

[Free] With Charity For All: Why Charities Are Failing and a Better Way to Give

With Charity For All: Why Charities Are Failing and a Better Way to Give

Ken Stern

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Ken Stern : With Charity For All: Why Charities Are Failing and a Better Way to Give before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised With Charity For All: Why Charities Are Failing and a Better Way to Give:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Measure and disseminate the results! By Maria del Sol Excellent

vantage point on how it is possible to give wisely, demand results (no matter what those results are) and disseminate that information for better utilization of future funding dollars, with measurable results. Building stronger nonprofits - that succeed - work for the betterment of all of us, our society in general, and reduce societal problems. Good reading, important resource, recommended for anyone interested in non-profits and positive change. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A good start

By MecStern served on the board of a large non-profit organization so he has plenty of (successful) first-hand experience in this area. Right there, that makes his book worth my attention. On the good side: Stern makes many cogent points: The true customers of a charity are the donors, not the beneficiaries. Charities will do whatever impresses donors. Research shows that most donors do very little research; therefore, many charities focus on beautiful stories ("help this person in the photo!") rather than actual measured results ("we spent \$X million dollars per year, and 5 years later, Y thousand people were vaccinated / had high school degrees / had clean running water in their homes / had visited our clinic"). There is a very clear message to donors here: you're the customer; it's up to you to figure out what you want and then direct your money accordingly. There are very few -- perhaps just one -- organization in the world that credibly evaluates the performance of charities. That's givewell.org. If nothing else, check the charities that you know on [givewell](http://givewell.org). You'll be surprised. The Gates Foundation also does this kind of evaluation for its own use but does not publish reports for others. Donors should think carefully about what they want and think carefully about how to tell if they are getting it. One traditional measure of charitable effectiveness is %age spent on program services. To be sure, a charity that spends 20% of its revenues on program services and 80% on paying its own executives and other overhead is likely to be an ineffective charity, so this measure helps weed out a few bad charities. However, the difference between a charity that spends 75% on program services and another charity that spends 95% on program services isn't going to be visible by looking at those two numbers. It's likely that the second charity is not spending *enough* on institutional development. How much is enough? It's not a percentage, it goes back to measuring outcomes -- whatever produces the best outcome. On the down side: Stern starts the book with a warning about using anecdotes as a way of making judgements, but then fills most of the rest of the book with anecdotes. And they all line up nicely, too. When Stern introduces an executive as friendly, personable, and exuding "boyish charm" -- that turns out to be a good charity. When Stern doesn't say anything about the personal attributes of executives -- that turns out to be a bad charity. Similarly, there's a bias against certain charitable areas (sports, high art) and in favor of others (social service). How about an effective sports charity or an ineffective youth service charity for a change? Stern chastizes donors for being unfamiliar with the tools available, but then (a bit smugly) assumes that all his readers are familiar. This book could use an appendix of resources: how to look up the Form 990 of a charity. How to read the Form 990 of a charity. The address of [Givewell](http://Givewell.org). The address of any other services which publish comparable information.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Problem With Charities

By Steve King This book covers - warts and all - the many problems with U.S. charities. The reality is while the vast majority of charities have good intentions, many fail to solve the social problems they are intended to address. And more than few are simply fraudulent organizations, taking advantage of lax legal oversight to bilk contributors. A number of high profile examples of failed charities are examined. Examples include water charities that drill wells in Third World countries but are then unable to maintain them; the much denounced D.A.R.E program that still gets millions in funding despite proof the program doesn't work; and the many failings of the American Red Cross. The book is at its best talking about the problems with charities. It's weaker when talking about how to fix them. It does have some great advice to donors: The public must begin to see donations as investments ... people must take charitable giving as seriously as they do investing in the stock market. This is the critical first step toward creating a new market discipline, a new culture of effectiveness, and efficient, results-oriented service.

Each year, the average American household donates almost \$2700 to charity. Yet, most donors know little about the American charitable sector and the nonprofit organizations they support. In *With Charity For All*, former NPR CEO Ken Stern exposes a field that few know: 1.1 million organizations, 10% of the national workforce, and \$1.5 trillion in annual revenues. He chronicles the many flaws in the charity system, from tax-exempt charities such as bowl games, roller derby leagues, and beer festivals, to charitable hospitals that pay their executives into the millions, to--worst of all--organizations that raise millions of dollars without ever cracking the problem they have pledged to solve. *With Charity For All* provides an unflinching look at the philanthropic sector but also offers an inspiring prescription for individual giving and widespread reform.

From [Booklist](http://Booklist.org) Stern, corporate executive and former CEO of NPR, tells the story of how the charitable sector in the U.S. has lost its way because of the absence of market mechanisms that reward good work and punish failure. His research uncovered organizational and service failures in charities that refused to evaluate their programs and ignored poor results. There are approximately 1.4 million charities in this country with a workforce of 13 million and volunteers numbering 61 million; revenues total more than \$1.5 trillion annually. Charitable activity accounts for 10 percent of the economic life of this country, says the author, seeing hope in a small movement that is currently rethinking how charities operate, and he is optimistic that tools will be developed so that contributors to charities will

become investors rather than donors. Stern emphasizes that social investing takes work and urges donors to look beyond clever marketing campaigns for organizations that are transparent and accountable to stakeholders. Important and thought-provoking analysis. --Mary Whaley Smart and scathing. Nicholas Kristof, Pulitzer Prizewinning New York Times columnist and co-author of *Half the Sky* An eye-popping and devastatingly detailed critique. San Francisco Chronicle Stern makes a strong case that the average American donor has become a sucker. . . . A good guide to what makes an effective charity. Los Angeles Times Eye-opening. . . . Stern is calling for donors to . . . rethink the way they give in order to be the impetus for change. The Washington Post Informative. . . . Stern covers an enormous amount of non-profit ground. . . . Feisty. Los Angeles of Books [With Charity for All is] more exasperated than mean, more provocative than shrill, and counterintuitive instead of purveying stale conventional wisdom. Sterns advice is consequential, because if followed it will alter the charitable realm. USA Today [With Charity for All] will be particularly beneficial to those conservatives whose reflexive answer to every question about how to limit government is civil society. . . . [We] must therefore devote serious attention to the health of the charitable sector. . . . Ken Stern offers essential guidance on where to start." The Wall Street Journal Stern is an engaging storyteller, and his catalog of venality and graft in the charitable sector borders on farce. . . . His insistence on this fundamental question about the purpose of American charity is the great and original strength of this book. Washington Monthly [A] devastatingly detailed critique. . . . With Charity for All makes a compelling case that philanthropic organizations are rife with theft both grand and petty grotesquely high salaries, waste and incompetence, and subject to virtually no oversight. Tulsa World [Stern] fills the text with insightful, vivid examples. . . . A trove of useful insider wisdom. Kirkus s [A] provocative expos. . . . For anyone who has given time or money to not-for-profits, Sterns critique will prove both disturbing and thought-provoking. Publishers Weekly About the Author Ken Stern is a media and nonprofit executive best known for helping to build National Public Radio into a global news and information power. He is currently the CEO of Palisades Media Ventures, a Washington D.C.-based public affairs company.