

GIVING... WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

Ken Nelson, CEO of LEDCOM, a leading social enterprise and business enterprise centre.



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

A life which is all about getting, is an empty one and in the words of the supreme giver, "it is more blessed to give than receive".

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

It is a combination of both because I believe both individuals and organisations have a responsibility to support the common good.

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

All three : through regular financial giving, through volunteering and in using my skills through "in kind" support.

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

At a personal level, there are a number of causes which reflect my Christian faith and church involvement. This includes supporting those experiencing persecution and sponsoring children living in absolute poverty giving them the opportunity to attend school and church-based support so they have a safe-haven where they are known, loved and protected.

Through LEDCOM my colleagues and I are very committed to tackling unemployment and disadvantage. We regularly measure our social impact through "in kind" support which this year will equate to a value of over £100,000.

We positively encourage our staff to be involved in volunteering and to support community development activities through voluntary board

and committee memberships. Over recent years we've had the opportunity to work on projects in partnership with Business in the Community which have made a difference for disadvantaged individuals and groups.

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

I tend to focus on the charities and causes that reflect my interests and concerns, as well as being ones that I can have a long term commitment to, with regular updates.

As well as supporting various church based activities , I've an on-going interest in organisations such as Compassion and Open Doors.

Following a brain haemorrhage and stroke in 2013, I experienced at first hand the vital work done within the Acute Stroke Unit at the RVH and the Regional Acquired Brain Injuries Unit (RABIU) at Musgrave Park Hospital. I've been impressed by the work done by NI Chest, Heart & Stroke and the Mitre Trust - a charity based at Musgrave Park - to raise money to improve patient services and to fund new developments at Musgrave.

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

I firmly believe that everyone has a responsibility to help others. The poet John Donne captured this very well when he wrote, "No Man Is an Island", emphasizing how we are connected as individuals and communities. The timeless

words of the " golden rule" should motivate us to help and give : "Love your neighbour as yourself" and " Treat others the same way you want them to treat you."

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

Business and economic development is part of vibrant community life where through employment and entrepreneurship, individuals are enabled to help provide for themselves and their families, which in turn supports local communities.

Strategic philanthropy is not only a good thing to do for the benefit of the recipients - it makes good business sense at different levels.

It helps the communities where businesses usually draw their employees and customers from, thereby generating good will and positive community relations internally and externally. Business owners and employees better understand their corporate social responsibilities and why success

is about more than profit - it's also about the legacy a business leaves for current and future generations.

8. Giving Northern Ireland was set up 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?

Yes I do, for all the reasons I've mentioned already.

There is a tendency to expect government to have all the answers - and funding - to tackle all of society's ills.

That is unrealistic - it is vital that everyone plays a part in supporting individuals and communities that are struggling. This should be with the aim of not keeping them dependent, but facilitating them to find the solutions they need and to be as self-reliant as possible.

Giving Northern Ireland is well placed to help businesses and individuals think through how best to do that - and then make it happen.