SOLD ON SCHOOL FUND-RAISING

BUSINESSES USE FUND-RAISING FOR EDUCATION AS A MARKETING TOOL.

By Marcelle Tessler

Supplemental funding for schools used to consist of occasional cake sale or carwash to pay for a special function or new uniforms. But not any longer. Businesses are becoming increasingly involved in the funding of education, both public and private.

"Public schools are discovering that they can no longer depend just on state funds," says Candace Townsend, who has occupied administrative positions in public and private education, and is currently development director for Teurlings and St. Genevieve Catholic schools. Campbell Soup labels, Community Coffee bag, Quaker Oats packaging, Pepsi caps and grocery store receipts are being used to enlarge a school's treasure chest. Individual programs vary, but proceeds are used to purchase everything from computers to basic essentials, such as office supplies and classroom equipment.

The concept is that by redeeming certain items from participating sources, schools can cash in on extra funds. Community Coffee's program, which recently ended, refunded 15 cents for every bag that was collected from participating schools. Of course, the schools procure the necessary items from students, who presumably encourage Mom and Dad to frequent the brand or store sponsoring the program. Teurlings' and St. Genevieve's take was almost $2,000 from the Community Project, and will be split accordingly between the two schools and used for library funds. "It's up to us as to the amount of money we generate or earn participating in the program," says Townsend. "I think it's an advantage for both." Which, of course, is exactly why businesses engage in such ventures. The generosity of corporate America does have bounds. "Cause-related marketing," as it is termed, is a direct tie-in between marketing and school fund-raising, but Schechter thinks the concept is here to stay. Cause-related marketing furthers business' mission to sell more products, and it earns income for non-profit organizations, thereby benefiting the school and heightening the image of the contributor simultaneously.

A survey that was compiled last year by the Council on Foundations concluded that companies are betting their gifts on "enlightened self-interest," meaning they're giving only if they get something in return. The report further indicates that the most popular new cause for companies is public education.

ACADIANA BOTTLING CO. IN LAFAYETTE HAS CONTRIBUTED $1 million to area schools since beginning its Cash Cap program in 1984. The premise is simple. Acadiana Bottling refunds matching amounts of money to students and their schools when bottle caps labeled with various amounts of money are submitted. The amounts start at 25 cents and escalate to $500. This is known in the industry as an "under the crown" promotion. "It's a very common program," says Nancie delaHoussaye, director of event and school marketing at Acadiana Bottling.

The program was an outgrowth of continued solicitation from various schools and organizations within them. "We just couldn't keep giving out money without help from the schools," she says. "It was designed to help balance our corporate contribution level. There's plenty of money out there, but they need to drink our products to get it." There's also another reason. The soft drink industry is heavily dependent upon a young market. Nationally, it's estimated that 40 percent of sales are derived from youth. By getting children to drink its product, Pepsi stands a good chance of creating a loyal customer.

School marketing is very vital because it brings the use up with the product," says delaHoussaye. "It's a vital part of our market." It has also made Acadiana Bottling the largest corporate contributor to education in the area, she says.

The Real Superstore is also hoping to get into the act with a new offering called Schoolmates that began this month. The store plans to reimburse 1 percent of all money spent in registrater receipts to participating schools that turn them in. It's open to any school in Acadiana, and runs through May 7. Though it's still too early to gauge the results, if initial response is any indication, Schoolmates should be a resounding success.

"As early as it is, it's overwhelming," says Richard Goff, manager of the Lafayette store. "It should go over well. It's also good business. The idea was originally conceived as a means of increasing business. "We were looking for new and different ways to market ourselves," says John Estes, Superstore vice president.

IN BUSINESS, CORPORATE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOOLS BASED ON SALES IS KNOWN AS "CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING."

SOME PEOPLE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH SUCH BLATANT SELF-PROMOTION in the name of education. "How often have you seen big business do anything that was in the interest of anyone but themselves?" says Clark Robensteine, USL assistant professor in the department of educational foundations and leadership.

