

## Improving your website to get more donations

Jakob Nielsen, one of the top web usability expert, highlighted in one of his alerts that poor design of a charity website can result in fewer online donations.

A recent Nielsen study asked participants to choose one of two charities (within the same category) after looking at their websites; and then to make a credit card donation to the chosen charity via that charity's website.

The study highlighted two motivating factors the potential donors were looking for before they made a donation. First of all, they wanted to find out about the charity's mission, objectives and areas of work. Secondly, they wanted to find out how the charity would use their contributions.

It is interesting to note, that less than half of the websites tested (43% of 23 websites) offered information about their mission, objectives and work. And, only 4% of the websites gave information on how they would use the donor's gifts.

It is not surprising to note that donors want to give to charities that share their values and ideals. But in addition to this they also want to know how the charity goes about fulfilling the bold statements they make about fighting poverty, alleviating suffering, etc.

The study also identified some of the stumbling blocks that might hinder people from making a donation online. They are:

1. **Poor page design.** Nearly half of the usability problems (47%) related to poor page design and un-intuitive information architecture, cluttered pages and confusing information flow.
2. **Hiding the donation button.** Many charities are still really good at this. So, it is not surprising when potential donors find it hard to discover the 'Donate Now' button.
3. **Missing information and in-house jargon.** More than half (53%) of the usability problems related to unclear content, missing information and confusing terms.
4. **Lack of integration of local and national websites.** One of the worst problems was poor integration of local charity sites with their national

parent sites. When donors moved to a subsidiary website to find out what was being done in their local area, these websites looked completely different than the parent sites. The same can be said about pages for different projects, etc.

5. **Giving money on a charity website is 7% harder than spending money on e-commercial sites.** It seems that once donors moved on to the actual transaction, things moved fairly easily, especially when the process was similar to e-commerce sites that they are accustomed to using.

The study suggests that sorting out usability problems identified by potential donors could increase donations by 10%. That is a considerable improvement that justifies a little expense and time in writing clearer content, making the 'Donate Now' button easily visible and telling potential donors how the money would be used/

The study concludes that, *'To improve fundraising, speak plainly and answer donors' main questions, and money will flow your way.'*

Find out more at: <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/nonprofit-charity-ngo-study1.html>