

WISE GIVING™

GUIDE

BBB WISE GIVING ALLIANCE : FALL/HOLIDAY 2011



Charity and
Social Media:
Finding What Fits





A Publication of the
BBB Wise Giving Alliance

The *Wise Giving Guide* is published three times a year to help donors make more informed giving decisions. This guide includes a compilation of the latest evaluation conclusions completed by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance.

If you would like to see a particular topic discussed in this guide, please email suggestions to give@council.bbb.org or write to us at the address below.

FALL/HOLIDAY ISSUE 2011

BBB Wise Giving Alliance
4200 Wilson Blvd.
Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22203
(703) 276-0100
www.give.org

Wise Giving Guide Layout and
Production — art270, inc.

Publication No. 11-24-503

Staff members from the affiliated Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., provide administrative, personnel, media, accounting, information technology, legal and office services to the BBB Wise Giving Alliance.

INSIDE

2 Charity and Social Media: Finding What Fits

How to Read the
List of National
Charities **8**

Q&A about the
Wise Giving
Guide **50**

National Charity
Seal Program **51**

Standards
for Charity
Accountability **52**

9 List of Nationally Soliciting Charities

BBB Wise Giving Alliance Board of Directors

John H. Graham IV - Chair
American Society of Association Executives •
Washington, DC

David E. Ormstedt - Vice Chair
Consulting Attorney • Bloomington, IN

Kate Guedj - Treasurer
The Boston Foundation • Boston, MA

Myrl Weinberg - Secretary
National Health Council • Washington, DC

Audrey Alvarado
Mosaica • Washington, DC

Evelyn Brody
Chicago-Kent College of Law • Chicago, IL

Michelle L. Corey
Better Business Bureau / St. Louis • St. Louis, MO

John A. Edie
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP • Washington, DC

Karl E. Emerson
Montgomery, McCracken, Walker & Rhoads, LLP •
Philadelphia, PA

Cheryl Lamm
McMaster-Carr Supply Company • Elmhurst, IL

Paulette Maehara (Retired)
Association of Fundraising Professionals • Arlington, VA

Joseph R. Reynolds
Sundial Creative Services • Battle Creek, MI

Claire Rosenzweig
BBB/Metropolitan New York • New York, NY

H. Art Taylor - Ex-Officio
BBB Wise Giving Alliance • Arlington, VA

BBB Wise Giving Alliance Staff

H. Art Taylor
President and CEO

Bennett M. Weiner
Chief Operating Officer

Kelley Bevis
Research Analyst

Margery K. Heitbrink
Editor, Wise Giving Guide

David Kurtz
Research Analyst

Jean Lewis
Administrative Coordinator

Edward Loftin
Research Analyst

Julie A. Rizzo
Director, Development

Rebecca Uwaifo
Research Analyst

Shawn Van Gorder
Director, Charity Evaluation

president's MESSAGE

I'm a big fan of social media. I relish being able to respond quickly to comments and questions, to communicate with colleagues in a flash, to be stirred by the constant circulation of information and thought. I know that millions feel the same enthusiasm. But as I consider the effects of social media on charitable giving, I also want at times to say "slow down."

That's the gist of several tips for givers that we include in our cover article. The speed of communication that social media offers can tempt us to keep up the beat: we may immediately click a link on an e-mail claiming to represent a well-known charity, respond without thought to friends' appeals on behalf of their charity "favorites" or instantly text a gift to a number we've just seen publicized—and find afterwards that verification and vetting might have led to sounder decisions.

