Buy a Schonsted, Save a Life

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Mine-action efforts often include more than actual clearing of mines. Social and economic support is also needed. The Schonstedt Initiative, for example, is to provide magnetic locators to the United Nations Mine Action Team for every Tracemaster II or XTpc commercial cable/utilities locator Schonstedt sells. In creating and implementing this initiative, the company helps countries lacking extensive resources increase their demining capacities.

Inspired by stories of corporate social responsibility, Schonstedt decided to leverage its market position by launching its own program. Schonstedt’s initiative revolved around four main goals. First and most importantly, the initiative must accomplish a meaningful goal. Second, the initiative should be sustainable and not a one-time donation. Third, the initiative should help Schonstedt achieve a higher profile for its own cable/utilities locators. Finally, it should increase sales of the new product line.1

To accomplish these goals Schonstedt looked toward its own strengths. The company had already made and sold some of the highest-quality magnetic locators proven in the field by humanitarian and military organizations. Building on one of its existing strengths to promote its new line of locators seemed natural. Once Schonstedt management realized they could donate a magnetic locator with the purchase of one of its cable/utilities locators, they found their solution. This approach allowed Schonstedt to continue to operate as a for-profit business while doing good and enhancing its public image.

The Schonstedt Initiative

Schonstedt, a world leader in magnetic locators, recently partnered with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to create “The Schonstedt Humanitarian Demining Initiative.” Through this initiative, Schonstedt donates one magnetic locator to the United Nations Mine Action Team for every Tracemaster II or XTpc commercial cable/utilities locator Schonstedt sells. This initiative leaves one of compassion as a competitive edge. It allows Schonstedt to attract new customers who are interested in supporting a company that makes it possible for people to live in unsafe regions around the world. It also helps Schonstedt to be seen as a responsible business.

An ancillary benefit of Schonstedt’s approach does not go unnoticed at UNMAS. Brady says, “A nice aspect of the initiative is that the companies, municipalities and individuals who make the donation of such detectors... receive a letter of thanks from UNMAS.”2 And they also receive a similar letter from the U.S. Department of State thanking them for their participation, according to Daniel E. Hutcherson, Program Officer in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. Schonstedt Instrument Company’s initiative not only helps mine-action efforts by donating locators to needy countries but also by increasing awareness. Raising the profile of its new product line relies largely on the advertising of its humanitarian-donating initiative. UNMAS has seen this as an opportunity to raise awareness of the mine-action awareness of the population at large.

“We are starting to get inquiries about buying and donating the magnetic locators directly,” says Ebberson. So far, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have purchased and donated units, and Rotary International and the student chapter of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping at California State University, Fresno are also pursuing this option. Schonstedt sells the locators at list price and matches donations unit for unit. The Quakers will also be presenting Schonstedt with US$5000 in contributions to Schonstedt and the Quakers’ unrelenting desire to help others in the world.3

Schonstedt advocates “Buy a Schonstedt, Save a Life” on the company’s Web site and in other advertising. This simple message reaches a community that would not normally have access to Schonstedt’s locators to Lao PDR at Schonstedt’s headquarters in Kearneysville, West Virginia.

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