

# UNCAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

As Business & Education Coordinator at [Bike PGH](#), I spend a lot of time talking with colleagues in Pittsburgh and across the country about how to best engage business communities in promoting biking and walking. It's exciting work because, in a sense, we're creating the narrative for how bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations work with the private sector to build the political and financial support needed to transform cities.

So I was thrilled to have the chance to lead a breakout group called "Uncapping the Potential of the Private Sector" at the Alliance's 2014 Leadership Retreat and bring together these stories to move the narrative forward. It was a great conversation. Here's some of what we discussed.



Many businesses find that bikes benefit their bottom line. In some cases, it's about creating a more competitive city or improving environmental sustainability. Or maybe managers are focused on employee wellness, advertising to target markets, or making worthwhile charitable contributions.

At the same time, biking and walking advocacy organizations have so many resources to offer companies. We can offer classes and resources to help employees ride confidently and safely and consultation on becoming more bike-friendly. And, of course, there so many ways businesses can help our missions. We can always benefit from funding, support on key campaigns, and member recruitment.

Our job is to make that involvement easy. We have to package “bike friendliness” as an easy solution to businesses’ problems, then have those offerings at the ready when potential business partners approach.

Is your organization hoping to create or strengthen ties with the private sector? Consider emulating these examples from other state and local biking and walking advocacy organizations:

1. **Bike Parking:** Does a business want bike racks? Then sell it. [Bike PGH keeps a few simple hoop racks in our basement](#) for businesses to easily bring some quality bike parking to any facility. [San Francisco Bike Coalition](#) offers a bike rack consultation to determine what works best for a site.
2. **Education:** There are a number of organizations that offer bike education as a way to connect with businesses and employees. Check out [Local Motion’s approach](#) to bringing lunch and learn workshops into workplaces, or check out [Washington Area Bicyclists Association](#) and [Bike PGH’s City Cycling](#) classes that can be taught after a workday.
3. **Competition** always gets businesses (and their employees) jazzed about riding bikes. In Portland, the [Bicycle Transportation Alliance](#) uses their Bike Commute Challenge to give businesses a way to engage employees and challenge other local businesses to build a workplace culture around biking. If your organization doesn’t have the capacity of BTA, then the [League of American Bicyclists’ National Bike Challenge](#) may be the best bringing a challenge to engage businesses.
4. Bike/Ped advocacy organizations do incredible community work that engages thousands. Businesses that recognize your organization’s audience and reach audience may want to **support and advertise**. Take notes from the way [Cycle Toronto sponsors their Street Smarts program](#), or how the [Atlanta Bicycle Coalition](#) runs their Bike Valet service, and create a way for businesses to advertise through your services.
5. Some businesses go bonkers for **certifications**, and some want to see **where their business falls among others**. If you find either of these businesses, the [League of American Bicyclists’ Bike Friendly Business program](#) may be your way to involve them. The BFB program grades businesses according to the bike parking, changing facilities, incentives and events that are offered to employees. Your organization has the knowledge of how to improve their standing, and you can sell that consultation like [Bike PGH does with their Bike Friendly Employer program](#).

6. Finally, **business memberships** serve as a solid backbone to an organizations' business program. Membership programs allow businesses an easy way to support a non-profit's work year after year. The [Active Transportation Alliance](#) and the [Alliance for Biking and Walking](#) both have robust programs to serve as models.

State and local biking and walking advocacy organizations are making great strides in successfully partnering with businesses.

Our job as advocates is to spend a bit of time researching what our colleagues are doing; adapt those approaches for our organizations; create an accessible way to market our offerings to businesses; and start the conversation.

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