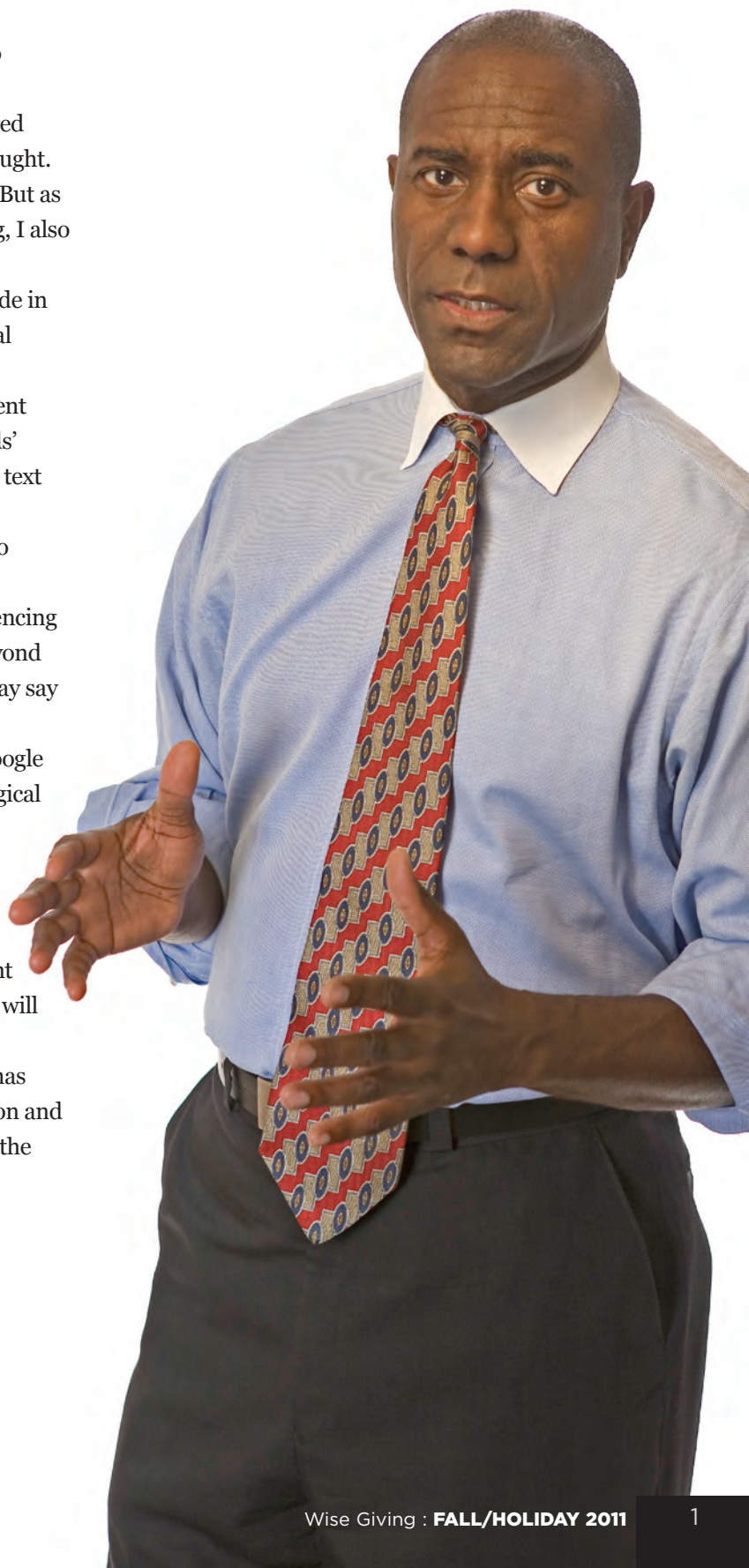
As charities grow more adept at engaging and influencing us through social media, donors must be ready to go beyond appearances. The attractiveness of a charity's website may say more about the talent of its design consultants than its programmatic effectiveness. Being the top "find" in a Google search may be a better indication of a charity's technological cleverness than its accountability.

None of this is meant to downplay charities' achievements in using social media to promote their causes and gain your support, monetary or other. Social media's prospects for deepening the public's involvement in charities are promising indeed, and I hope our article will provide helpful perspectives as changes occur.

