Charitable Searching

The Cost-Free Way to Give Back to Your Community
But there is a way to give back without spending a cent of your own money. No check-writing. No time spent volunteering. Simply doing something we all do probably every single day — clicking that mouse in a search engine. But not just any search engine, rather the ones created specifically to raise funds for charities and nonprofit organizations. According to the 2009 Global Edelman Goodpurpose study, despite the recession, people do want to give back in some way and, in fact, 63% of respondents, “are looking toward brands and companies to make it easier for them to make a difference” [http://www.edelman.com/news/ShowOne.asp?ID=222; retrieved 11/23/09].

Like any other search engine, these charity-based search engines raise money from sponsored links and advertisements. So for every search a user does, a portion of the search engine’s revenue is donated to a charity, which can be a nonprofit organization, a school, a college or university, or religious organization. It’s as easy as that. The only question now is why wouldn’t you?
Here’s a rundown on some of the more successful search engines.

**GoodSearch**
http://www.goodsearch.com

Launched in 2005 by brother and sister team Ken Ramberg and JJ Ramberg, GoodSearch donates 50% of its revenue to the charity or school of the user’s choice. Ken, a former founder of JOBTRAK, and JJ, an anchor at MSNBC and former director of marketing at Cooking.com, have found a way to give to charity without the user spending a dime and have been pretty successful so far. For each search performed, about 1 cent is donated. As of November 2009, more than 84,000 charities have signed on to receive donations from GoodSearch, which claims that more than 100 new groups join every day. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals alone has received almost $30,000 [http://www.goodsearch.com/successstory.aspx].

GoodSearch is powered by Yahoo! and the same search performed in both engines returned identical results. One downside of searching through GoodSearch is that you don’t have access to Yahoo!’s advanced search functions, but for most searches, this isn’t a terrible drawback. When the anticipated merger between Microsoft’s Bing and Yahoo! is finalized, GoodSearch will also use the Bing search engine.

Goodshop was added to the GoodSearch family in 2007. Goodshop is an online shopping mall where each purchase made in the mall generates a donation to the user’s selected charity. Amazon, Macy’s, and iTunes are just a few of the many participating vendors with the donations ranging anywhere from 2% up to 30% of the purchase. There are some restrictions and not every purchase may apply, but the majority of purchases do qualify for a donation.

**Do Great Good**
http://www.dogreatgood.com

Do Great Good is a really new search engine from InfoSpace, the creators of the metasearch engine Dogpile. Do Great Good extends Dogpile’s Search and Rescue program, which allows users to help raise funds for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Search and Rescue was...
an announcement about GoodSearch on your Facebook wall. Or, if you have a Twitter account, Tweet about it every once in a while to remind your users how they can help. Not everyone will necessarily check your library’s webpage each day, but avid users of Facebook and Twitter will likely see your posts and Tweets right away.

Another consideration is ease-of-use for your users. Most users of Google or Yahoo! appreciate their intuitive interfaces and we don’t necessarily want to complicate things for them. So make it as easy as possible for your users to use GoodSearch.com. Many libraries provide a basic link to GoodSearch.com and instructions on how to find the library’s name in GoodSearch’s database of nonprofits to designate the library and then start searching. Others, such as the Ohioana Library [http://www.ohioana.org/help], provide a direct link that takes users to a page where they can begin their search straightaway. The New Castle library mentioned above does the same but goes a step further: It doesn’t just provide a web address, it made a graphical interface which is far more intuitive and recognizable.

Savvy library staff will take any opportunity to promote GoodSearch to their users. Both Ohioana Library and the Sonoma County Public Library Foundation ask their staff to add a line about it in their email signatures. The Ohioana Library has raised more than $300 so far using this charitable search engine, employing several strategies to get the word out. Asked about giving advice to others who want to do the same, office manager Beth Poley says, “Make sure that GoodSearch is the default search engine on all of your in-house computers. Our staff uses GoodSearch, which makes up quite a bit of our total usage. Also, continue to remind your members that GoodSearch and GoodShop are helping your organization. Use your email signature line, put a link on your website, and include information in your email newsletters.” She added that the newsletters are where the library seems to get the most feedback from its users.

