

# CHARITYFOCUS INTERNSHIP

An Experience in the Gift Economy

We just jump and trust that the net will appear, instead of stalling projects until resources are secured. We have passionate be-the-change volunteers, instead of paid employees working 9-to-5. We invite people to sit in silence, instead of holding fundraisers. We have distributed meetings in the living rooms of the world, instead of having centralized headquarters. We share stories with each other, instead of doing outreach. In the previous century we might've been any small group of friends, but in today's fast-paced networked economy, such decentralized and distributed posses are often in the position to be true changemakers.

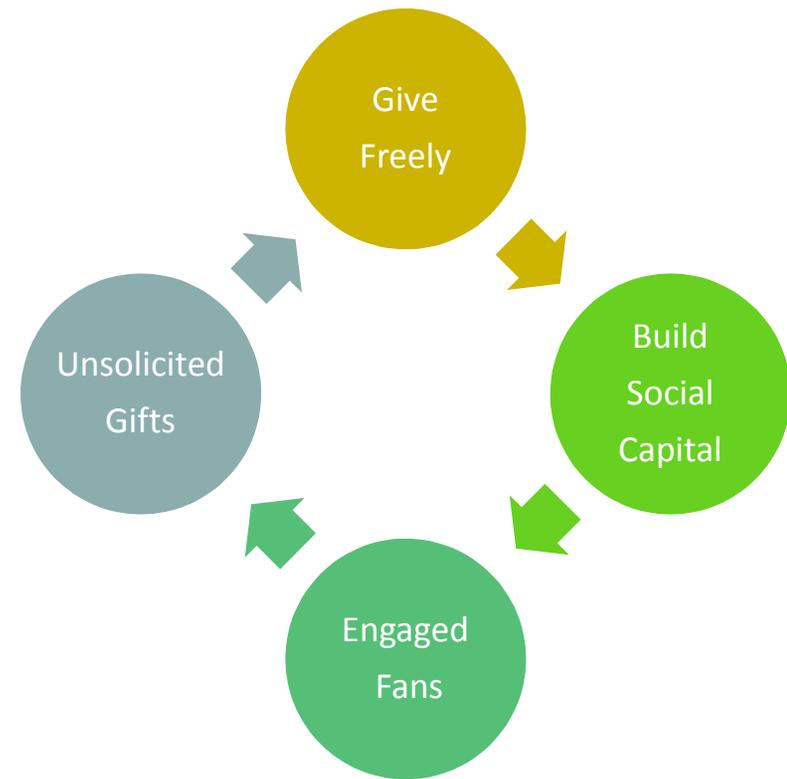
CharityFocus, like all good posses, never really tried to create itself. It just happened. In January 1999, in the height of the dot-com heyday, a few friends gathered in an ordinary living room, over some pizza. It was Silicon Valley, where greed was in the air, BMWs were being given as signing bonuses, and 18-hour workdays were not uncommon. But this meeting was about something very simple – something so simple that it was radical. It was about giving.

“Let's serve without any strings attached, just for the sake of giving,” Nipun Mehta opened. A posse based on a fundamental generosity.

## INSPIRATION

CharityFocus started in April 1999, to build websites for nonprofits using volunteer capital. Since then, it has grown into an incubator of “gift economy” projects.

In aboriginal societies, a person of consequence -- the man or woman who is deemed worthy of adulation, respect and emulation -- was not the one who accumulated the most goods but the one who dispersed them. Gift economies are marked by that very circulation and connectivity: goods have value only insofar as they are treated as gifts, and gifts can remain gifts only if they are continually given away. This results in a kind of engine of community cohesion, in which objects create social, psychological, emotional and spiritual bonds as they pass from hand to hand.



## GIFT ECONOMY

CharityFocus operates with three guiding principles:  
(a) be volunteer-run, (b) don't fundraise, and  
(c) think small.