At base, however, much is the same. Sound giving has never sprung from impulse alone. It requires information and reflection. Thank you for taking the time to make use of the Alliance's resources in your giving decisions.



H. Art Taylor, *President*



even a greenhorn giver would have little trouble linking direct mail, telemarketing, cause-related marketing and celebrity events to charity. But social media and charity? Just how that combination will work is less clear, though there have been glowing reports:

- Within days after an earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, 13 percent of the Americans who responded with charitable gifts made them through text messages on their cell phones. Texted donations to the American Red Cross alone totaled over \$32 million, but others also benefited.
- A young Canadian woman and her friends, connecting through Twitter, created Twestival, a project that engaged people worldwide in

Answers on hold

Whether on computers, cell phones, smart phones, tablets or the still newer devices launched almost daily, people are having conversations, silent or spoken, with other people and with organizations at any time, day or night. That's not just certain generations: surely it wasn't young citizens alone who sent tweets to a Presidential news conference or shared photos and videos electronically during the latest natural disasters.

Of course no one would claim that all those contacts and conversations have anything to do with charity. But thousands of charities are using these media to further the causes they're dedicated to. What they do will ultimately affect you as a donor.

That's why we're writing here about charities' connections with prominent media sites and tools. We'll

Charity and Social



developing small local events that raised over \$250,000 for charity:water, a nonprofit organization, in February 2009.

- For every new viewer up to 5,000 who clicked “like” on the Facebook page of the Food Bank of New York City this past winter, FedEx said it would donate the cost of five meals, a possible 25,000 meals in all. The goal, to be met in one month, was reached in nine days, with 3,500 visitors to the Food Bank's page “liking” it in the first 24 hours.

Are such reports typical? In the world of social networks and mobile media, can charities tap energy and altruism as never before and donors give with new ease and confidence?

report what they're trying to do, what has worked and what hasn't, at least yet. We'll offer points to consider and tips for using social media.

And we hope you'll want to weigh the notion, put forward by some, that social media aren't just convenient and innovative; they are profoundly changing how charities and donors think, act and influence society. It's a prediction worth watching.

Social media and fund raising — chief tools

The three cases cited at the start, where text giving, Twitter and Facebook brought newsworthy fund raising success to charities, might seem to suggest that social and mobile media are the long-sought answer to every fund raiser's prayer — an effective, low-cost way to raise support from a totally new range of givers.

Text giving has looked like an answer to at least part of that prayer. It is an offshoot of text messaging, widely used by mobile subscribers of all ages. Average mobile users in the U.S. now text more than they talk.

Text giving begins when a mobile phone user gets a “call to action,” most often through a newscast on TV or radio. The “call,” urging a donation of \$5 or \$10 to a particular charity, includes a word and short numerical code that donors type into their mobile phones. Sample: Text “HAITI” to 25383 to donate \$5 to the International Rescue Committee.

The donation appears on the donor’s next bill from the cell phone company. Charities usually work through third-party providers that set up the text messaging service, arranging transmittal of the donation through the cell phone company and on to the charity itself.

Facebook is now part of millions of lives, a presence even non-users recognize. It’s the most popular place online where people can, for free, create individual pages about themselves, their interests and activities. There they can open up all kinds of communications and

Facebook isn’t the only social network with charity connections. Many charities are on several networks, including Twitter, used by 57 percent; and LinkedIn, a social networking community for professionals, used by 33 percent.

Twitter is the company that enables messages of no more than 140 characters to be posted online for “followers” to receive on their cell phone, computer or other device. Anyone can set up a Twitter account, at no cost. The “tweet” includes a link that followers can click to see past posts that the tweeter has shared. Someone who reads a tweet can “re-tweet” the message to his or her own followers.

