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HEADLINE: Study: Cause-Related Marketing Initiatives Distinguish Company Brand

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HIGHLIGHT:

84% of Americans are likely to switch brands to support a worthy cause when price and quality are equal.

BODY:

DAYTON, OH -- An all time high of 84% of Americans say they are likely to switch brands to support a worthy cause when price and quality are equal, according to a Cone Corporate Citizenship Study. With statistics like this in mind, companies such as Staples, Coca-Cola, Target and others set themselves apart by aligning with brand strengthening charities, such as the **SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation**, which provides free school supplies to teachers who need them. According to brand experts, allocating funds and resources to a non-profit whose mission complements a corporation's own mission can have unparalleled effects on brand appeal to consumers and the company's overall image.

The Kids In Need Foundation is one charity that provides corporations an opportunity to be involved philanthropically beyond simply writing a check, finding useful educational avenues for unsold products. While also donating dollars, leading companies like Target and Office Depot, donate product and discontinued stock to the Kids In Need Foundation, aiding the education of children who might not otherwise have supplies and supplying underfunded teachers with the materials to make their classrooms more imaginative places of learning.

For example, Staples, in addition to providing generous financial support, recently donated nearly \$100,000 worth of school supplies to the Kids in Need program. The product was harvested from the Staples 2004 vendor show in Orlando, FL, and was distributed to resource centers in Orlando and Fort Lauderdale.

"Kids in Need Resource Centers have a great track record of supplying teachers and students with the supplies they need to be successful," said Joy Errico, spokesperson for Staples Foundation for Learning. "Our continued support of this program is reflective of the exemplary work done by the SHOPA Foundation in helping low-income communities throughout the United States."

Corporate philanthropy also has a significant and often unexpected effect on a company's human resource dynamic. The Cone Corporate Citizenship Study indicated that employees whose companies support social issues are 40% more likely to say they are proud of their company's values and nearly 25% more likely to be loyal to their employers than those whose companies do not have such programs. With such marked benefits associated with charitable initiatives, increasingly companies are taking on philanthropic projects that support corporate initiatives.

"Our corporate partners are the lifeblood of our organization, and we are honored to be able to

work with such wonderful organizations who continue to find creative ways to assist the Kids in Need Foundation and ultimately, help those students to learn and to grow," Kids In Need Foundation director Scott Walters said. "Every child is a dreamer -- they dream of growing up, going to college, starting a career. Education is the key, and it all starts with the right tools. The Kids In Need Foundation works with businesses to make sure students in need of school supplies have the right tools for the job. Together, we can make their dreams become reality and we encourage other like minded businesses to contact us and work with us for this most worthwhile endeavor -- our children's educational future."

Jay Long, public affairs manager at Coca-Cola Bottling Company of North Texas says, "Coca-Cola has a responsibility to today's youth. They are our future employees, and we have a responsibility to take care of the next generation. Coca-Cola Bottling Company of North Texas has an Employee Volunteer Council which is made up of hundreds of employees who give of their time at the Kids In Need resource center. Our employees get to directly see the impact of our efforts, and with our in-school programs we've created with the center, they can even see how kids are responding in school with their new supplies."

"Working with the Kids In Need Foundation has helped us to engage with other retailers to align to recognize the need and help the children in our community," continues Long. "SHOPA furnishes the only large-scale school supply program in North Texas, where the number of impoverished students is staggering. We are proud to partner with a foundation that is fully committed to helping teachers help students. We have to take care of our kids."

Tom Nutile, vp of public relations for Staples echoes Long, adding, "Our mission at Staples is to serve our customers. We like to support those causes that not only do great things in our community, but also assist us in branding our company and aligning the good works that we do everyday -- helping businesses to grow, helping teachers, helping students -- and through the Kids In Need Foundation, we have found a real philanthropic partner. Together, we can make a positive impact in our communities."

The **SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation** is a national non-profit organization providing school supplies to impoverished children and under-funded teachers. A 501(c)(3) charitable organization founded in 1995 by SHOPA, the School, Home, & Office Products Association, the Foundation's mission is to recognize, promote, and support initiatives that foster educational excellence. The Foundation supports 21 Kids In Need Resource Centers that allow teachers from low-income schools to obtain free school supplies for their students. In addition, Kids In Need Teacher Grants provide K-12 educators with funding to provide innovative learning opportunities for students. Now in its tenth year, the **SHOPA Kids in Need Foundation** has distributed more than \$150 million in school supplies, directly benefiting 1.1 million students and 65,000 teachers annually. For more information, call 800-854-7467 or visit www.kidsinneed.net.

Coca-Cola Enterprises is the world's largest marketer, distributor, and producer of bottle and can liquid nonalcoholic refreshment. Coca-Cola Enterprises sells approximately 80% of The Coca-Cola Company's bottle and can volume in North America and is the sole licensed bottler for products of The Coca-Cola Company in Belgium, continental France, Great Britain, Luxembourg, Monaco, and the Netherlands.

Staples is an \$11 billion retailer of office supplies, furniture, technology and business services to consumers and businesses from home-based businesses to Fortune 500 companies in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Headquartered outside Boston, Staples invented the office superstore concept and today is the largest operator of office superstores in the world. The company has over 50,000 employees serving customers through more than 1,300 office superstores, mail order catalogs, e-commerce, and a contract business. More information about the company is available at www.staples.com.

SHOPA, founded in 1991, is a nonprofit trade association representing nearly 1,500 manufacturers, manufacturer representatives, retailers, wholesalers, distributors, commercial/contract stationers,

and service companies involved in the production, distribution, and sale of school supplies and office products. The Association also produces SBTS (SHOPA Buyer-to-Seller) Marketplace events, which facilitate pre-scheduled and one-on-one meetings. SHOPA, in cooperation with Messe Frankfurt and PROPAPER, is producing Paperworld USA in November, the international trade event for the school, home, and office products industry. For more information, visit the Web site at www.shopa.org.

Source: 2002 Cone Corporate Citizenship Study, The Role of Cause Branding (2002)

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