

What, Not Enough Money?

by Nancy Knowlton

Funding realities today mean there is often not enough money to get desired technology products into the classroom in many schools and districts, even with enhanced funding from stimulus packages around the world. Rather than becoming resigned to this fact, determined educators are getting creative. Here are some innovative options that might just help you get what you need.



Can You Say “Benefactor”?

Let your community know that you have a specific need for technology products. It may flush out a donor interested in helping. Describing the benefits to be gained from the desired product is often the catalyst for this type of donor to get involved.

Simply Ask

Many companies have committees that meet quarterly to consider donation requests. Ask for what you need and have your request considered.

Local Service Organizations

There are many service organizations that actively raise money to help their communities. Let your local service organizations know that you have a vision and a need – and how much it will cost.

Bigger Might Be Better

Some companies have a mandate to give back to their communities, but it can be difficult for them to make many small-scale donations. Consider scaling up the request to include several schools and a bigger implementation.

Consider Seconds

Some companies offer seconds – products that aren’t aesthetically perfect but are still perfectly functional. Ask if this is the case and at what price they are available. Ask as well about the warranty that is available.

Showcase School

Many companies actively work to develop reference sites that prospective purchasers can visit to see their products in action. Offer to be such a showcase for companies whose products you desire. There are usually strings – including hosting visitors and, often, testing new products.

Multiple Payments

While you might not have all the money you need today, you likely have a portion of it. Offer to pay suppliers over time in installments.

Specialized Grants

Many educational bodies offer discretionary grants for students with disabilities, and many nonprofit organizations also offer funds specifically for students who need assistive technology. Programs and grants also exist for second language learners. A quick search of the Internet will start you on your way to acquiring the products that you need for your special students.

Undertaking Research

Consider offering to undertake a concrete research project using one of the technology products you wish to have in your classroom. Proposals can be made to a variety of nonprofit organizations as well as directly to some manufacturers. Make sure that your proposal offers something of value to the manufacturer if this is your approach.

Creativity, Clarity and Persistence

It’s fair to say that there’s more than one way to get the money for products you need and want in your classrooms. While one could legitimately argue that districts, states and national governments should be able to provide all of the funding that schools need, it is most often not the case.

However you choose to proceed to creatively find the money that you need, remember the following:

- Be clear and direct about what you need and how much it costs
- Speak about the specific benefits that you expect to achieve as a consequence of using the products. The technical specifications are secondary.
- Talk about transformation and one opportunity for a great education for every child. These are aspirational messages that can help targeted benefactors and service organizations connect with your request.
- Consider the needs of the donating organization. Undertake some research upfront so that your request can hit some of its hot buttons.
- Asking many organizations to support your needs can increase your chances of success
- “No” might really mean “not now.” Keep trying.

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