Charities are using Twitter for a variety of purposes. At the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, for example, new or revised reports about national charities are announced on Twitter, with a link to each new report. The Red Cross uses Twitter to provide real time information and tips during disasters. (But speed of message may create unrealistic expectations about speed of response. A recent Red Cross study reported that a substantial

Media:

Finding What Fits

interactions. Rallying friends and friends of their friends to support charitable causes is popular.

Charities have flocked to Facebook. They have set up their own multi-featured pages. According to the 2011 *Nonprofit Social Network Benchmark Report* (NTEN, Common Knowledge and Blackbaud), nine out of ten nonprofits have a presence there. It’s the favorite fund raising site of charity organizations, according to this report. Some also work through Facebook Causes, a separate company which helps charities raise money through Facebook.

number of people who said they would post a request for help to a social media website also said they would expect help to arrive in less than one hour.)

Twitter’s use for fund raising is hard to pin down. It’s hardly widespread, but charities are experimenting, according to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* (August 25, 2011). As part of a larger strategy, one group recently tried this, with good results: a commercial company contributed specific sums to the charity for every Twitter follower and for other Twitter postings and re-tweets related to the appeal.



Social media and fund raising — results

Text giving made headlines following the Haiti earthquake. Since then, its successes have been less marked: its use as a fund raising method declined by 24 percent this year, according to *New Directions, Survey Findings on Non-Profit Adoption of Mobile Media and Mobile Giving* (Association of Fund Raising Professionals and Kaptive, June 2011). Observers point to several reasons why text giving hasn't met the expectations it created:

- In disasters, when the desire to give is spontaneous, like Haiti, texting is quick and satisfying. In reflective moments, givers are comfortable with ordinary methods.
- Texted gift amounts are limited, usually \$5 or \$10.
- The text message provides very little information about the texter.

Researchers say that what's really catching on, and may be the wave of the future, is connecting to charity directly by mobile phone, possibly but not necessarily to give. Charities can now have mobile websites, accessible to all sorts of mobile devices, that tie in with their other social media programs.

Proponents of text giving argue that it is by no means moribund. It has too many advantages: over 90 percent of the U.S. population has a mobile phone, according to CTIA-The Wireless Association, and virtually every cell phone owner can text. Text giving attracts those ages 18 to 29, involving them in giving at a level they can afford; it's available to those without a credit card or no ready access to a checkbook; in contrast to telemarketing and direct mail, it leaves to the individual the choice of initiating contact with a charity.

Jim Manis, president and CEO of the Mobile Giving Foundation, says that the growing use of mobile websites and apps will expand text giving, not replace it. Text giving can offer donors new options for contributing, he says — perhaps in larger amounts or recurrently, as donors determine. It can allow donors to receive follow-up information from the soliciting charity. Text giving is also multiplying the demographic information about givers that helps charities improve their marketing strategies.

As to **Facebook** fund raising, despite the site's high favor with charity, results to date aren't making fund raisers ecstatic. The case with other social media is similar: fund raising results are improving but not yet spectacular.

The *Benchmark Report* says that 46 percent of charities in its survey reported raising relatively small

amounts, from \$1,000 to \$10,000 a year, through social media. Only 0.4 percent of those surveyed raised \$100,000 or more a year. Almost half of the charities that used mobile media devices did not use them for fund raising from individual donors. As recently as August 25 of this year, a headline in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* summed up the situation: "Most Charities Still Do Not Raise Much Money Via Social Media."

Why hasn't something as powerful and pervasive as social media met early expectations as a money raiser? Among the answers: it is so new that charities are still trying to figure how best to use it; the biggest social media fans are the young, who don't have the income to make sizable contributions, though they further charitable causes with energy and networking; charities haven't developed a social media strategy, or an adequate one, or haven't the staff or budget to do so.

Engagement, yes

What, then, is the increasingly intense relationship between charity and social media all about?

Charities seem to speak almost with one voice in stressing that whether they reach you at their website, through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or the like, through cell phones or other mobile media, their aim is not to attract your donation but to *engage* you.

