

# Cause Survey 2009

In spite of the recession, consumers still expect cause efforts and corporations are responding with renewed commitment

**S**onic, the 50-plus-year-old chain of fast-food drive-in restaurants, launched its “Limeades for Learning” campaign in September 2009. The decision to tackle education came after much deliberation about which cause and which partner would be appropriate for the company. After consulting with its franchisees and customers, the company realized that a cause program benefiting public education was a solid fit.

“We built our drive-ins in a lot of small communities where our competitors weren’t going,” says Nancy Love Robertson, SVP of communications for Sonic, which works with Barkley PR as its AOR. “Consequently, we have deep relationships with our communities. As we began to galvanize our thoughts around cause marketing, we understood intrinsically that every one of our communities has a public education component.”

While consumers struggle to maintain financial contributions to charities, corporate efforts are trying to fill the gap, finds the 2009 *PRWeek/Barkley PR Cause Survey*. **Tonya Garcia reports**

The company recognized that teachers in the public education systems where its restaurants are located had a need for supplies to help them better do their jobs. Partnering with DonorsChoose.org, Sonic sought to raise \$500,000 during the month of September to fund small projects initiated by public school teachers.

Instructors registered their projects on DonorsChoose.org and customers who purchased a drink from Sonic received a unique code to use to vote for a teacher’s project on LimeadesforLearning.com. The programs with the most votes received donations. At press time, 1,420 projects had received a total of \$637,944 in funding.

Launching a cause marketing campaign in the middle of an economic downturn might seem like odd timing, but the company wasn’t dissuaded by the recession.

“It’s something we’ve been working on for quite some time,” says Dominic Losacco, VP of marketing for Sonic. “We know the recession has hurt cause marketing, but it’s also hurt schools.”

That thinking aligns with consumer expectations, according to this year’s *PRWeek/Barkley PR Cause Survey*. Of the 530 women polled, 91% said it was important for companies to support a cause, an increase from 86% in 2008. Moreover, 64% of consumers polled expect companies to align themselves with a cause.

“Cause gives companies a way to engage with consumers, and new ways for nonprofits and companies to work together to create avenues where lower donations are acceptable,” says Mike Swenson, CMO for Barkley and

# Committed to the cause

founder of Barkley PR. “[It can] create new avenues of giving that weren’t there in the past.”

The survey also polled 116 marketers, 58% of whom say they engage in cause marketing. Of those, 61% plan to continue to the same level of commitment to causes in spite of the recession. In addition, of those who engage in cause marketing, 97% believe it is a valid business strategy.

New Balance, which is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its relationship with Susan G. Komen for the Cure in 2009, has boosted its cause marketing spend this year. This is due, largely, to the Komen anniversary, but also because demonstrating consistent support is important, says Chris Mann, brand marketing manager for the company.

The company’s Web site highlights the relationship, a branded YouTube channel launched in October, and the company is reintroducing a special edition pink running shoe that can be personalized. New Balance has launched the Lace Up for the Cure Collection of fitness products, has created sales kits for its stores, and has also added anniversary logos and information to event presence.

“To cut budgets behind causes during tough times would have called into question a little bit our commitment to those programs,” says Mann.

Of the total sample of consumers polled, 89% have been involved with a cause over the past year, whether donating money to a charity (63%), donating items to a charity (73%), purchasing a product that benefits a cause (59%), or taking part in an event that benefits a cause (35%).

Yet, 67% say the economy has had an impact on their involvement with charities. This percentage accounts for people who say they have cut back on giving to all charities (37%), eliminated some of the charities they support (14%), and don’t give financially (16%).

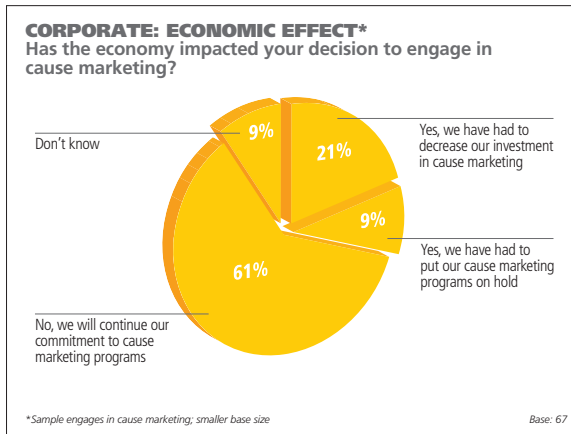
### Undeterred by recession

David Hessekiel, president of the Cause Marketing Forum, agrees that despite the recession companies are still executing cause marketing programs with frequency.

