

MAKE THE DIFFERENCE NETWORK

A New Way to Give by Rebecca Saltman

» Make the Difference Network – It's a fascinating story, sort of a MySpace for Non-Profits, connecting them and helping them find new donors. «

- President Bill Clinton



Katrina relief. California fires. Supporting returning Iraq soldiers. World slavery. Kids with terminal heart disease. Abused animals. Poverty. The list seems endless. The need can look overwhelming, to those involved and those wanting to make a difference. Current economic turmoil does not help nor bode well for future government assistance.

With so much help needed, it's hard to tell where an individual can even begin to assist a non-profit effort, forget through a company. Certainly Wall Street does not seem to be the best investment anymore, and not because of the crash. Why should we care about these two seemingly divergent issues? Because they converge in innovations that change systems like the way we give or the way we invest.

Enter Make The Difference Network (MTDN), an online social network for everyone interested in helping non-profit organizations, as well as non-profits who want to connect with a wider network of individuals and businesses who give. Co-founded by actress Jessica Biel, her father Jon Biel and social entrepreneur, Kent McBride, MTDN enables individuals and businesses to become grassroots philanthropists through the site's "wishes" – projects and needs, posted by the sites' member non-profits. This innovation is *Making a Difference*, through collaboration.

MTDN has not only developed a social network but has infused trust into a very murky sea of Internet-based online giving. The most important element in collaboration, especially when you are a financial partner, is trust. The problem is most businesses and non-profits don't trust each other, often with good reason. Businesses believe non-profits are constantly walking around with their hand out - often with a tin cup - and non-profits



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feel that the big bad companies shouldn't be able to use the non-profit community to "green-wash" bad acts of the private sector. They don't have the heart-set, the mind-set, or common language to work these issues out. Even the most basic collaborations often suffer because of this disconnect.

MTDN is the translator fixing this problem. It creates a platform which allows both sides of the equation to showcase passion and caring, creating a common language through defined mutual goals. At its core MTDN is a hybrid: cause marketing and collaborative movement. It provides non-profits training, technology and traffic. It also allows individuals, businesses and non-profits to list opportunities for collaboration and cooperation while providing transparency for people with which they want to work. Because of this "translation capability", MTDN is uniquely positioned to teach collaboration to non-profits and the business community, without losing passion for the mission.

MTDN is proving that a major difference can be made in our world today by enabling worthy non-profits to help more people through the availability of contemporary, cutting-edge Internet technology connecting them with caring people who want to "experience the magic of giving". And that magic isn't a fantasy – it can be seen.

Donors locally, nationally, and internationally can choose where they are helping, can observe what is happening in their community, can choose which organization they want to support and the best way to do it, and most importantly see the difference they have made - literally witnessing a quantifiable return on investment from those same donations.



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In essence, MTDN is bringing a tangible new twist on the "the teach a man to fish" proverb: Give a non-profit a donation; you feed it for a day. Teach a non-profit how to attract donations by building a solid, reliable social network; you feed it (as well as the community) for life.

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Collaboration doesn't happen between the sectors without communication. Make the Difference Network and the movement behind it was launched around the core idea of providing a solid solution to get non-profits, business and individuals to work more effectively together, to invest in each other, extending each of their messages by increasing donations of non-profit efforts and those that support them ubiquitously.



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platform on which MTDN is based, and from which it will continue to grow as an enterprise.

WHO WINS FROM ALL THIS CAUSE-INSPIRED MARKETING?

Everybody wins: cause-inspired marketing creates a great win/win/win situation. non-profits win because they get additional visibility and contributions. The donors win because they are gratified while advancing their cause. The business wins by increasing its sphere of influence, gaining more clients and credibility within their sphere of influence and the community wins by

Businesses who support MTDN non-profit organizations through a national platform gain benefits two ways: first by enhancing and solidifying the national brand and corporate image as a caring one, secondly by allowing their local stores, representatives, or employees to participate in that effort, locally, with their customers and other non-profit efforts. Simply put, MTDN gives non-profits a place to tell their story and the audience to sell it to.

developing a stronger business and non-profit base.

Part of the mission at MTDN is being a partner with all their partners. MTDN insures the highest return for the sponsors, the individual donors, and the non-profits by not taking a cut or percentage of their donations. They can look the non-profits and all involved in the eye and say "We're in this together." They can do the same with the business sponsors as well – yes, the businesses pay to be on the site, and they sponsor the non-profits expanded capabilities. But the same dynamic holds true. The dollars are going where you want them Mr. Sponsor, to the non-profit effort - and you get the exposure for being a caring business.

It has been observed that such an ambitious undertaking would not have been possible without the advent of the Internet to act as the actual engine of collaboration in this model. But the daily experiences of MTDN staffers seems to bear out the simple truth that people will work together in some capacity if given the opportunity. The opportunities highlighted by MTDN's approach are simply on a more vast scale, and as such, so are the returns!

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According to MTDN Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer, "The entire week of the Justin Timberlake Shriners Hospitals for Children Open is a great example of what can happen when a diverse group of people, inspired by a common cause, can accomplish when they collaborate. Working together, the PGA, the Shriners, Justin Timberlake and his musician friends, Make The Difference Network and tons of volunteers helped raise money for Shriners Hospitals for Children." They also helped raise awareness among the general public of the amazing work the 22 Shriners hospitals do each year – they treated over 125,000 kids in 2007 - all for FREE."

DEMOCRATIZE GIVING

MTDN has a goal to democratize giving by literally bringing it to the masses. Increasing the visibility of thousands of non-profit organizations and empowering millions of potential donors to search, select and fund organizations' specific "wishes" is the very

