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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 SolExcellent 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."

Vast and largely unexamined, the world of American charities accounts for fully 10 percent of economic activity in this country, yet operates with little accountability, no real barriers to entry, and a stunning lack of evidence of effectiveness. In *With Charity for All*, Ken Stern reveals a problem hidden in plain sight and prescribes a whole new way for Americans to make a difference. Each year, two thirds of American households donate to charities, with charitable revenues exceeding one trillion dollars. Yet while the mutual fund industry employs more than 150,000 people to rate and evaluate for-profit companies, nothing remotely comparable exists to monitor the nonprofit world. Instead, each individual is on his or her own, writing checks for a cause and going on faith. Ken Stern, former head of NPR and a long-time nonprofit executive, set out to investigate the vast world of U.S. charities and discovered a sector hobbled by deep structural flaws. Unlike private corporations that respond to market signals and go out of business when they fail, nonprofit organizations have a very low barrier to entry (the IRS approves 99.5 percent of applications) and once established rarely die. From water charities aimed at improving life in Africa to drug education programs run by police officers in thousands of U.S. schools, and including American charitable icons such as the Red Cross, Stern tells devastating stories of organizations that raise and spend millions of dollars without ever cracking the problems they set out to solve. But he also discovered some good news: a growing movement toward accountability and effectiveness in the nonprofit world. *With Charity for All* is compulsively readable, driven in its early pages by the plight of millions of Americans donating to good causes to no

good end, and in its last chapters by an inspiring prescription for individual giving and widespread reform.