



CHARITYFOCUS ENABLES
INSPIRED PEOPLE TO CON-
TRIBUTE IN MEANINGFUL
WAYS TO THE
WORLD AROUND THEM

by Neelam Mehta

• the
JOY
of

giving

Nipun Mehta, 33 years old, is the founder of CharityFocus.org, a fully volunteer-run organisation that has delivered millions of dollars of web-related services to the nonprofit world for free. The recipient of the Jefferson Award for Public Service and the President's Volunteer Service Award, his work creatively leverages web technologies for collaborative and transformational giving. He serves on the advisory boards of the *Seva Foundation*, *Dalai Lama Foundation*, and *Airline Ambassadors*. In his own words, this is how it all happened for him: "A job at Sun Microsystems in my third year of college gave me more money than I could

spend. So I did the only thing I could – I gave it away. I gave a little money, then some time, and then finally myself."

CharityFocus is an experiment in the joy of giving. Its services enable inspired people to contribute in meaningful ways to the world around them by "being the change we wish to see in the world." The organisation endeavours to inspire greater volunteerism and provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for all who want them – no matter what their skills, how much time they have to give, where they are located, and what their interests. In the process, CharityFocus volunteers provide much-needed assistance



Giftwrapped smiles

to nonprofit organisations worldwide and create inspiring local events that manifest the spirit of service. It also helps incubate small projects and offer a wide range of technological tools for “helping others help others.”

Nipun’s high-school goal was to become either a tennis pro or a Himalayan yogi. However, by the third year of his Computer Science and Philosophy degree at UC Berkeley, he started his software career at Sun Microsystems. Dissatisfied by the dot-com greed of the late '90s, Nipun went to a homeless shelter with three friends to “give with absolutely no agendas”. They ended up creating a website, and an organisation named CharityFocus. Today, CharityFocus’s 18,500 members incubate compassionate action in a multitude of ways and its inspiration portal gets 100 million hits a year. In 2001, at the age of 25, Nipun quit his job to become a full-time volunteer. He didn’t have a plan of survival beyond six months, but so far, so good.

In January 2005, Nipun and Guri, his wife of six months, dropped everything to embark on an open-ended, unscripted walking pilgrimage in India to “use our hands to do random acts of kindness, use our heads to profile inspiring people, and use our hearts to cultivate truth”. Living on one dollar a day,

eating wherever food was offered, sleeping wherever a flat surface was found, the couple walked 1000 km before ending up at a monastery where they meditated for three months. Today, both Nipun and Guri live in Berkeley, do small acts of service with great love, and run CharityFocus. Unsurprisingly, the work of CharityFocus regularly touches thousands of lives in a myriad of different ways.

Nipun’s mission statement in life reads: “Bring smiles in the world and stillness in my heart.” ☺

*We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article.
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