

In Your Own Backyard

Organizations to which you already belong can be a great source of both new business and volunteerism. The two can go hand-in-hand, in fact, but the obviousness of that is not always apparent, says Sonya Beam, CAS, co-owner of The P.O.P Shop (*asi/288992*), in Alpharetta, GA.

Since 2002, Beam and her husband have been members of North Point Community Church, with Sunday attendance of more than 17,000 on three campuses. When she was asked to participate in one of the church's programs for elementary school children, it connected her in a bigger way with the organization and its members, but she didn't make a point of telling everyone about her company.

"I kind of felt like some other promotional products company already had an in, and it would take a lot for them to make a change," she says. "Also, I wasn't sure I wanted to be so responsible for their promotional products business; if something beyond

my control went wrong, I might be forced to change churches out of embarrassment."

Gradually, however, she became bolder. As a thank-you to a church staffer, she sent a note along with a small nail file with The P.O.P. Shop logo. This modest gesture opened the gates; the staffer and other colleagues visited Beam's showroom, business began flowing her way, and the church now is among The P.O.P. Shop's top clients.

"My husband and I now hold three volunteer positions at the church, and we always look for other ways to give back through tithing or donating products," she says. "In retrospect, I find it ironic that we were originally an 'un-churched' couple who didn't have time to go because we were always working and looking for ways to grow our business. Sunday seemed like our only day off. Who knew that slowing down and getting involved would be the way to grow our business?"