not only are these teambuilding programs effective ways to give back but there are many others as well. Examples include donating a banquet's leftovers to a food party or collecting unused hotel toiletries for local shelters.

### ViaCommunity Day All About Giving Back

Viacom International, consisting of BET Networks, MTV Networks and Paramount Pictures, the world's leading entertainment content company, has a ViaCommunity day annually. In 2009, more than 3,000 participated in 30 cities worldwide. From improving public spaces to assisting the less fortunate, a multitude of philanthropic activities were organized.

"Operation Goody Bag" was held at the company headquarters in New York's Times Square the last two years. Brown paper bags were decorated with drawings and inspirational messages and were then filled with candy, gum, a personal letter, original poetry and puzzles. In total, more than 200 employees participated, creating more than 1,000 bags. Viacom's president and CEO Philippe Dauman also participated.



**"When we delivered the boxes and they were waiting to thank**

The bags were then delivered to the Armed Forces Recruiting Station in Times Square where military personnel accepted them and to local firehouses. "Some had never had a conversation with a military person before. When we delivered the boxes and they were waiting to thank the group, many were so choked up they had tears running down their faces," explained Jane Cosco, a former middle school teacher and founder of "Operation Goody Bag."

Cosco created Operation Goody Bag for her students at East Brook Middle School in Paramus, NJ, not long after American soldiers, sailors and Marines were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003. To date, more than 100,000 goody bags have been shipped. For her effort, Cosco was awarded the President's Call to Service Award and met former President George Bush and First Lady Laura Bush.

Lisa McGahran, a Viacom manager of recruiting, made the initial connection with Operation Goody Bag. "Our people love it. They bring their creativity and get to help out our troops," she said.

### Process Simplified

Hotels, resorts, and convention and visitors bureaus are simplifying the process of partnering with community non-profit and volunteer organizations. One example is the Metropolitan Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau (MTCVB), which has a one-stop landing page about volunteering while in Tucson at [visittucson.org/volunteer](http://visittucson.org/volunteer).

The New Orleans Marriott recently introduced a voluntourism program to meet groups' demand for more volunteer opportunities in post-Katrina New Orleans. Named Voluntour Gumbo for the native New Orleans stew that blends influences from the city's convergence of cultures, the new program creates a one-stop shop for groups that matches group "voluntourists" with service projects in the region and customizes itineraries to create a personalized experience for meeting attendees.



(Left) Jane Cosco, founder of Operation Goody Bag received the President's Call to Service Award from then President George Bush and First Lady Laura Bush. (Right) Viacom CEO Philippe Dauman pitched in to create goody bags during ViaCommunity day.

Left Photo by Gene Cosco, Right Photo by Lisa Vreeland

### Gift Giving With A CSR Twist

Established in 1970, Chicago-based Hinda Incentives is one of the nation's leading specialists in motivating employees and sales forces, and providing incentives to dealers, distributors and clients. Hinda is a pioneer in the development and support of cutting-edge, Web-based motivational programs.

In 2006, Michael Arkes, president and CEO of Hinda Incentives, created Helping Hand Rewards, introducing to the incentive market products from all over the world made by underprivileged or at-risk women and men in the U.S. and less developed countries. Its objective is to assist socially focused enterprises in marketing and distributing their products, thereby combining CSR with gift giving and awards.

Arkes' relationship with nonprofit social enterprises started in 2004 when he volunteered for The Enterprising Kitchen, which provides work force development and support services to women who are working toward self-sufficiency and economic independence. The Enterprising Kitchen employs women who would otherwise have difficulty finding work — many are on welfare and about 40 percent have been in prison. It produces handmade soaps, bath oils and spa products (among other items) for gift baskets.

The organization wasn't familiar with the incentive industry, a way Arkes felt they could expand their business. It worked. In 2003, The Enterprising Kitchen had \$150,000 in sales that enabled them to help 25 women. In 2006, sales grew to \$670,000 with \$380,000 of that coming from incentives thus enabling the organization to help 75 women. Helping Hand Rewards currently has nine social enterprise partners

"There is more awareness at the corporate level of being socially responsible," explained Arkes. "This is a perfect fit."

With its zero-based profit structure, Helping Hand Rewards provides marketing, business development and distribution expertise to socially focused organizations that are interested in expanding their business into the incentive reward and recognition market.

The long-term objective of Helping Hand Rewards is to stimulate symbiotic relationships between those businesses seeking to demonstrate their commitment to supporting socially responsible initiatives and the grassroots organizations that create opportunities for people to improve their lives.

These products can add new meaning to incentive programs. Utilizing products that were manufactured by a social purpose business creates added value for the sponsoring company and the recipient, while giving back to the community.

Marriott International used Helping Hand Rewards to purchase iron washer baskets from World of Good to give as gifts for an executive meeting. Artisans from Moradabad, India, collect each individual iron ring from local repair shops, hand-welding each of the nearly 1,000 connection points.

The executive team was so impressed with the baskets that many have ordered others for their own teams.

Lisa Da Silva, an Orlando, FL-based premium consultant for HALO/ Lee Wayne, is credited with recommending Helping Hand Rewards to Marriott's sales and event team. "I came across Helping Hand Rewards at The Motivation Show. I was intrigued. I felt it was the year to not focus on luxury gifts and send a different message. I knew Marriott would be intrigued as it has very strong interests in corporate and environmental responsibilities."

Hinda Incentives is a company that practices what it preaches. As part of its 2007 and 2008 customer meetings, each attendee was able to select from four products from four different social enterprises. In addition, attendees were served brownies from Greyston Bakery, whose social mission is to provide a sustainable livelihood for workers who produce quality, locally made products in Yonkers, NY. In 2009, chocolate bars from Divine Chocolate were included in their welcome bags and a silent auction was held to support one of the social enterprises, Women Helping Other Women. The item auctioned was a quilt made by the wife of one of the attendees. The final bid for the quilt was more than \$1,000.

From buying gifts from socially responsible organizations to planning an event for employees that does good, not only will attendees be helping someone else, they will be helping to boost company morale. And happy employees translate into productive employees. **C&IT**