In other words, charities want to get your attention, spark your interest in their work, hear what you have to say, involve you in their cause. The "return on investment" that they get from social media isn't money but "soft benefits" like increased awareness, participation, and trust. Social media-wise charities are apt to speak as much of their "communities" as their donors.

But in case you're thinking there's nothing old under the sun, be assured: charities must fund raise, and to a persistent extent still depend on direct mail. Though much maligned, direct mail remains an effective way to raise money. Here's the new wrinkle, though. Donors responsive to direct mail are increasingly going online to make the actual gift transaction.

Home on the Web

In the search to engage you, a charity's own website remains central.

For some time, a charity's goal was to draw visitors to the site and keep them there — attracted, intrigued and hopefully drawn to support, in various ways, the charity's work. But "build it and they will come" hasn't held: drawing visitors to these sites has been a challenge.

Social media have multiplied a charity's chance to

enlarge its audience. Websites open up new paths for donors. A charity is now likely to urge and enable you, through a link, to friend it on Facebook and to cite it on your own Facebook page; to follow it on Twitter; and to look at its videos on YouTube or photos on Flickr.

Propelled into cyberspace, the charity's name and message come before thousands of people whom the charity could never reach directly. Its online presence expands exponentially. Those exposed to its message elsewhere may come to the charity's website, even on smartphones, but they may also or instead go every which way, contacting their friends through their phones, who then contact others.

Researchers say, however, that while marketing word-of-mouth through social media can supplement the base of supporters needed to bring in substantial revenue, it can't replace it. Besides sending you elsewhere to spread their word, therefore, charities have been bolstering interactivity on their own sites, offering visitors the chance to ask questions, see videos of their programs in action, read and comment on blogs and click links to related sites and sources. Dedicated donors are actively courted.

Social strains?

Charities that decide to employ social media have to consider a number of things before they adopt it. Staff time, money, and expertise are required, and not every charity has these in equal supply. Those ready to venture forth, experts say, must develop a whole new outlook.

The change can be difficult. John Kenyon, a nonprofit technology educator and strategist, says that organizations eager to go social often begin at the wrong end, thinking in terms of simply planting their current Web material, with modifications, on social media sites. He tells them that's not where to start.

Instead, says Kenyon, an organization must work from what people think about it, not what it thinks they think. It must find out how many people come to its website, what they look at, and where they linger longest. It must study its incoming email for what it reveals about mailers' interests. It must discover the key words that will bring to its site, not another's, the people who are searching the Internet without a particular charity in mind. Such information provides the basic nourishment for social media programs.

As it happens, there are many free tools available to help charities in the search. Google Alerts, for example, can identify the key words that send visitors to their site. By monitoring data like these, charities can plan how best to shape their social media presence. *Donor, be advised:* If you visit charity websites, your presence and

