



The Magic of Building Alliances

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By Kathleen Gage

Enlightened individuals understand the power of building bridges and giving back to their community. So much in fact, progressive companies often have programs that allow staff and management to become involved in a variety of nonprofit groups. In many cases, individuals are allowed to participate during company time and are given a company-sponsored budget to pay for membership dues and make donations.

There is magic in giving back to the community. For many it is simply the right thing to do. For others, it helps keep balance and perspective in their lives during these tumultuous times. Community involvement offers a great opportunity to keep staff and management motivated and feeling appreciated. Additionally, the power of networking that takes place from community involvement is beyond compare.

Deciding what organizations to participate in can be challenging. One organization that has helped to address this challenge is The Utah Women's Alliance for Building Community (UWABC).

"UWABC acts as an umbrella organization, bringing together women representing diverse business and professional backgrounds and organizations within our community. UWABC provides its members with an aligned and unified voice, to give them the power to strengthen the fabric of our community by creating a pattern for positive political, social and economic

changes," comments Phyllis LeFevre, founder and President of the organization. As partner and co-founder of Momentum, an innovative lifestyle training and coaching firm specializing in health, fitness and nutrition, Phyllis saw a need to provide a venue for people from all walks of life to join together for a common cause.

A small sampling of organizations represented either as a company or with affiliate members are Zions Bank Women's Financial Group, The American Cancer Society, KRCL Radio, The National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Utah, Meta Logia Consulting, Westminster College, Essentials for Natural Living, Cohesion consulting, and Salomon Smith Barney.

"Zions Bank encourages staff participation with their respective communities. Participation in these organizations has a positive effect on staff members and the Women's Financial Group. It is a win-win situation. Staff are involved with the organizations they consider important to them and their families; and those organizations receive additional resources and expertise needed. An additional benefit for both the staff and the organization is the networking opportunities involvement provides," offers Lori Chillingworth, Senior VP and Manager of the Women's Financial Group.

"By participating with the American Cancer Society, both as a member of the Community Council and as chair for the 2002 Salt Lake City Relay for Life, I met (on a personal level) many business owners who have been touched by cancer. This added dimension created greater respect between banker and client and enhanced the relationship that would not have

existed otherwise.” Lisa Salisbury, VP, Zions Women’s Financial Group.

For many, finding purpose beyond their careers is essential to their happiness. With morale in many organizations at an all time low community involvement helps to build spirits.

“It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm and satisfaction in our employees and my business partners when they are given an opportunity to provide for someone in need.” Julie Kilgore, Board Member UWABC, Principal, Wasatch Environmental, Inc., and a member of the Board of Trustees for The Road Home, an emergency shelter and support services for the homeless.

With a desire to network and build whatever connections make sense to the members, UWABC is a great venue for individuals to share their unique gifts and talents. There is an incomparable inclusiveness of all walks of life. Everyone who supports their vision is welcome.

“Uniqueness comes in inviting anyone who wants to help build community to come and offer her (even his) perspective on how to do that. People come to the meetings representing their businesses or organizations, yet they choose to speak about how they contribute to the greater good. The tone of the meetings changes through a wonderful perspective--it's not about me; it's about all of us,” suggests Beth Guss, owner, Cohesion.

As the culture of Utah continues to expand and change, building diverse alliances is the direction many are choosing to go. A direction that is sure to create magic for all.

For information on UWABC visit www.uwabc.org

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