

Making Sense Of Online Giving

by Bob Ottenhoff, GuideStar (NAPSA)—With prices of everyday items soaring and the economic outlook worsening, consumers are cutting back on their spending, which has resulted in an overall decline of charitable donations in the past 12 months, according to a recent National Survey of U.S. Adults on Current Charitable Giving Practices commissioned by Capital One. In fact,



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57 percent of respondents stated that they can't afford to make charitable donations due to financial concerns.

The saying "every little bit helps" rings especially true in today's economy. Although money may be tight, there are stress-free ways to give reasonably and wisely online. Here are some simple tips for consumers to make sure every penny of their donation counts:

How To Choose The Right Charity

With many charities to choose from, the selection process can be daunting, so first think about what is most important to you. What kinds of programs do you want to support? What problems do you want your gift to help solve? Once you have answers, find a charity that shares your values.

There are a number of sites, including GuideStar (www.guidestar.org), where you can research charities by various criteria, such as keywords and location.

Check The Charity's Legitimacy

The last thing you want is your donation used improperly, or worse, with a fraudulent organization. When approached for a dona-

tion, be sure to ask questions about the solicitor. Give only when you're personally comfortable with the charity and how the dollars are being spent. Trustworthy charities are happy to answer these questions. Never provide your banking or credit card information to a charity that phones you and never click a link in an e-mail to give online. Initiate all online transactions by visiting a reputable online giving site or a charity's site directly.

Another way to ensure that a charity will use your gift wisely is to make sure it meets the standards of the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance (www.bbb.org/charity).

A New Opportunity To Make The Most Of Your Giving

Online donations have transaction costs associated with them, which are usually deducted before a contribution is sent to the charity. According to the Charitable Giving survey, 61 percent of respondents did not know that charities can lose up to 5 percent of each donation to these costs.

At the No Hassle Giving Site (www.capitalone.com/give), Capital One will cover the transaction costs so that 100 percent of the donation goes to charity. Capital One customers can find more than 1 million charities and set up a one-time or monthly donation through the site with the click of a button. Another bonus is that consumers receive a detailed donation history and a summary of tax-deductible donations at the end of the year.

• *Bob Ottenhoff is the president and CEO of GuideStar, a non-profit organization with a database of more than 1.7 million non-profits recognized by the IRS.*