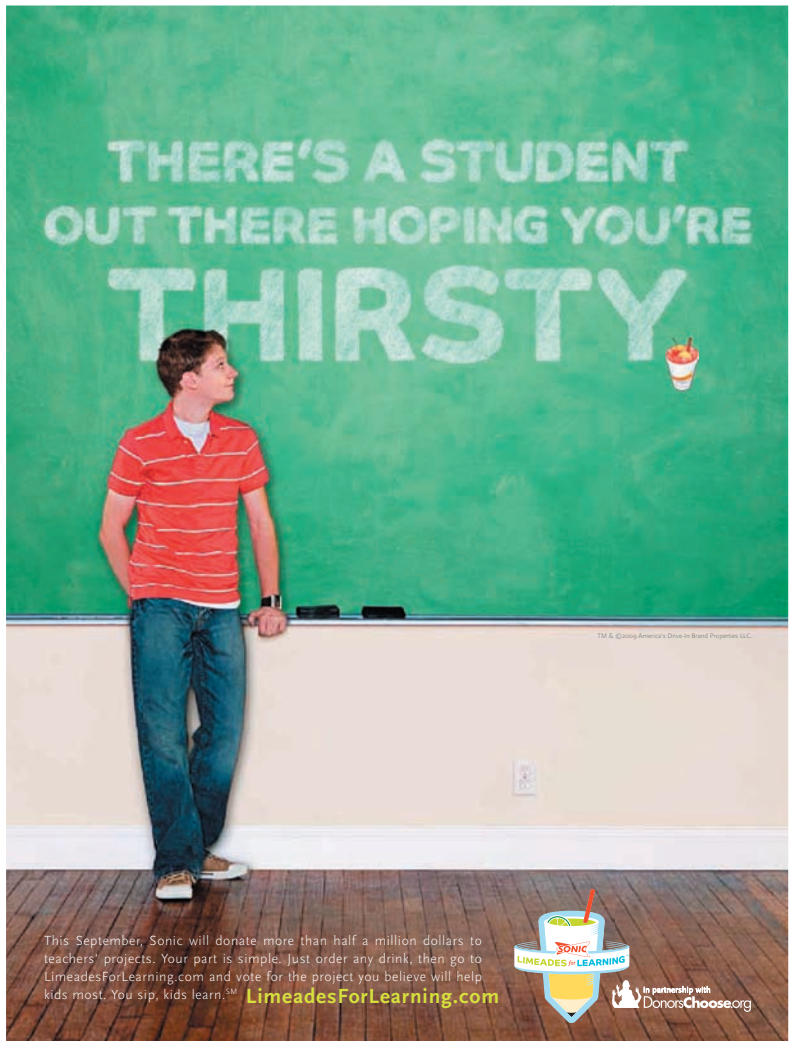
“Relative to other forms of marketing that may have taken a big hit and relative to expectations that everything would be price driven, cause marketing is holding up quite well,” he says. “Companies are communicating that they are in there to be a contributing part of our society, and consumers appreciate and would like to support companies that are doing the right thing.”

Companies have also become more thoughtful about which nonprofits they partner with and which issues they decide to tackle, according to Swenson.

“Companies today are looking at it from a much more strategic focus,” he says. “The results are that the programs are more meaningful and focused... better programs that will work harder for the brand and nonprofit alike.”



**97%**  
of respondents who engage in cause marketing believe that it is a valid business strategy



Sonic’s “Limeades for Learning” has received a total of \$637,944 in funding



Packaging plays a key part in promoting New Balance's relationship with Susan G. Komen for the Cure

According to the survey, 83% of consumers say it's important to know exactly where a corporate donation to a cause is going and the results of that donation. Of those, 60% would prefer it to be on the package, 55% on the company Web site, 42% in the advertising, and 40% in a mailer or follow-up postcards.

