

# E-commerce clicks can connect consumers to their causes

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Credit: Worldcoo

The European marketplace is increasingly geared to e-commerce, with turnover up 15 percent to EUR 530 billion in 2016. Yet, current architecture remains basic and misses opportunities, such as fundraising for social causes; a situation WIDGET 3.0 set out to rectify.

Raising funds for humanitarian, developmental and environmental organisations has become more difficult. This is partly due to an increasingly competitive marketplace but also to the fallout, especially for donor governments, of the [global financial crisis](#). Less funding obviously impacts on the ability of organisations to carry out vital, sometimes life-saving, work.

Yet, over the same period there has been a step-change in flexible

marketplace e-commerce and e-banking solutions, alongside innovations such as crowdfunding. Collectively, these offer people new ways of connecting, as individuals or groups, with efforts and causes they want to support.

An EU-funded project, WIDGET 3.0, set out to tap this trend by developing a facility, (a widget) which connects social causes with companies' customers for fundraising. The system also affords transparency, paramount for effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) packages, while also offering unique supporter engagement opportunities.

WIDGET 3.0 has enabled the developers, Worldcoo, to adopt new fundraising channels such as Point of Sale (POS) systems, add new partners all over the European Union and work with companies such as Ticketmaster and MasterCard. The initiative has passed EUR 1 million in donations and funded more than 200 social projects around the world, all thanks to almost 500 000 donors.

## **Connecting customers, companies and causes**

After the 2008 financial crisis, public and government donations to charities and NGOs has been reduced in real terms. However, donations from individuals, faith and social groups, as well as companies, have continued to grow.

Explaining the inception of WIDGET 3.0, project coordinator Mr Sergi Figueres says, "We see conversion rates of supporters, from interested to active, growing daily. People are still very willing to donate, all they ask for is to know where the money goes, what impact it achieves and for an easy giving process."

Equally, many companies are increasingly engaged with social issues,

whether allowing donations on their websites or through more formal charity partnerships and they seek to involve their customers in these efforts as part of their market proposition. WIDGET 3.0 simplifies the process of matching customer, company and cause, potentially influencing spending patterns as customers support companies with demonstrable ethics which align with their own. Currently the project is working with around 100 companies.

Individuals usually experience WIDGET 3.0 at the point of purchase, where with just one click they can donate or round up payments. The widgets themselves are freely and easily integrated into existing e-commerce facilities or a physical point of sale checkout device (for physical retailers) with money transferred to the chosen projects in real-time. Supporters can check on project progress by visiting dedicated website pages, which include multimedia updates and impact stories. Donors can also receive tax deduction certificates.

Once a charity is approached and wants to be involved, or itself approaches Worldcoo, the charity is added to the fundraising portfolio, after a successful audit and signed agreement. Worldcoo is currently working with more than 300 charities from around the world, for now mainly based in EU countries, and this year alone has supported almost 200 projects.

## **Becoming the European standard-bearer for tech donations**

Worldcoo is committed to build the European go-to tech donation facility. Part of the strategy involves working with top European companies but the team also aims to become a key partner for multinational institutions like the European Union. Towards this end, they are already partnering with many United Nations agencies, such as

UNICEF.

"Our vision is to become the world leader in tech donations. If we achieve this we could raise millions of euros for thousands of projects, which really benefit many people's lives. This will also contribute to the implementation of the policies and strategies of large institutions, increasing their social impact," says Figueres.

To reach this goal, Worldcoo's roadmap has to be ambitious. Aside from improving current donation tools, the team is also designing new ones with more customizable solutions and exploring how Artificial Intelligence may help increase conversion rates. They are looking to streamline and automate currently manual processes, such as the generation of tax deduction certificates. Also significant to future upgrades will be timely follow-ups to donations, alongside improvements to transparency efforts, where blockchain technology may play a role.

As Figueres concludes, "Our ultimate goal is to have access to nothing short of 100 percent of the e-retailing market, e-banking and beyond: billing, payment systems, and vending solutions."

Provided by CORDIS

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