

What does a broker do?

A broker is a person or organisation that is a 'middleman', they effectively act as a matchmaker between the charity and the business making sure that both parties benefit from the relationship.

The service a broker offers will vary from broker to broker for example, they may simply pass on contact details between the two parties, or provide a greater level of contact such as helping to set up and attend meetings.

How does a broker work?

A good broker understands the needs, issues and language of both community organisations and businesses, and they will also have a good network of contacts in both sectors – and may often have worked in both sectors.

Brokers need to communicate with both parties to gain an understanding of what each needs and what each hopes to gain from the relationship.

This may often involve helping community groups to identify what their real needs are. For example, a request for an architect to help draw up plans for an extension to a building, when in fact the real need is for a surveyor to come and see if an extension is possible.

Brokers will also sometimes attend the first meeting between the community organisation and business ensuring that both parties agree on what is to be done and when.

A key part of the broker's role is helping both the community group and professional firm understand how they can work together. They will also need to manage the expectations of both parties to avoid misunderstanding and/or demoralization when the reality does not match up to what has been anticipated.

If any misunderstandings do emerge then the broker is able to act as a neutral 'mediator' between the community group and professional firm.

Brokers are often called upon to be leaders and negotiators, because of their perceived neutrality and ability to 'translate' between two sectors that may not have previous experience of working together.