On a broad scale, Robensteine deplores the growing national trend of mixing business and education. "The result isn't necessarily good. It sounds good and it looks good. But it has broad emotional appeal and support," he says. "These programs are good only if the existing programs are good, and they're not. Too many students have not benefited even roughly equally. He thinks that education needs to be restructured before anything substantive can be accomplished, and this is where he thinks business efforts fall flat. The answer, he feels, should be more concerned about what is being taught and how. "By contributing to the system as it is, 1 is running counter to what the interests of the economy," he says. "It's precluding large numbers of students from gaining knowledge. Again, it's not changing anything. It's perpetuating the system as is." He is equally disturbed about specific programs on a local level. "Just yesterday, for example, to simply donate a certain part of all sales to all parish schools," says Robensteine.

He's also concerned about built-in inequities with such giveaways. "Certain folks at certain levels will be doing a lot more shopping." He theorizes that more affluent parents will almost certainly contribute more receipts due to their financial status than parents of students at a less affluent school district in Acadiana area. "Their intentions may be fine, but it's a program that's been cut critically or unthinkingy." Townsend thinks that they are thinking too much. "They think they're very clever. We're not asking parents to do something they're not already doing," she says. "They see these programs as any type of intervention, nor holding educational institutions hostage. They seem to be trying to help." St. Genevieve and Teurlings plan to actively participate in the Schoolmates program, and parents will be notified of the project via mailers and the school newsletter. Townsend views such programs as an extension of the Adelphi School concept. She doesn't, however, feel that those marketing approaches will ever eliminate traditional fund- raising activities that are inherent within private schools and are becoming an increasing source of supplemental income to parochial institutions.

"There's more opportunity to raise funds from different areas to help the program," she says. "It will only enhance those opportunities." In fact, she plans to approach other supermarkets in the area to encourage participation in funding for school computers. "It's opening up a whole new field," she says. "In past years, it was more of a giving going to them. Now, it's a reimbursement. Tribal businesses are realizing the importance of becoming involved in education. But the introduction of management techniques and leaving interesting might be more proper goals by business to pursue, according to Schecter. "Maybe we're not challenging them enough. Corporations are beginning to say we have to do something. Charity, it's not just the money. He thinks the interest of American business has been heightened by the extraordinary business survey of the legislature and their fierce dedication to education. He expects corporate involvement to be a continuing trend into the 1990s. "Education is the problem of the '80s and I think we will see it very much in the future," says C. R. "Mandy" Couvillon-McAuliff, uninvolved, alongside KLFY-TV and Acadiana Bottling, in the Cajunjette Enter- tainment Series. The program has surpassed more than $10,000, she says. "I think it's the start of something. We're trying to get the message out to Lafayette Parish public schools to get the good will, and the LFAFY Parish public schools to get the good will, and the money." The monies will be presented Tuesday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. at the Lafayette Parish Civic Center, and the LFAFY Parish public schools to be awarded, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce's Publick Edent

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LAFAYETTE PARISH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT MAX SKIDMORE is leery of any marketing schemes that prey on the captive audiences available in school settings. He advises caution when dealing with groups that seek to take advantage of students. "We try to resist that in every way we can."
The Superstore head, he applauds the Superstore's efforts to generate funds toward education. "It's great they are providing these funds without any strings attached," says Skidmore. "They are to be commended for this type of program." He acknowledges that the strategy inadvertently encourages parents to frequent the store, but says, "It's a small price to pay for the amount of funds and the ease with which they can be obtained.

The question of whether schools are being held captive to the profit motive of U.S. industry will undoubt- edly be debated well into the next decade. But it's a hard and cold fact that today's educators are constantly on the alert for new and innovative ways to raise money. "You must be creative," says Schechter. "There are so many nonprofit organizations that can tell a good tear-jerker story that we have to find a different way. The traditional fund- raising, selling raffle tickets, might well be joined by yet another R, raising money. Like it or not, business and education will have to be indefinitely entwined, and the future holds the potential for even more involvement. Asks Robensteine, "What school system will turn down money?"