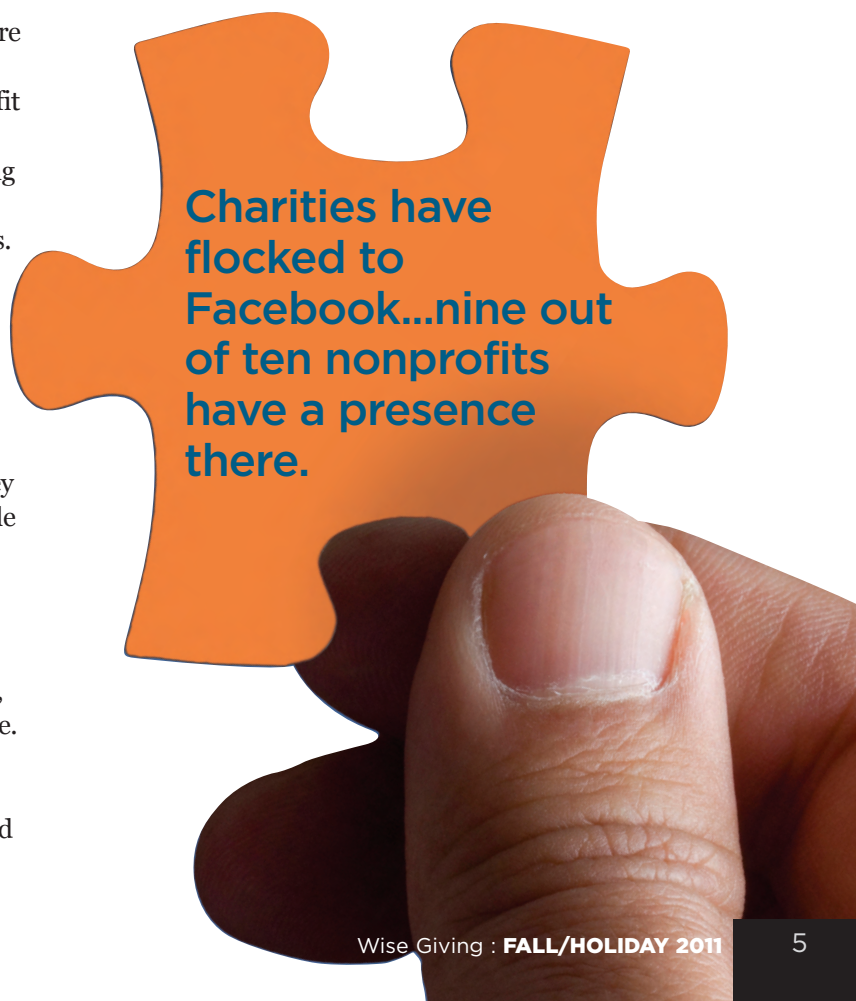
path (though not your name) is noted and rolled into numerous statistics.

Does this attention to their publics mean that charities will bend and twist to respond to the voice of the people, that a wildlife protection agency will leave salmon to fend for themselves if visitors seem keener on bears? No one is making that case. Rather, the argument goes, by probing the public response, a charity may learn how it can cultivate interest in those salmon whose protection is part of its mission.

Finding upsides in downsides

Everyone knows by now that social media networks aren't always congenial places. There can be privacy violations, exploitation, carelessness and just plain nastiness. Charities have to be prepared to deal with a public they court but can't control.

"Nonprofits sometimes worry about what the community will say," says Josh Fischer, head of a marketing and design firm whose work includes social media strategy for nonprofits. An organization serving at-risk youth might be anxious that a client would misbehave on its site. A charity may be concerned that it doesn't have the staff to deal with situations that get out of hand.



Charities have
flocked to
Facebook...nine out
of ten nonprofits
have a presence
there.

Charities have to make clear what they will and won't allow, says James Gatto, a lawyer who works with charities on legal issues related to social media. They have to monitor what's being said about them online and deal immediately with unfavorable comments. Like many observers, Gatto notes that a charity is often aided by its community of supporters, who may be the first to flag comments they think inappropriate. It's a kind of community policing.

The consensus of social media experts is that taking on any negative postings right away is far better than ignoring them. According to a news report, a tweet about happy beer drinking that an American Red Cross employee mistakenly posted to the Red Cross Twitter account was quickly and humorously handled by the Red Cross national office, bringing a highly favorable response, including contributions, from viewers.

Revolution now?

The speed and reach of social media are certainly new, but are they revolutionizing charity? Some authorities say yes. In the influential book *The Networked Nonprofit: Connecting with Social Media to Drive Change*, authors Beth Kanter and Allison H. Fine declare that with their idealism, dedication to giving and ease in social media, Millennials (those born between 1978 and 1992) are driving drastic change.

This generation, they say, behaves differently from earlier ones. "Millennials represent a potential fatal blow to the large, ongoing membership donor bases for

...charities must radically alter the way they operate. They must develop a culture that welcomes outside initiative, comments and questions.

traditional organizations. They are highly unlikely to become lifetime members and donors to groups like their grandparents were. Millennials are more likely to retain their passion for causes and giving in general...but also jump from organization to organization as a particular effort moves them."

