



Charitable giving gets a fiscal overhaul from a trio of business-savvy entrepreneurs.

the philanthropists

Photographed by Julian Dufort

The term "not for profit" is usually enough to make businessmen cringe. But the new wave charity DonorsChoose offers proof that when good money sense is paired with generosity of spirit, the world can change, one No. 2 pencil at a time. Seven years ago, Charles Best set out to improve education in New York City after batting around ideas with an energetic group of fellow schoolteachers in the Bronx. Today, as the 31-year-old CEO of DonorsChoose, he's connected \$10 million with 15,000 teachers at 5,000 public schools nationwide. "It's a charity operating on free market principles, a philanthropic marketplace," says Best, pointing out that its user-friendly Web site, DonorsChoose.org, offers a novel way of collaborating: The teachers, with their acute knowledge of students' needs, link up with donors who have the resources to fulfill those needs. "It enables any teacher to be a change-maker," says Best, "and it enables any citizen to be a philanthropist." The egalitarianism doesn't stop there—even modest supporters are courted like Carnegies with impact letters, thank-you notes, and photos of satisfied students happily crafting away with donor-provided construction paper or, perhaps, blogging away on new laptops. Former Microsoft executive Oliver Hurst-Hiller brings tech savvy to the enterprise as CTO, while Andy Kaplan—DonorsChoose's CFO and a Harvard M.B.A.—keeps the books. Together with Best, they hope to bring their business into every public classroom in America by next year. A sound investment by any standards. □

SCHOOL SUPPLY
The men behind DonorsChoose drop in on Ms. Stacey Subitz's fifth grade class at P.S. 171 on 103rd Street in Manhattan. FROM LEFT: Charles Best, Oliver Hurst-Hiller, and Andy Kaplan. On Best: Michael Bastian suit. On Hurst-Hiller: Isala jacket. On Kaplan: APC blazer.

When diverse talents come together, the resulting collaboration can be greater than the sum of its parts.

COMBINED FORCES

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