Not surprisingly, companies that actively promote their cause marketing efforts and display involvement in a very prominent way, such as packaging, were among the most recognized by consumers. According to the survey, consumers were most familiar with the following cause programs: General Mills' "Box Tops for Education" (*see sidebar, p. 34*), Yoplait's "Save Lids to Save Lives"; Avon's Breast Cancer Crusade; Dove Campaign for Real Beauty; and Tide "Loads of Hope" (*see sidebar, p. 36*).

Particularly in this economy, companies seek a "halo effect" to counter poor corporate reputations, Swenson says.

In fact, high percentages of consumers say they purchased a brand because it supported a cause (74%), would try a brand they normally wouldn't because it supported a cause (75%), or would pay more for a brand because it supports a cause that is important to them (64%).

### Building trust with consumers

Though cause marketing involvement can impact purchase consideration, that reputational halo effect can still be difficult to achieve. According to the survey, while 37% of consumer respondents assume that the primary motivation for companies to engage in these programs is to demonstrate what they care about or to help the charity, 23% of respondents say a tax write-off is the driving force, and 20% assume it's for publicity.

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In addition, companies have become more outspoken about their cause marketing efforts. Among those marketers surveyed, 82% actively promote their support of causes.

"There was a time when, sometimes naively, there was this feeling that if we're doing something good, that will build its own awareness," Hessekiel says of the previous corporate mindset. "I see a tremendous amount happening on package, in advertising, online, and in earned media at a time when this might have quieted down."

Mann says New Balance has historically been reticent about its efforts, but with younger generations of consumers saying they're interested in how socially responsible corporations are, the company believes it should communicate more.

"Companies have to do better at promoting their efforts," he says. "Companies doing a good job are making sure they're communicating their efforts across all elements of the marketing mix. Packaging is where it starts."

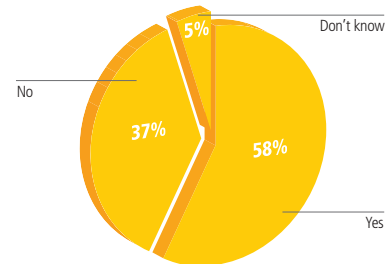
## The respondents

**Consumer:** The survey polled **530** women, 280 with children and 250 without. The median age of respondents was **40**. Of the respondents, **81%** were Caucasian, **6%** were black, **6%** were Hispanic, **4%** were Asian, and **2%** were other. The median annual household income for respondents was **\$46K**.

**Corporate:** The survey's **116** respondents included the following marketing/communications titles: director of marketing (**27%**); VP of marketing (**16%**); marketing manager (**14%**); director of PR/comms (**11%**); VP of PR/comms (**10%**); SVP of PR/comms (**6%**); PR/comms manager (**9%**); CMO (**3%**); SVP/EVP of marketing (**4%**).

### CORPORATE: CAUSE INVOLVEMENT

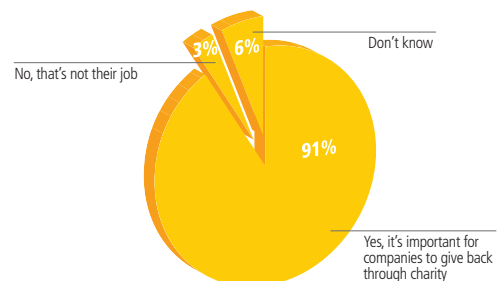
Does your company currently engage in cause marketing programs?



