

Salesforce: One percent solution guides donations

BY LAURA IMPELLIZZERI

San Francisco Business Times Contributor

You could say Salesforce.com and its charitable foundation grew up together. They started about the same time and expanded in tandem, locally and then internationally, always finding a niche at the forefront of philanthropy.

Now, they are maturing together. At its founding in 1999, Salesforce donated employees' time to San Francisco youth development organizations. The employees helped set up computers and train kids to use them and tackled other technology challenges for the agencies, said Steve Wright, director of innovation for Salesforce.com Foundation.

PROFILE Bay Area Giving

SALESFORCE.COM

HQ: San Francisco.

CEO: Marc Benioff.

Bay Area employees: 1,181.

2006 revenue: \$497.1 million.

2006 Bay Area giving: \$1.9 million.

tool — to help nonprofits measure the outcome of their work, again a hot arena in philanthropy as both funders and service providers are focused on reproducing best practices.

CEO leader in philanthropy

But Salesforce's push to integrate phi-

lanthropy into the core of its business remains, Wright said. With a three-pronged strategy of donating 1 percent of employees' time, 1 percent of the company's equity and 1 percent of its product, Salesforce — through its Salesforce.com Foundation, started in 2000 — now "evangelizes" about how corporations can improve their communities, Salesforce spokeswoman Erin O'Keefe said. CEO Marc Benioff has written two books on the topic and the company hosts a philanthropy event at the annual World Economic Forum, she said.

"Our goal is for every emerging company in the United States to adopt the 1 percent model and make a real impact on their communities," O'Keefe said. A typical nonprofit client now diving into the key task of measuring outcomes is Family



Services Agency, the Bay Area's largest social service case management organization, Wright said. "Before, the best that they could do was report off of the hours that they provided to their client," Wright said. "Now, they are able to report on (a specific client's) progress toward a mental health cure. ... They are actually able to report on what a client is doing."

What sets apart on-demand online database management tools like Salesforce's, Wright said, is that they are much more flexible than earlier software. "It's as easy to create a new field or a new piece of work flow as it is to manage data," he said of the Salesforce product's use. Earlier database management tools,

designed to measure a financial bottom line, did not adapt well to managing less quantitative information, leaving nonprofits in the lurch because they didn't have the funds to support development of the tools they needed to measure the outcomes of their work.

He called the company's strategy the "democratizing of customization."

Volunteerism grows

Salesforce.com continues to support its employees' volunteerism with grants to projects that employees are involved in. It announced this month that it would give \$250,000 to projects at 46 nonprofits around the world, including creating a computer lab in Cambodia to improve literacy, enabling meaningful Internet communication between Israeli and Palestinian students and creating interactive comic book games to help terminally ill children at George Mark Children's House in San Leandro express their feelings, according to a company statement.

And its commitment continues in the Bay Area with \$1.9 million in giving. At the city of San Francisco's Project Homeless Connect, Salesforce employees donate time, and the company's information management tool keeps track of which clients take advantage of which services. "Anyone who looks inside that building knows there's a lot of data flying around, and we help them manage that data effectively and know who came through," Wright said.

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