it does not reflect gifts in kind. Some companies make mention of some of
their projects, say in the annual report, but according to my questionnaire
survey replies, most would not disclose even the cash total of their gifts if
they were no longer required to do so. Although it might be reasonable to
question why companies are so reticent in publicising their charitable giving, it
is clearly inappropriate for charities to take a crude, simplistic view of the kind
of pay offs for which companies are looking.

Companies are critical not only of the attitude of some charities in soliciting
donations, but also of the competence with which they administer their
appeals. A number of writers mention the negative reaction likely to result
from an approach which is not personalised or which is to a chairman who
has been retired or dead for years. It is also important to suggest an air of
efficiency by getting the name and address of the company right. Most of the
necessary information can be obtained from directories like The Times
1000
d. Although the information is reasonably up-to-date, Hilary Blume
comments that it might be worth telephoning to check
d. This is also a good
way of finding the appropriate person to whom the request should be made.

There are also complaints that some charities mail their requests too near to
the time they need the money. Many companies have an appeals committee
which may meet only once a quarter, or which may even decide its main
allocations on an annual basis. While an individual employee may be given
discretion to disburse small sums at any time, many larger requests are bound
to fail because there will be no possibility of making a donation of the desired
size before the appeal date has passed.

No doubt there are many individual points which annoy company donors, but
the final one I wish to mention here is the provision of feedback information.
It seems that companies often fail to receive a direct acknowledgement of a
gift or any report on how the project they have supported, or the charity in
general, are progressing. Reporting back to donors may be seen as a duty,
but in the case of large donors it is also likely to be a very cost-effective way
of maintaining goodwill for further appeals.

Criticisms of Companies

While there are undoubtedly shortcomings in the way in which some charities
approach the business world for funds, it should be said that some of the
problems, if not the fault of companies, could at least be alleviated by them.
It is not surprising that requests for help often seem to be very general or
inappropriate when so little is known about the policies and administrative
procedures of companies when making donations.

There is a considerable amount of information available on companies, but
little of it is of direct relevance to a charity seeking to raise funds. Foster
Murphy recommends
d that charities should seek industrial or geographical
associations when soliciting donations, as this exploits the preference of many
companies for giving money to causes with some sort of connection with their
operations. My own research suggests that charities do indeed look for such
associations. These can be discovered in sources such as The Times 1000 or
the Yellow Pages. However, much of what would be useful to know beyond
this — favoured types of charity, who to write to, preferred date of
application etc. — is not generally available and so appeals are limited in their
specificity and sophistication.

One way for companies to divulge more useful information would be in
relying to charities, whether their request is met or not. The statement could
indicate to the charity whether a future request would be treated favourably
and, if so, how and when it should be made. Some charities already keep
records of companies which have supported them in the past and these would
presumably welcome any additional guidance. At present, some companies
justify their rejection of a request by saying that it was too late, when in fact
they have no intention of ever supporting the charity. This may appear to
soften the blow in the short term but misleads and encourages the charity to
try again at a later date and so incur unnecessary fund raising costs.

An alternative approach would be for companies to take more positive steps
to declare their donations policy and practices. There are signs that the
secrecy which has traditionally surrounded the topic is beginning to disappear.
The B.O.C. Group, for example, have made available a statement on their
donations policy, a practice which seems likely to become more widespread.
A number of people have also written about their own companies in a
Directory of Social Change book, Raising Money from Industry, which has
already been alluded to
d.