

MAKING TIME FOR PHILANTHROPY...

Leigh Yeaman, Investment Director, Investec Wealth & Investment, member of IoD.

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

I grew up in a family where we regularly supported a variety of causes in a very traditional way such as taking part in sponsored walks or collecting jars full of 20ps to donate to a specific cause. My husband and I try to encourage our own children with the same spirit. We love to see them coming home having discovered a particular charity which has inspired them to contribute. They become very excited as they try to think of a new fundraising idea to gain support for the cause.

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

My giving is a combination of both; on a personal level it is in relation to organisations or causes that have impacted upon my family and friends. I'm also fortunate to work for a company whose core values include contributing to society, valuing diversity and respecting others. Investec places a huge importance on charities and supporting charitable initiatives. We have Social Investment champions in every office, who organise local volunteering activities and fundraising events, and everyone is given two days leave a year to volunteer gaining many valuable skills and memorable experiences in the process. The Give as You Earn payroll giving facility also enables donations directly from salaries to charities of choice.

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

On a personal level I give monetarily to my own personal charities and I'm also on the Board of Directors at Rathgael Gymnastics & Tumbling Club, which is a charitable organisation whose focus is on encouraging kids to be active and healthy.

What types of causes do you favour and why?

As a mum of three girls I tend to favour causes that support children and young people in general. I like to support causes helping families in difficulty, or aiding education and encouraging kids in a healthy lifestyle. I tend

to lean towards sports as the benefits are well known, such as, reducing health risks, building confidence in children and young people, and also improving their social skills.

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

At Investec we focus on empowering communities through education and entrepreneurship and also on supporting meaningful activities that either produce positive impact or prolong life on our planet. For example, 'Team Green' was set up when a group of colleagues in the Specialist Bank who were passionate about the environment got together. The Team is made up of volunteers from across the business and has a representative in each regional office including Belfast; on a personal level, I donate to charities such as Women's Aid, Wave, Odette Cancer Clinic and Think Pink for Breast Cancer and I also like to select specific causes during the year that come to the attention of our family.

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

Yes - I think that there is a duty to contribute and to be willing to help out where you can; everyone needs help sometimes. It is important to me and it is important to Investec Wealth & Investment and I believe that Northern Ireland benefits from a strong culture of charitable giving both from a personal and corporate level, and I hope that this continues.

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

Business people make strategic plans as a matter of course e.g. for their businesses, for their retirement, for their financial affairs and investments, and philanthropy is no different. Apply the same logic and assess what or where you want to invest, consider what the impact of your investment will be and what you hope to achieve over your chosen time horizon. Modern day philanthropy is dynamic with many opportunities to get involved.



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?

Businesses and individuals, when asked, are often happy to contribute, however, when it comes to initiating philanthropic ventures many find it difficult to set the time aside to gather the information they need or may be unsure where to start. Giving Northern Ireland is an innovative organisation that fills this niche raising the profile of philanthropy, getting people talking and thinking strategically. It is surprising what can come from a quick cup of coffee and a chat...