A final strategy may be to advertise your goals and successes on your webpages. For example, if you’re trying to raise money for a specific collection or program in the future, let that be known and update your users on the progress that’s been made. If the money is going to a general fund, give examples of how many books can be bought for the amount of money raised. Making your goals more tangible gives a face, as it were, to your library’s needs.
such a success, raising about $200,000 in just 2 months in 2008, that InfoSpace launched Do Great Good in the summer of 2009.

Unlike GoodSearch, InfoSpace selects which charities receive the donations. Users may suggest charities for inclusion in InfoSpace’s giving but do not have the option to select which charity receives the revenue from their searching. And though Do Great Good is now separate from Dogpile’s animal-based Search and Rescue, many of the targeted charities still focus on aiding animals. As with Dogpile, Do Great Good simultaneously searches Yahoo!, Bing, and Ask.com. Both GoodSearch and Do Great Good allow you to download toolbars for even easier searching. As of February 2010, Do Great Good had given more than $400,000 to charities.

**Every click**

http://www.everyclick.com

Every click is a privately owned British search engine that will donate to any charity in the U.K. It markets itself to businesses, colleges, and schools as a way to raise funds. Individuals and companies can choose to donate their search revenue to the charity of their choice. Searchers from schools and colleges can choose to have the funds go directly to their own institution or a charity. Launched in 2005 by Polly Gowers, Every click has raised almost £1 million to date for British charities.

**Search Kindly**

http://www.searchkindly.org

Search Kindly is an Illinois-based search engine that uses Google to “take the money that you directly and indirectly donate to us and use it to build mobile libraries for underserved schools” [http://www.searchkindly.org/index.php]. Run solely on a volunteer basis, 100% of its advertising revenue goes to charity. One major difference in searching, however: A search performed from the Search Kindly page takes you out of Search Kindly and directly into Google. So, though Search Kindly does get the revenue from your first visit, to really optimize the fundraising potential, you have to go back to Search Kindly for follow-up searches. The site has been mired in some delays with the IRS and is currently trying to obtain federal tax-exempt status, which, if successful, would make it the first search engine with tax-exempt status donating its entire profit to charities. At press time, Search Kindly was still in a holding pattern as far as donations go and expects to resume its contributions when all is settled with the IRS. It also plans to create a program called Operation Library Box in which donations would go to materials needed to aid overseas libraries. So far, the engine has raised more than $13,000.

**i’m making a difference**

http://im.live.com/Messenger/IM/Home

Microsoft’s i’m Initiative puts a different spin on using the internet to support social causes. It is not a search engine, though. Instead, every time you use Windows Live Messenger for instant messaging or Windows Live Hotmail for your email, Microsoft will donate a portion of its advertising revenue to the organization of your choice. In either service, you simply select i’m Making a Difference in the options link and then choose from ten major associations, such as the Sierra Club or the American Red Cross and start instant messaging and emailing. According to the site, Microsoft has raised almost 2.5 million dollars since 2007 with this initiative [http://im.live.com/Messenger/IM/About/Default.aspx].

**Do Good and Do Well**

These are just a few of the many charitable search engines available. A simple search using the terms “charity search engines” will help you locate others all over the world. Whether you want to help the environment, underprivileged children, those battling cancer, or your own local neighborhood church or school, there is a search engine available to help you give back.

But with so many different options out there, both big and small, you must do your research and check out the credibility and honesty of the search engine you choose. For starters, you can check reputable websites, such as http://www.philanthropyjournal.org, to see if your search engine of choice is mentioned. If so, it stands to reason that it’s probably a reliable site. Its omission doesn’t preclude it being reputable, it just means you may want to dig a little further. For example, is the website open about how the donation process works? Does it specify how much money has been raised, as a whole and for individual charities? Is there contact information? If a site is not forthcoming with this type of information, proceed with caution.

◆