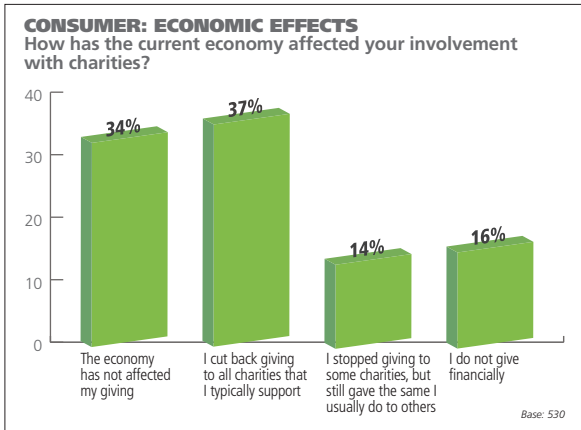
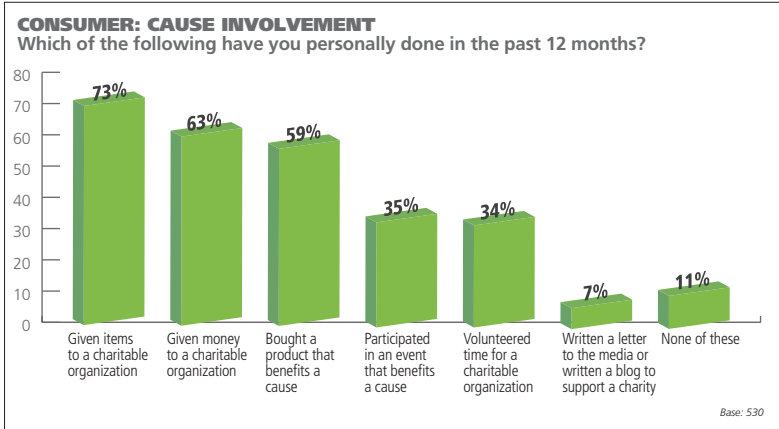
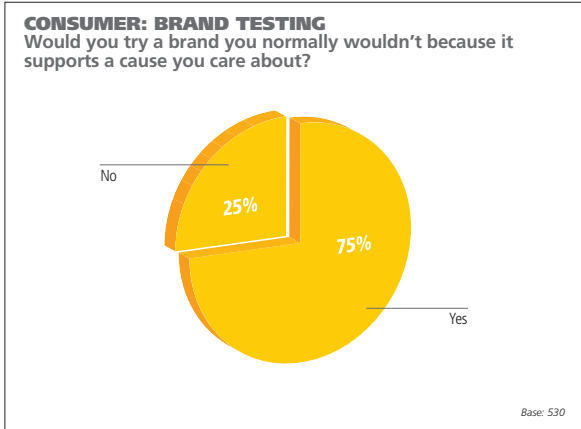
Base: 116

### CONSUMER: CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Do you think it is important for companies to support causes and charities?



Base: 530



However, it wasn't until this past July that the company launched the "Dawn Saves Wildlife" campaign, complete with an integrated marketing effort. Baba says the brand launched the initiative this year because it wants "consumers to feel like they're a part of it."

**64%**  
of consumers would pay more for a brand because it supports a cause important to them

"We wanted to empower consumers to drive the movement," she adds. To participate, consumers buy a bottle of Dawn then go online to [dawnsaveswildlife.com](http://dawnsaveswildlife.com) to activate their donation. The donation premise is simple, says Baba, one dollar for each bottle. Participants are called "everyday wildlife champions."

"It makes consumers feel not that they're partnering with a brand, but that they're actually doing this," she says. "In essence, it's a very consumer-driven movement, rather than a brand-driven movement."

Those who choose to increase their participation can seek out other "everyday wildlife champions" on the campaign's Facebook page. Apart from that, consumers have done their part simply by purchasing the product and going online, two things they typically do in their daily lives.

"As we were developing the program, the two big guiding principles were we wanted it to be really consumer-driven... and we wanted this to be easy, not a lot of hoops to jump through," explains Baba. "We really made sure that the cost of entry was very simple, but consumers can get more involved if they want."

While the brand asserts its longstanding commitment to helping wildlife and wildlife programs, Baba is clear that "Dawn Saves Wildlife" also has business goals.

"We're not the P&G Foundation; we're a business," she says. "We're finding that this cause program, for Dawn, is something that makes consumers feel good, but it's also reinforcing our performance benefit – tough on grease, gentle on hands. This is the perfect way to communicate that toughness – we're tough enough to clean oil off of these very delicate birds, but we're gentle enough to do it in a way that doesn't harm them."

The program has been successful enough for Dawn to extend it in the

**"Dawn Saves Wildlife" was launched to empower consumers to help the cause**

Above all, Mann says it's a trust issue. "At a time when corporate America is not trusted or respected the way it used to be, customers are looking for brands they can trust and feel good about," he explains. "Cause makes a statement in that regard."

Yet the survey shows that companies still must do better at touting their cause marketing partnerships as a way for consumers to give back. Of consumer respondents who lowered the amount of their personal giving, only 23% are filling that gap by seeking out corporate cause programs.

More and more, companies are treating their nonprofit partnerships and cause campaigns like other marketing commitments – creating programs that holistically speak to their brands and make sense to the consumer. Moreover, in order to reap results in these tough economic times, these partnerships are providing consumers with easy ways to participate, a significant element of what makes them successful.