## The Internship Intentions

Hosting an intern is a significant overhead for any organization. CharityFocus takes on this challenge, to contribute to the “ripple effect” that it has benefitted from in the past. At the end of the term, we hope that the intern grows in three broad areas:

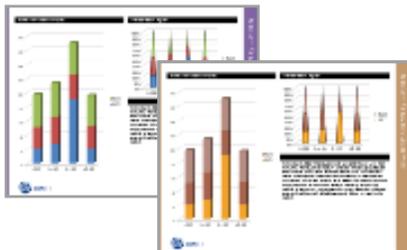
1. **Material:** we hope to expand the intern’s tangible, concrete skill-set that could range from building technology to designing graphics to writing articles to organizing grassroots movements.
2. **Emotional:** we hope to engage the intern in group projects that deepen cooperation and collaboration skills, with the larger purpose of deepening their “emotional intelligence”.
3. **Spiritual:** we hope to provide a strong context for cultivating spiritual values like generosity, non-violence, and interconnectedness – at the experiential level.

While maintaining clarity on these intentions, a CharityFocus intern is expected to work very hard and stretch their bounds.

## An Ideal Candidate Will Have ...

Typically, we’d love for a volunteer to have one or more of these skills that can be applied to various projects:

- Unflinching interest in **“being the change”**
- Strong **organizational** skills
- Competence in **Internet technologies**, and social media
- Comfort with **graphics design**
- Powerful written and oral **communication capacity**



## The “Orientation”

The exact nature of the project will be co-created after the first-meeting with the intern and will continue to evolve dynamically. However, our orientation might foreshadow the experience :

- Read ‘Tao of CharityFocus’. List 10 most inspiring articles amongst the CF portals, and explain why they moved you.
- Do three “Smile Card” acts of kindness and publish the story of your experience on HelpOthers.org.
- Engage in “Wednesday meditation”, a community space of silence, sharing and service.
- Volunteer at Karma Kitchen, a gift-economy restaurant in Berkeley on Sundays.
- Interview a social artist in the community, and submit the article for submission in *works & conversations*
- Respond to volunteer queries from around the world.
- Surf the Internet to find 10 “good news” stories that would be good features for DailyGood.org

## Why CharityFocus?

People

Process

Projects

CharityFocus is a self-assembled group of VERY diverse group of volunteers – who are the coolest people you'll ever meet! Really. 😊 From engineers to carpenters to venture capitalists to teachers to doctors to filmmakers, everyone is a part of CharityFocus.



Because we're volunteer run, we don't have any bosses. We work like brothers and sisters, and are very process oriented. Of course, we work hard, we have deadlines, and we push ourselves, but we don't compromise our values along the way.

Naturally, we also end up doing a lot in the world: 18 online portals, 262 thousand members, 50 million newsletters per year, and so on. Instead of financial capital, the entire CharityFocus ecosystem runs solely on inspiration capital! 😊

Helping, fixing and serving are three fundamental ways of seeing life. When we help, we use our own strength to support someone with less strength; we see life as weak and our offerings are rooted in a sense of inequality. When we fix, we have pre-judged idea of delivering a solution and that judgement creates a separation. When we serve, though, we work with the understanding that another's suffering is our own and that when we heal others, we are healing ourselves; we see life as whole, without demarcations between giver and receiver.

A Chinese parable further illustrates the point: an old man set out to change the world. He found that he wasn't making much progress, so he tried to change his country. This was also too difficult, so he tried to change his neighborhood. When he didn't have success there, he tried to change his family. Even that was easier said than done, so he tried to change himself. Then an interesting thing happened. When he had changed himself, his family changed. And when his family changed, his neighborhood changed. When his neighborhood changed, his country changed. And when his country changed, the world changed.

From that point of view, being-the-change is the highest form of service.

## SPIRIT OF SERVICE

We flow with our change, and that very commitment allows others to flow with their own dynamic conditions. In a very real sense, we become instruments.