

BY JOAN CHAYKIN



There are some people who are driven to give. Their goal is not to simply have a prosperous business, but to reach within their depths to elevate those in extreme poverty. Raman Agarwal, president & CEO of Akran Marketing (asi/115329), is one of these people. Even during difficult economic times, he's committed to giving back, and he wants to pass the torch to "show the incoming generation that life is about giving."

In addition to heading up a successful distributor firm, Agarwal is the founding director of the Ottawa-based Akran Foundation, a nonprofit with the goal of supporting a variety of charities to help the disadvantaged, especially children living in poverty. The foundation also has a liaison office in Delhi, India. According to the foundation's website, [www.akranfoundation.com](http://www.akranfoundation.com), they "have a mandate to act with compassion toward solving the world's most intractable problems by promoting sustainable social and environmental progress. Our recognition that we all need to play our part in making the world a better place is reflected in the work of the Akran Foundation and its local and international community support."

Through the foundation, Akran Marketing distributes 10% of its annual net profits in the form of donations, grants, technical expertise, products and services, primarily in Canada, India and China. The foundation matches employees' contributions and donates imprinted wholesale-priced items to nonprofit and charitable marketing efforts, as well as free overstock products. Gift collections, auctions and fundraisers are held to raise awareness and money for needy communities.

Agarwal says business is going "really well, however, the past five years have certainly been more challenging," he says. "One has to be very innovative and creative these days, otherwise the negative economic conditions will damage, if not kill, your business."

Even in lean times, Agarwal feels strongly that businesses focus on charitable efforts. "Social responsibility must be part of the company's philosophy, and an ongoing initiative," he says. "No matter how your business is doing, you must always engage in some way to make regular charitable contributions."

The Akran Foundation currently supports 25 charities, including The Missing Children's Network of Canada, the Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre, The Children's Wish Foundation, United Way and Habitat for Humanity. On the environmental end, Akran supports the audit programs needed for ISO 14001 certification, the global standard for environmental management systems.

Agarwal lists the following advantages for companies to be involved with a charity: "One feels good that he or she has done something good for underprivileged children; one sets an example for our next generation; clients see that you are not just after their business; you're putting something back into the community; you're well-respected in your own community; your staff, clients, suppliers and partners – the people who made it possible for you and your business to succeed in the first place – like to see their success is being shared." –JC

Source: [ASI Publications](#)