"Consumers are savvy," says Swenson. "They understand companies are involved with giving back, and they are smart enough to know the difference between a simple product promotion and something that promotes a cause."

Dawn, the dishwashing detergent brand, has been serving wildlife causes in various forms for more than 30 years, says Susan Baba, external relations manager for dish care at P&G. In 1989, the company ramped up its relationship with California-based The International Bird Rescue Research Center following the Exxon Valdez oil spill, which took place in Alaska in March of that year. In the 1990s, the company had an "adopt-a-flock" program. And the company has always donated product for a variety of uses.



US from September to December to reach its \$500,000 donation goal. (In Canada, the brand already planned on running the campaign through December.) Money raised goes to The International Bird Rescue Research Center and The Marine Mammal Center.

“With budgets being impacted as they have over the past year, every marketer is trying to make every dollar work smarter,” says Hessekiel. “A large number of campaigns that we see with a cause angle are testimony to the fact that they’ve done their homework and seen that this can move the needle for them and their businesses.”

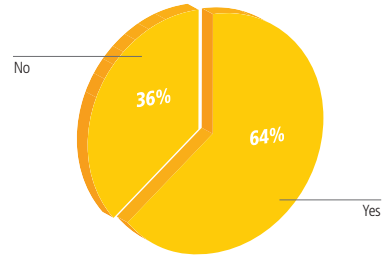
### Internal benefits

Besides the positive results with external audiences, cause programs also serve an important function for internal communications. Eighty-nine percent of corporate respondents to the survey with cause programs say they promote their efforts through internal communications and events. And 58% say they’ve seen an improvement in employee morale and retention as a result of these programs. Seventy-two percent say they’ve seen enhanced brand reputation, while 70% report PR results such as media hits.

“HR would tell you that it’s big for recruitment and retention,” says New Balance’s Mann. To celebrate the partnership with Komen for the Cure, the company had a week of activities for its associates leading up to the Race for the Cure in Boston. “It’s been brought up in people’s interviews as one of the reasons they respect the company,” adds Mann, who says that it was one of the things that attracted him to New Balance.

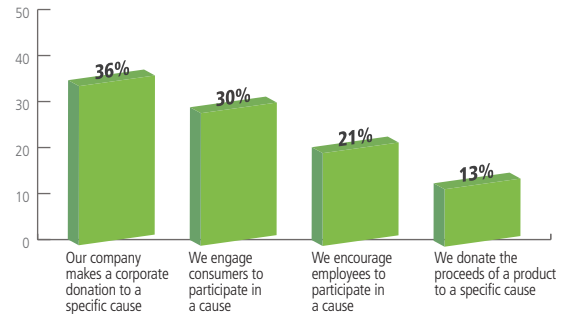
**89%**  
of corporate respondents with cause programs promote those efforts through internal comms and events

**CONSUMER: PURCHASE CONSIDERATION**  
Would you pay more for a brand or product because it supports or benefits a cause important to you?



Base: 530

**CORPORATE: LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT\***  
Which statement most closely represents your cause program?



\*Sample engages in cause marketing; smaller base size

Base: 67

## Cause program spotlight: General Mills' "Box Tops for Education"

General Mills launched "Box Tops for Education" in 1996 by literally going school to school asking consumers to clip box tops to raise money. More than a decade later and with \$300 million raised to meet a variety of school needs, it continues to grow and evolve the program in order to maintain relevance. Online participation is standard, Facebook and Twitter

are big players in the program, and the number of participating brands has grown.

According to Greg Zimprich, the company's director of brand PR, the key to the program's resilience is the ease with which consumers and parents can take part. The simple act of shopping at a local supermarket can earn money for a local school in need.

Moreover, he credits the program's target audiences, particularly the school coordinators (comprising parents, teachers, and others) who organize the box top collections on behalf of their schools and have taken a kind of ownership of the program. While Box Tops has integrated a variety of PR strategies and tactics, most notably social media, the program is sustained primarily by the word of mouth.

"Clearly, parents feel passionate about their children's education," says Zimprich. "Once you tell people, 'Here's a way to raise extra money,' it sells itself."

Last year was a record one for box top redemptions, totaling \$50.6 million, Zimprich says. The program also added 3,400 schools, bringing the total of participant schools to more than 69,000.



