

A FOCUSED APPROACH TO PHILANTHROPY

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1. What are your thoughts, in general, on charitable giving?

I believe that we all have something that we can do to help others, whether that be through giving time, money or passion. Working with a number of smaller charities I have seen at first hand the positive impact that charitable giving can have. We all have a responsibility to 'give back' and a culture of giving leads to better society and sense of community.

2. Is your giving personal or corporate or a combination of both?

My giving is a combination of both. Working for a not for profit, all of our surplus at the NI Science Park is invested in our programmes supporting entrepreneurs and working with young people to inspire them to achieve their potential. Our ethos is community over company, and we have a network of people who give their time on a pro-bono basis to help others to succeed. Our vision is to have one of the most entrepreneurial knowledge economies which will provide jobs and wealth

3. How do you give to charity: monetarily, your own time as a volunteer or your specialist skills?

My personal giving is a mix of all three. Most of my time is given on charitable boards. I chair Arts & Business NI, an organisation which advocates and brokers business based creative development to position the arts as a catalyst to help achieve business solutions, while securing new income streams for the arts and cultural sector. I am also treasurer for Tides Training, an organisation working in conflict resolution and mediation and Treasurer for Angel Eyes NI, a local charity supporting parents of blind and partially sighted children.

4. What types of causes do you favour and why?

There are so many good causes, it is hard to choose. My approach is to work for and to support those charities with which I have a personal affinity or those that work in the areas that I am passionate about, such as education and innovation.

Are there specific charities or causes that you give to regularly? How do you choose which to support?

My niece and nephew are partially sighted and Angel Eyes NI was set up by my sister 8 years ago to address the lack of support for parents. This has been run on a voluntary basis and has grown from supporting a small number of families to now providing support to almost 500 families. As treasurer and trustee I am able to provide skills to help the charity grow in a sustainable way. In my professional career I am passionate about inspiring young people in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics and I really enjoy my time volunteering as a judge for BT Young Scientist and Young Enterprise. It also makes coming to work at the crack of dawn easier, as this is the one of the main purposes of the Science Park.

5. Do you believe that companies and individuals have a duty to help others? If yes, why?

Absolutely, we have all at sometime been helped along the way, and it is good for us as individuals and as companies to spend time, energy and money supporting others. I don't know of any company which regrets a commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility. Global exemplar TATA is showing the world, a new business model of enterprise and innovation, founded on a Charity and whose bottom line is doing the right thing for society.

At the Science Park we do a number of activities during the year to support charities and as a not-for profit invest our surpluses into our programmes to support

entrepreneurs and early stage companies with programmes at no cost to the participants. This is about creating a better society with more jobs and pathways into work which will help to sustain peace through prosperity. Personally speaking, it is very rewarding to work with charities and gives me a sense of purpose and perspective.

7. What is your message to business people who may be thinking about becoming more involved in strategic philanthropy?

Get involved now! At Arts & Business NI we are able to show the business benefits that ensue from working with and supporting the Arts. For example, better staff engagement and development and brand enhancement. Taking a more strategic approach creates a positive impact for both the business and the charities.

8. Giving Northern Ireland was set up last year to champion Philanthropy. Why do you think it is important that there is an organisation that helps businesses and individuals think more strategically about giving?

Creating a new culture needs a champion. Giving Northern Ireland has an important role to play in being an advocate for philanthropy both by business and the individual and provides a safe and creative space to talk openly about philanthropy. Celebrating those who are making a difference encourages others and the more businesses and individuals get involved the bigger and more positive impact there will be on our society.