

Bookshelf

HEATHER HISEY, *Editor*

Torys, Barristers and Solicitors LLP, Toronto, Ontario

The Nonprofit Organization's Guide to E-Commerce

By Gary M. Grobman

Published by White Hat Communications, P.O. Box 5390, Harrisburg, PA 17110-0390, 2001, 182 pp., U.S. \$19.95 (plus S and H)

REVIEWED BY CHERYL EWING

Brava Special Events and Arts Management, Kitchener, Ontario

One of the greatest challenges facing not-for-profits is the lack of time – staff never have enough, volunteers definitely don't have enough – so it is daunting to consider taking on a new approach that will involve research, setup, new ways of thinking. Grobman promises that his book will “explore how nonprofit organizations can use the power of the Internet to generate more revenues for their organization”. He does so in a way that is quick and easy to read, that provides examples of successes, gives practical advice, and offers strategies for going forward. The *Guide* can make it possible to take that first huge step.

One word of caution – Canadians must take the time to clarify Canadian rules and regulations regarding transactions and tax-related questions. This *Guide* is primarily directed to Americans.

Grobman has carefully laid out his chapters and within each has subheadings so that the book becomes a manual that you will easily refer to again and again. Approximately a third consists of an Appendix giving detailed information ranging from a glossary to tips for writing specifically for the web. Grobman takes the reader through an understanding of e-commerce and the implications for not-for-profits. He provides a “10-Step Quick-Start Guide” then takes you through an understanding of how transactions actually work. One of the key chapters is the fourth, “Security, Privacy, and Other Issues”. Although somewhat frustrating (this chapter is the one that requires the reader to research Canadian law), it is worthwhile reading. It is important that not-for-profits fully understand the implications of e-commerce and this chapter will help identify the questions that need to be answered.

The last half of the book is specific to using e-commerce. Grobman gives the reader a great understanding of the possibilities of fundraising on the Internet. He begins with an overview and then takes the reader through the specifics of online auctions and shopping malls, finishing with an understanding of the role

of online communities. In the chapters specific to types of online fundraising, Grobman includes a series of tips to help the reader understand the steps involved and the commitments that will be made. It is a reminder that although Grobman believes e-commerce to be a good thing, not all aspects of it are suitable for all organizations.

Perhaps the most compelling sections found throughout the *Guide* are those he calls “Up Close”. Here Grobman speaks to individuals, many of them fundraisers, encouraging them to speak about their own experiences with e-commerce. Although there is a firm belief in the Internet and its potential for doing good for charities, these sections still allow the reader to get a better sense of the challenges organizations face in taking this step.

Grobman also includes samples of existing web pages. It is not clear what his intent is as he does not discuss these pages and, although it is implied that there are good samples of a site, he does not explain why.

Finally, Grobman walks you through the publicity strategies required for success and clarifies some of the terms that are often heard and, equally often, misunderstood.

The Nonprofit Organization’s Guide to E-Commerce is not only useful for those organizations considering venturing into the e-commerce world, it is a valuable resource for any organization with a web site. It increases a basic understanding of the Internet and will cause senior managers to take another look at how they run their web sites.