



B4 New life under the sea **B3** Ex-principal's memories of village school preserved in book

What donors want ≠ What charities want

Most non-profit groups prefer cash to donations in kind, study shows

By PRISCILLA GOY

COMPANIES want to help by getting their staff to volunteer, but most non-profit groups would rather receive donations.

Firms want to donate to specific projects, but charities prefer that the cash is given for a general purpose, allowing them to decide how to use it.

These mismatches between companies and charities are highlighted in a recent study, in a bid to raise awareness and iron out such kinks so precious resources are not wasted.

"Both groups need to take a proactive stance in structuring corporate giving programmes to benefit both parties and the community at large," said a spokesman for the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC).

The study, done pro-bono for NVPC, listed 10 "expectation gaps" between firms and charities.

A common gap, for example, is

that firms prefer to donate gifts rather than cash, but charities are not so keen on receiving donations in kind.

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ENOUGH OF GIFTS
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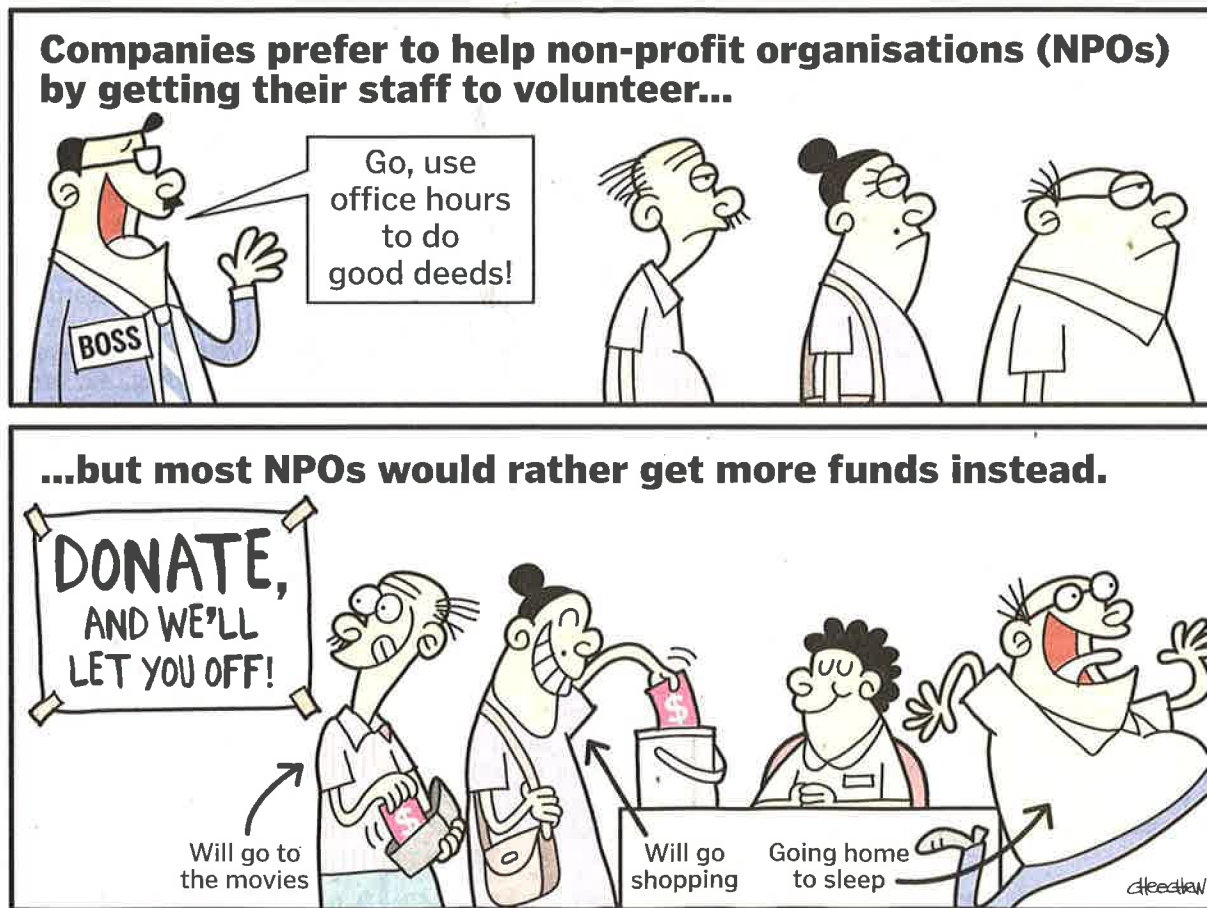
— Singapore Children's Society executive director Alfred Tan

Another mismatch raised is that charities prefer partnerships with companies to last two to five years, but most companies think these should be shorter, lasting one to three years.

A few companies said this was because they wanted to expose their staff to a variety of volunteering opportunities catering to different causes.

Another study on skills-based volunteerism — leveraging on the expertise of volunteers to provide corporate services to help groups — also found a gap between companies and non-profit organisations (NPOs).

For instance, more than half of



the 52 corporations polled were willing to offer support in "human resource and leadership development", such as giving advice on manpower planning. But only 15 per cent of the 58 social organisations said they needed help in this area.

The study was conducted by Empact, which promotes skills-based volunteerism. Its findings were presented at a conference last month.

NVPC and Empact said they will share these findings with com-

panies and NPOs so as to minimise the mismatches. Firms have shown an interest in improving how they give to the community, said the NVPC spokesman.

Such strong engagement with welfare groups is key to making the partnership mutually beneficial, said Keppel and SingTel when contacted for comments. Both companies had taken part in the NVPC study.

"There must be common understanding, aligned interests and joint commitment between both

parties so we are able to match our giving to meet their needs," said a SingTel spokesman.

Communication has helped to smooth out some differences between corporate partners and non-profit groups.

Said Mr Tan of the Singapore Children's Society: "After we tell them about our other projects which tend to receive less funding, some of them change their minds and will donate to these projects instead."

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Some 'expectation gaps'

FIVE of the 10 "expectation gaps" in corporate giving from a recent study:

- Most companies prefer to help non-profit organisations (NPOs) by getting employees to volunteer, but most NPOs prefer cash donations.
- Most NPOs want companies to donate to their general pool of funds, but most companies prefer to give to specific projects.
- Most companies want to involve many staff members in volunteer activities, but NPOs require only a small group of volunteers for their regular programmes.
- Some companies think volunteering is meaningful if there is interaction with beneficiaries. But some NPOs feel that what matters is getting help where they need it the most, such as labour-intensive work if there is a lack of manpower.
- Most welfare groups want companies to organise the volunteer activities. But a few firms want the help groups to take charge instead.