

## Guest Column for 11/15/12- Jennifer Levine Hartz, Corporate Hartz LLC

Thursday, November 15 is National Philanthropy Day®. The word “philanthropy” comes from the Greek roots *phil* – loving and *anthropo* – mankind. By definition, charitable donors and volunteers love mankind. However, in our political arena, each of these words is fraught with personal and political overtones. Are corporations people? Does mankind include women? How does charity improve our world? What exactly is love? Why do philanthropists share with others?

In honor of National Philanthropy Day®, let us put politics aside and focus on making a difference in our communities, here and worldwide. Today, both companies and people actively invest for this purpose, but do they have the same motivations and goals? I certainly hope not; otherwise all parties will fail.

Corporate Hartz, LLC works with both businesses (made up of human beings) and human beings (made up of heart, head, body, and spirit). The private sector exists primarily to generate return on investment (ROI). In this case, ROI is the benefit of an investment minus the cost of the investment, divided by the cost of the investment. Human beings also make calculations of ROI every day. If we splurge on a vacation, will it bring us enough joy to justify the expenditure? If I move to live near my family, can I earn enough money to retire? That isn't about mathematics.

Corporate Social Responsibility will remain in our lexicon, if and only if, executives approach it with an expectation of financial ROI. I often tell executives of public companies, “My mother owns a share; please invest it wisely so she can be secure.” To business owners I ask, “Don't you want this company to be strong when you are gone?” The virtuous cycles I have witnessed in the last 20 years are astounding: companies that view community engagement as a critical piece of their own sustainability, embrace the opportunity, reap the benefits, and therefore invest *more* to serve our planet.

However, 90% of charitable giving comes from individuals (Giving USA, 2012). This fact presents the opportunity for a broad awareness campaign to change the game for nonprofit organizations and their causes. In our work with family foundations, donor-advised funds, individual donors, and volunteers, I watch philanthropy make a difference. I ask these clients, “What do you hope to achieve with philanthropy?” The ROI for human beings' donations is, simply, to see their time and treasure used well to benefit the world. The secret is that the virtuous cycle also comes into play for people who give and serve. Their lives are improved by their commitment to enrich mankind, they engage even more, and society reaps the rewards.

Today, on National Philanthropy Day®, I hope that each business leader reading this article considers how to invest in a socially responsible manner, and that each individual shares an extra dollar and an extra hour to better our world. The return on investment for every person, for each business, and for the world is priceless.