To thrive in this new culture, these and other social media experts advise, charities must radically alter the way they operate. They must develop a culture that welcomes outside initiative, comments and questions. Successes are to be shared, and weaknesses acknowledged. "Only by letting go and throwing off the yoke of control can organizations unleash the power and

creativity of many people to do amazing things on their behalf," write Kanter and Fine.

This is the core of what is often called the social media revolution. Charities that enter into social media enter a community. They abandon monologues and take up conversations. They network with all kinds of people. They share information and ideas. The result, say proponents, is a new energy that empowers social change.

Proceeding with care

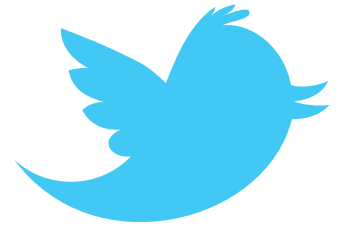
Social media offers donors boundless opportunities to learn of good work and do it themselves. It offers charities vast outreach.

But the future of social media's benefit to charity isn't yet clear. Friending, liking, following, and sharing, so eagerly tabulated and displayed, aren't necessarily signs of firm attachment. And with so many of our million-plus charities active in social media, the clamor for attention may grow deafening.

For a thoughtful giver, there's much to keep in mind:

- A charity's mastery of social media is no guarantee that it is soundly managed and effectively furthering its mission.
- A friendly, intriguing website or a particularly ingenious fund raising device shouldn't in itself be reason to give.
- Virtual giving, through re-tweets or friending that prompts others' cash gifts, is still giving. If your cash were involved, would this charity get your support?
- While charity regulators strive to catch up with technology, it's up to you to be wary of questionable online appeals.
- Your privacy isn't necessarily more protected when it's related to charity than anywhere else on line.

The variety, speed and ease of action and the congeniality and enthusiasm of the networked community — all the beckoning pleasures of social media in the service of charity, in fact — needn't divert from sound practices. Thoughtful givers will continue to check out an organization's transparency and accountability before they contribute their time, creativity or cash. If charity is truly being transformed, there are some things it can't afford to change. ■



Tips

TEXTING

1. If you're considering texting your gift, verify with the charity (perhaps through its website) that the number you've been given by friends or online social networks is correct. You may want to text a small donation and then go online to the site to give more.
2. Be aware that a texted donation does not immediately reach a charity. The full process involves several parties, including your phone service provider and the third-party carrier that transmits donations to the charity, and may take 60-90 days. (Some carriers have speeded gift transmission in the wake of disasters.)
3. Check whether your texting will bring you future messages from the charity. Charities' websites should give details of their text messaging programs so that you can see what you're signing up for and how you can opt out.



ONLINE TOOLS and SOCIAL NETWORKS

1. When searching online for a specific cause, keep in mind that search engines like Google don't rank results according to a charity's accountability or effectiveness. Instead, they provide a list of links in a ranking determined by the popularity of the websites' content and how well that content meets criteria set by search engine companies. Website developers can design the content so as to raise a charity's ranking and bring its site to you first, but a top position doesn't tell you whether or not the charity is the most deserving of your attention.
2. Be cautious when giving online, especially in response to spam messages or e-mails that claim to link to charities. Be especially wary of e-mails with attached files, which may have viruses.
3. If a site purporting to raise money for a well-known organization includes a link to it, don't click through. Instead, go to the known organization's site directly.



4. Find out whether your target charity will use information it obtained from you to contact you directly for future donations. Look at the charity's privacy policy on its site. You should have an opportunity to opt out of such future requests.
5. People who have been "friended" on online social networking sites may have more enthusiasm than knowledge about the charities they personally urge you to support. Look into the recommended group yourself.