



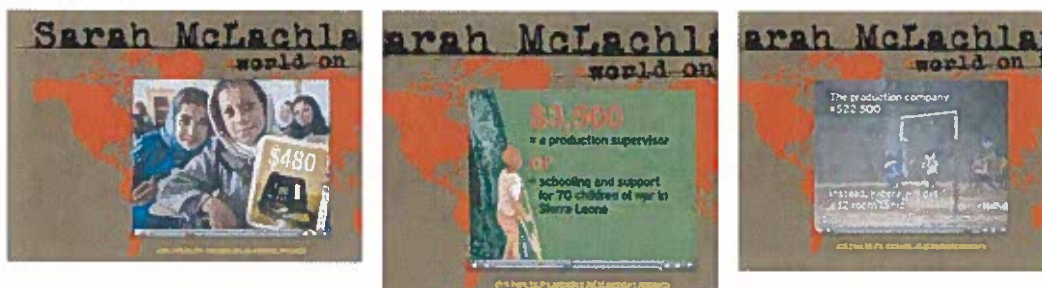
Figure 1 Prototype of "Boston Gives" home page

Design Concepts

Simple, clear interface. First and foremost, a simple, clear interface will enable the donor to decide what to do on the site—whether it is donating money, searching for projects based on geographic region or cause, or logging into their profile. Some nonprofit organization Web sites offer donors information on every project and news item, effectively creating information overload. In addition, unlike typical nonprofit Web sites offering online donation capabilities, Boston Gives would integrate vital information about the project throughout the donation process. Before giving, a donor can learn about the project's goal, the organization leading it, and neighborhoods the project will impact (see Figure 2). Finally, the simple design will help Boston Gives balance factual information (what \$25 will provide) with emotional triggers, such as a short film about the project.

Inspiration for including a short film in the prototype came from Canadian singer Sarah McLachlan's Web site, (<http://www.worldonfire.ca/>). Through a series of simple, highly

emotional clips, McLachlan documents how she took \$150,000 typically used to produce a music video and donated it to charities around the world. The look and feel of her project indicates that organizations can keep it simple and still create a moving experience.



Source: Screen shots from video at <http://www.worldonfire.ca>

Engaging: Tells a story. The most salient component from Wright and McCarthy's (2003) user experience framework is the compositional thread, or story, told through short, narrative descriptions of the project as well as some form of multimedia. The authors view "design as conversation with a situation," with the purpose of engaging the user and empowering him to create meaning from the experience. Nonprofit organizations can choose how they want to present their story on Boston Gives, and in essence, help design for a user experience. They may opt to tell their story through multiple short videos, still images, audio, text or some combination of multimedia.

Transparency and Feedback: Where does money go? Another important design element is the transparency and feedback mechanism included on the project page. As previously mentioned, donors trust nonprofit organizations when they maintain transparency and open lines of communication. For example, Heifer International (<http://www.heifer.org/>), enables donors to buy a farm animal—a cow, lamb, flock of chicks, a trio of rabbits—which are then sent to families in underdeveloped countries. The site does an excellent job of explaining exactly what your money buys (e.g., \$120 buys the gift of a goat) along with short descriptions of how the animal will help the family or community.

In addition, the Boston Gives project page offers donors two feedback mechanisms—updates on how the project is progressing, and a status bar indicating how much money has been raised, and how much more support the project needs. Again, this helps instill a sense of trust between the organization and the donor, as it assures the legitimacy of the organization. Furthermore, the donor feels that their donation is actually making a difference.

Locally based, multiple projects and causes. The final design element is based in on the idea that donors want to have choices—choices about what kind of projects they support, the location of the

projects, and how they want to give. By enabling donors to support specific initiatives, nonprofit organizations may find that donors are more fully engaged in the issue. This may result in more generous financial donations as well as “spillover effects”: donors may in addition volunteer their time or tell their friends about the project.

BostonGives

your dollars helping your community.

[home](#)
[about](#)
[donate](#)
[organizations](#)
[sponsor](#)
[contact us](#)

Goal: Build new Youth Center in Roxbury, MA

Organization: Project Hope
500 Dorchester Avenue
Roxbury, MA 02111
617.555.1111

[Donate](#)

About the Project

text

About the Neighborhood

text

News & Updates

text

Where Does the Money Go?

\$25	will pay for 5 new basketballs
\$75	will pay an onsite math tutor for one week
\$150	will buy a month of art supplies

Contributions Received: \$20,000

Contribution Goal: \$34,000

\$0 GOAL

watch film

[→ play](#)

contribute

[→ donate \\$](#)

[→ tell a friend](#)

[→ volunteer](#)

[→ donate supplies](#)

login

username:

password:

[Go](#)

Figure 2 Prototype of “Boston Gives” Second Level Project Page

Discussion

According to Wright and McCarthy (2003), the process of sense-making ensures that we view an experience through the eyes of a person. By applying the user experience framework to the context of online fundraising, organizations have an opportunity to tell a compelling story to a potential donor that is balanced in both content and emotion. The combined elements of storytelling, appropriate emotional triggers, and a welcoming atmosphere throughout an online fundraising environment like Boston Gives will encourage donors to *act* by making a donation, volunteering their time, telling their friends or attending a related event. The online experience helps the donor create a meaningful connection to a cause or problem directly impacting their community. It is this personal connection which makes the online donation experience pleasurable for the user.

On a more practical level, a site like Boston Gives may be appealing to donors due to its simple interface, and because it provides multiple, obvious options for action. Often, nonprofit organization Web sites provide so much information about the organization and its programs that the donor does not know where to begin. The donor may read about a certain project, feel engaged, but then be distracted by a different news item or navigate to an external link. This translates into missed donations for the organization. Furthermore, Boston Gives may provide small nonprofits or those with very limited resources or technical expertise with a place on the Web for the first time.

It is difficult to predict whether an online fundraising Web site like Boston Gives would be successful, or how users would react to a centralized site with hundreds of worthy causes to choose from. In order to evaluate the proposed design, it would make sense to solicit feedback from nonprofit IT professionals. In addition, it would make sense to conduct a pilot study in a city with a vibrant nonprofit community, such as Boston, MA or San Francisco, CA. By working closely with a diverse group of users, interaction designers can assess whether a model like Boston Gives would in fact offer donors a holistic, integrated online giving experience.

As indicated by a recent study, nonprofit organizations have an opportunity to utilize online environments in order to fulfill their mission. Designing for an online donation experience that balances cerebral and emotional elements will help nonprofit leaders keep sight of the “visceral nature of donors’ charitable impulses... [donors who] prefer an active rather than passive engagement in charities... and want to see the effects of the organization’s work in their local communities” (Arumi, Wooden, and Johnson, 2005, p. 31).

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