



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
eBay Giving Works

Organization URL:
<http://ebaygivingworks.com/>

Project Name:
eBay Giving Works

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The program came about as a response to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when eBay employees and community organized to raise \$10 million on eBay for relief efforts in the weeks following the attacks. This response was called "Auction for America," launched less than a week after the attacks, originally benefitting the United Way's September 11 Fund and later including the American Red Cross, the Twin Towers Fund and four other nonprofits. Then- New-York-Governor George Pataki and Mayor Rudy Giuliani made a personal appeal to former eBay CEO Meg Whitman to help New-York-area nonprofits handle the flood of incoming donations and eBay employees mobilized to do so. Auction for America wasn't the first charity auction on eBay, but it clearly demonstrated community interest in grass-roots fundraising for nonprofit organizations, so by 2002 Whitman committed publicly to "bringing back the key features and functions of Auction for America to eBay as part of a broader, longer-lasting charity fundraising effort ..." And in 2003, eBay Giving Works was officially launched. To measure the project's success, we track total funds raised by the eBay community for its favorite charitable organizations. To date, eBay users have raised \$293 million for nonprofits in the U.S., U.K. and Canada, \$63 million in 2011 alone.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

eBay Giving Works launched as a collaboration between MissionFish (eBay's nonprofit partner) technology and the eBay platform, and was one of the earliest examples of third-party integration into important parts of eBay's system, such as its "Sell Your Item" form and "My eBay" account. At launch, the program wasn't in core selling flows, or APIs, nor available to every seller. Its first big leap forward was being incorporated into the Sell Item form and APIs in 2005, which put it front and center to eBay sellers. We saw tremendous growth during that time. We also integrated the program into the eBay billing system in 2007, eliminating the need for sellers to register separately with a third party (MissionFish) -- which caused a lot of drop-off -- and enabling us to collect donations from the method of payment sellers already had on file with eBay. On the buyer side, we had to develop split payment functionality to allow donations at checkout. We leveraged PayPal to deliver this feature, which has generated \$12 million in donations since 2009. Beyond specific tools for buyers and sellers, our disaster response platform is one of the most important aspects of our program. It used to take up to 12 hours to launch our disaster fundraising campaigns, because we had to receive a lot of detailed information from our nonprofit partners before launching. As we learned, the majority of donations come in during the first 24 hours after a disaster; so unfortunately, we were missing a critical window to collect relief funds. We have solved this problem by developing templates that we can launch immediately after a disaster. We add additional information to them as we receive it, but we can be up and running in no time.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

A very specific example is disaster response. The eBay and PayPal communities have a history of incredible compassion when disasters strike. In 2011, they donated \$6 million for relief efforts in the wake of the earthquake in Japan. So many people pitched in: from everyday buyers and sellers who bought and sold items on behalf of charities doing work in Japan; to talented artists throughout North America and Japan who donated handmade pieces of artwork that were auctioned off for more than \$75,000 towards relief work on the island; to Gwen Stefani, who raised \$71,390 by auctioning off unique items. The platform also allowed eBay users to donate -- quickly and conveniently -- \$128,000 in support of relief efforts after the deadliest tornado in American history devastated Missouri in May and a series of tornadoes ripped across the country in April, and \$800,000 to help end the hunger crisis in the horn of Africa in August. For all of these disasters, eBay and PayPal waive their normal listing fees for seller donations benefitting relief charities. Back in 2010, within two hours of the devastating earthquake in Haiti, nonprofits mobilizing for relief in the country were receiving donations from generous eBay users, donating as they completed their purchases on eBay. Soon after, eBay and PayPal launched relief campaigns, featuring organizations large and small that were providing immediate aid and relief in Haiti. The eBay community responded with overwhelming generosity, donating more than \$1 million to those campaigns within two weeks.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

This program allows nonprofits big and small to reach a community of millions of engaged and generous supporters whom they otherwise wouldn't have access to. For instance, Angel Acres Horse Haven in Pennsylvania rescues healthy, young American horses that would otherwise be sold for human consumption in Europe and Asia. In 2010, Angel Acres -- with only one full-time employee -- raised more than \$23,000 from the eBay community, 20 percent of its annual budget. A more recent example is an eBay auction organized by members of Mulberry Baptist Church in Houma, La. Church members were hoping to raise \$6,000 on eBay to build one residential duplex on a 34-acre development in western Haiti. They were blown away when they raised \$23,000 in 10 days on eBay. This enabled them to expand their plans to build both the duplex and a school for children who survived the 2010 earthquake during a trip to Haiti this January. Here's a quote

from auction organizer, Hank Babin, as received by eBay in an email during the auction: "This is pretty amazing to watch come together. The most amazing thing really is we only scratched the surface of its [eBay's] potential. There were so many people who couldn't wrap their head around what we were trying to accomplish. And we only came up with this [the eBay auction idea] about 3 months ago. But now they get it. Now they see how simple it can be and the impact it has."