

JOHN D'ARCY...

OPEN UNIVERSITY'S NORTHERN IRELAND CHIEF

John D'Arcy, The Open University National Director, IOD member since 2000.

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

I probably wouldn't be best known for quoting Winston Churchill but this great quote about giving in its widest sense came to me via Twitter recently: "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." The idea of giving or contributing to the communities in which we live, work and do business isn't new - but the ways in which businesses, and the people in those businesses, can look at charitable giving has. While hard cash is still important, in-kind help, volunteering and leadership support are often as important and, in some cases, more important.

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

I'm very lucky to work for an organisation, The Open University, with a strong social justice mission at its heart. Our mission of being open to people, places, methods and ideas extends beyond our formal courses to our unique facility to provide high quality higher education study materials free to the learners. The reason we do that is to help people and communities enhance their lives. Often through getting a taste for learning, people will then move onto more formal qualifications with ourselves or other institutions. In addition, I have a great team in Belfast who take part in the Belfast City Marathon and other events to raise money and awareness for local charities.

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

As a family, we donate to a number of charities privately in

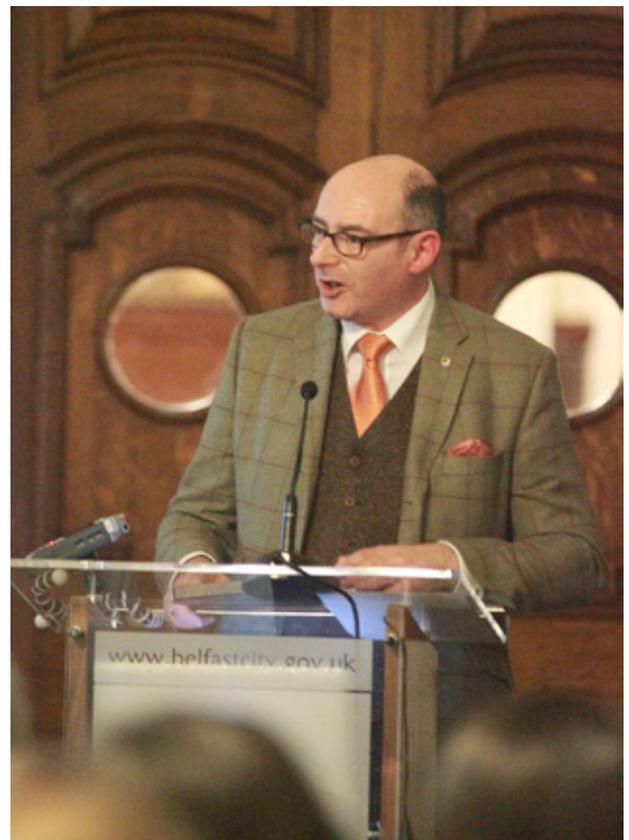
monetary terms but increasingly through sharing experience and skills. This can be as wide as being a board or committee member for a bigger project or being a sounding board, a critical friend or facilitator. One of the advantages of working and living in a small place like Northern Ireland is that you often can build friendships and networks with individuals and sectors in an organic way. I have been a volunteer Board member of organisations as different as Sport Northern Ireland and Audiences Northern Ireland but perhaps the one role which involved most time and creativity was in the formation of the Oh Yeah Music Centre. From an idea spawned by Gary Lightbody and Snow Patrol, a small group of us - Davy Matchett, Stuart Bailie, Lisa McElherron, Mike Edgar and Marty Neill - took the idea from scratch to operational all through volunteering and convincing others to help us in a pro-bono way as much as possible.

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

Anything that can help people build better lives is a winner for me. There is a lot of great work going on in the social economy sector here. Take, for example, The NOW Project which just continues to inspire me through its vision, ambition and the real benefits it delivers for people. It's a small, passionate team but it's guided by a volunteer board which brings the sort of experience and skills you couldn't buy.

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

Like most people, those charities that have impacted the lives of those close to me are important.



For example, The Northern Ireland Cancer Centre and the Alzheimer's Society would be high on my list.

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

I would rather phrase that in terms of companies and individuals wanting to help rather than necessarily having a duty to do so. I think that moving to a situation where you don't think twice about helping is where we need to be. However, there is an onus on potential recipients of support to be really clear about what they want and what the impact of your contribution of time, money or other support will do.

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

My message would be to get involved - there is a lot of help and good practice out there and Giving Northern Ireland is a great starting point. Whether it's an overview of the possible

or some hand-holding for the more innovative approaches, there's really practical help on hand. Plus the opportunity to learn from other businesses and organisation in terms of what works in particular sectors and locations is always a good thing,

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?

Giving Northern Ireland is a great initiative as it is a dynamic catalyst for awareness of the power of giving as well as helping individuals and organisations to focus on what they can do. Recently, The Open University, along with Queen's and Ulster, has worked closely with Giving Northern Ireland on a bursary scheme. For me, that experience was exceptional as Giving Northern Ireland helped shape our thinking in a much more strategic way.