## Cause program spotlight: Tide's "Loads of Hope"

Tide introduced its "Loads of Hope" program after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005. The laundry detergent brand sent a "mobile laundromat" to wash, dry, and fold laundry for affected families.

"It's intrinsically linked to the equity of the brand and easily linked for consumers," explains Christina Saunders, P&G's external relations manager for Tide, adding that the program was borne out of a "basic need for clean clothes."

Since Katrina, the program has sent product and traveled to other disaster areas.

Loads of Hope plans to begin a new PR effort this month and once again introduced its eye-catching packaging in October – yellow caps on participating bottles of Tide – to let consumers

know they're purchasing a product that benefits a cause. Consumers who buy a participating bottle of Tide enter a code online and a portion of the purchase is donated to help families in need.

"We have a significant amount of shelf space covered, so you see this sea of orange with yellow caps," says Saunders. "It makes a strong statement."

Consumers can also buy T-shirts online (the entire price is donated) and connect with the program on Facebook and Twitter.

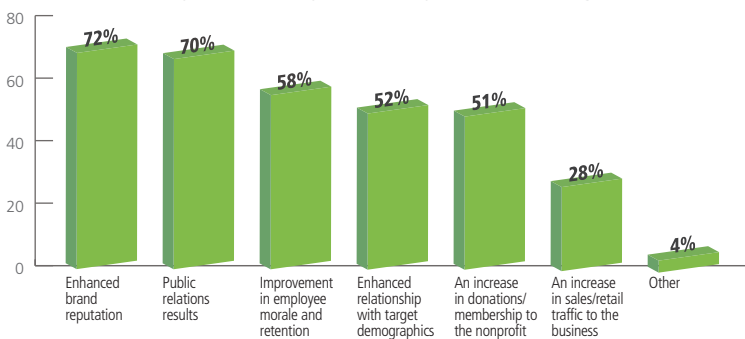
Tide has also partnered with FeedingAmerica and other local groups to help during a disaster situation when many are cut off from phones, TV, and the Internet.

"In 2008, there were 75 declared FEMA disasters," Saunders points out. "Even the little things make a big difference."



### CORPORATE: CAUSE BENEFIT\*

What benefits have you seen from your company's cause marketing efforts?



\*Sample engages in cause marketing; smaller base size

Base: 67

For Sonic, the positive internal effects have rippled throughout the company.

"It's not just with the corporate staff, but with folks in our restaurants," says Robertson. "This program provides our employees with a rallying point and that's always a great thing."

With younger generations becoming more active consumers, members of the workforce, and leaders in the C-suite of companies, cause marketing programs are predicted to become even more robust and to be even more aggressively promoted.

Thirty-one percent of the survey's corporate respondents who have cause programs say CEO or leadership interest in an issue is what prompted the company to launch a campaign.

"It's only natural that the baby boomers and younger generations, as they begin to move into power structures, they take their values with them," says Swenson. "It's getting to be embedded in our DNA." ●

The PRWeek/Barkley PR Cause Survey was conducted by CA Walker from August 18-September 1, 2009. E-mail notification was sent to approximately 5,914 marketing professionals and 7,385 consumers.

A total of 116 marketing professionals and 530 female consumers (280 women with children and 250 women without children) completed the survey online. The results are not weighted and are statistically tested at a confidence level of 90%.

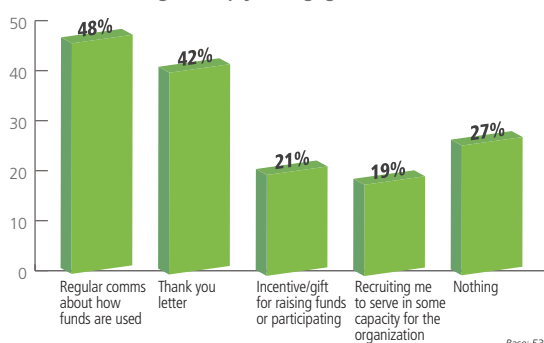
Complete survey results are available for purchase for \$150 by e-mailing Erica.lacono@prweek.com.

# 31%

of corporate respondents with cause programs say leadership's interest in an issue prompted the company to launch an effort

### CONSUMER: INTERACTION WITH CAUSE

For the issues/causes you are most involved in, what are the charities doing to keep you engaged?



Base: 530