Making a Difference: Corporate and Social Responsibility at LP

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The term "corporate responsibility" is one that is used liberally in today's legal industry. Every law firm (as well as every corporate entity) knows that its public reputation can be strengthened, to some extent, by giving to those less fortunate. At many firms, giving takes the form of monetary donations. While the recipients no doubt appreciate the generosity of these firms, the long-term benefit to the recipient organizations and the communities they serve often is fleeting.

Although the primary goal of the Edge is to provide articles that will help highlight legal issues that you should consider in your business and personal life, we felt it would be beneficial to tell you about an alternative corporate giving model that Levenfeld Pearlstein has created to address this issue. This model closely integrates "corporate responsibility" into our overall culture and supporting organizations where our resources
(money, time, skills, etc.) make a tangible impact on the organizations we support. "While many law firms really do care about their communities and are very sincere about supporting those in need, they often fail to utilize the same strategy in their corporate responsibility initiatives that they do in their core business, and that leads to contributions that have little lasting impact on those who receive them," says LP chairman Bryan Schwartz. "Instead, corporate and social responsibility must take a holistic approach that weaves together strategy and the firm's constituencies: clients, owners, employees and the community at large."

LP's integrated approach seeks to merge the best firm and employee practices, including environmental sustainability and strategically aligned philanthropic direction that is impactful rather than merely supplemental. The goal is to make a difference as a firm and to see the effort and resources make a tangible difference to the organizations the firm supports. This goes beyond required pro bono, holiday toy drives and matching programs, elevating social responsibility to a key strategy for business and personal success.

For example, in 2010 Levenfeld Pearlstein awarded grants to the Erie Family Health Center and the Greater Chicago Food
Depository. Each organization submitted to the firm's extensive application process, designed to ensure that LP's monetary contributions not only go to those organizations that need them the most, but also that they go to organizations that either hope to become self-sustaining or could not provide services without our funding.

The Erie Family Health Center used LP's grant to fund the entire annual salary of the only full-time social worker at Ryerson Elementary School, where the organization operates a health clinic. Without the firm's contribution, students at the school, located in one of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods, would go without essential mental health services.

The firm's contribution to the Greater Chicago Food Depository went to fund its Chicago Community Kitchen, a self-sustaining program that trains unemployed individuals for careers in the foodservice industry. Through the program, these individuals receive hands-on training while preparing meals for needy school-aged children and senior citizens. The combination of feeding those in need, while at the same time providing much-needed career training, underscores the synergies and strategy that LP seeks in making its grants.
This approach enables our firm, despite its relatively small size of 100 employees, to share, highlight and leverage our corporate and social responsibility successes and efforts within the legal industry and beyond.

We will continue to keep you informed of our sustainability and social responsibility efforts, which would not be possible without the support of our clients.

Thank you from all of us at LP.