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An Internship Report on Classwish

Chi Ma
University of New Orleans

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An Internship Report on Classwish

An Internship Report
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In partial fulfillment of the
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In
Arts Administration

by
Chi Ma
M.S. Capital Normal University, 2010
December, 2014
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Abstract

From September through December 2013, I interned at an organization named Classwish located in New York City. Classwish was founded in 2008. It is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the educational environment by helping teachers to get school supplies. The organization’s Mission Statement is, “We empower parents, educators, and local communities to make a positive change in their children's lives by providing them with the supplies they need to learn, grow and excel.” This internship report includes a review of the organizational profile, the duties of my internship as a music marketing intern, an organizational SWOT analysis, best practices in the field, and recommendations based on the organization’s current status.
Chapter I: Organizational Profile

Overview of ClassWish

1. Field of interest

Education—all accredited 501(c)(3) or public K-12, private, parochial, magnet, and charter schools in the United States.

2. Tax status

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Employer Identification Number 01-0911036

3. Contact and address

feedback@classwish.org  ClassWish, Inc.

401 Seventh Avenue, Office Level B, New York, NY 10001

4. Mission statement

We empower parents, educators, and local communities to make a positive change in their children’s lives by providing them with the supplies they need to learn, grow and excel.¹

5. Board of directors

Chairman: Patrik Silen, a McKinsey & Company partner.

Advisors: Adam Hirsch, COO, Mashable

   Betsy Brand, Director, American Youth Policy Forum
   Laurie Coots, CMO, TBWA
   Scott Cutler, EVP, NYSE-Euronext
   Jory des Jardins, co-founder, Blogher
   Esther Dyson, investor and philanthropist
   Nancy Pelz-Paget, Director, Education and Society Program, Aspen Institute
   Delia Pompa, VP of Education, National Council of La Raza
   Sharon Robinson, CEO, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

6. Staff

Executive director/manager: Robert Tolmach (paid)

Other: Online interns/volunteers and onsite interns/volunteers (unpaid)

7. Organization Structure

Classwish is operated by teams of interns with focus areas that include social media, fashion marketing, sports marketing, music marketing, science marketing, art marketing, technology marketing, cause marketing, web development, and school representation.

There are no ranks or positions in Classwish; all interns and volunteers report ONLY to the executive director Robert Tolmach.

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2 Taken from Classwish official report.
8. **Background**

Government budget cuts in recent years have left most K-12 schools in the U.S. without the teaching supplies that students need. Poorly-paid public school teachers sometimes have to reach into their own pockets to purchase teaching supplies for students. When the fundraising activities hosted by those public schools proved not to be much help, a number of nonprofits emerged and dedicated themselves to filling the funding gap in the public schools. Classwish is one of these.

Based on my research, Classwish began in 2008 as one of several projects from the company named Wellgood LLC, a consulting and marketing firm operated by Robert Tolmach (CEO). The previous projects from Wellgood LLC (or Robert Tolmach) are Glasses for Humanity, Changing the Present, and Gifts for Humanity LLC. Robert Tolmach is at the center of all these projects or companies, and now his focus of development is Classwish.

Below is a list of Classwish’s major events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Incorporated and started operating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>Developed website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Earned its 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>About 3000 square feet of office space located right across Penn Station was donated by the management company of the Hotel Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 https://www.linkedin.com/in/tolmach
9. Goals and Business Model

The goal of Classwish is to help K-12 schools obtain teaching supplies and funding for their activities (Appendix A). The philosophy of Classwish’s operating mode is this: individuals donate much more than large foundations do when they can chose whom to give to. The research from Classwish shows that individuals give 6.5 times as much to charity as do foundations; the key is motivating individuals to donate.

- People prefer give to their favorite college or religious congregation, not to college.org or worship.org.
- Heifer International raises $115 million a year by letting people fund the animal of their choice.
- Kiva has raised more than $400 million by letting people choose the developing-world micro-entrepreneurs they wish to fund.\(^7\)

\(^4\) Interview with Robert Tolmach, co-Founder of Classwish
\(^7\) Taken from Classwish official report.
Based on this philosophy, Classwish has built its website designed to motivate individuals to donate by giving them a direct channel to benefit any schools, teachers, or students they wish. Unlike other organizations such as DonorsChoose\(^8\), Classwish uses a database of schools that has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by each state, which includes 125,000 schools, or 3,600,000 classrooms in the country.\(^9\) This means that almost every teacher in the U.S. could start their own fundraising for their students at Classwish.org. Meanwhile Classwish is more efficient than traditional charity organizations. According to the research from Classwish, the annual sale of fundraising merchandise in the U.S. is approximately $3.7 billion, and $2 billion of that money actually goes to the cookie dough and wrapping paper companies instead.\(^10\) This is highly ineffective. Classwish, by contrast, has built up a platform that allows donors to give directly to the teachers they choose. The following picture shows three different models by which Classwish operates:

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9. Interview with Robert Tolmach, co-Founder of Classwish
10. Taken from Classwish official report.
Chapter II: The Internship

My graduate internship at ClassWish began on September 9, 2013 and ended on December 9, 2013. I worked full-time on the music marketing team under the supervision of Robert Tolmach, the co-founder of ClassWish. My major duty throughout the entire internship was gathering and analyzing data for the organization to supply the needs of music marketing program, the fundraising program, and the charity mall program. I also helped maintain the office supplies and solve computer-related issues. The tools I used during the internship were Dropbox, Google Docs, Microsoft Outlook, and Highrise.

Music Promotional Program

My training for the internship began with an internship manual and a music promotional PowerPoint (PPT). These documents didn’t help too much for a new member of the organization; as it is written in the internship manual, it’s all about peer learning ----If you need help on something (getting online, learning software, whatever), ask other interns first. With a minimal amount of training, I was quickly assigned the task of gathering celebrity contact info from the website contactanycelebrity.com. My partner on this task was Youngshin Jeong, whom I’ve known for two years from the Arts Administration program at UNO. First we received a Google doc from our superior that the previous interns had been working on; it was quite a mess. Youngshin and I had to make new Excel spreadsheets based on the old one. We took all the info we had found on contactanycelebrity.com and 

11 Classwish "Welcome doc for new interns and volunteers 2013_05_01",n.p,May 11 2013,
reorganized it into one big spreadsheet which included each celebrity’s birthday, interests, personal email, publicist’s phone number/email, office mailing address, and agency mailing address. In addition, we used other websites such as Google, IMDB, and agency homepages to gather info when contactanycelebrity.com was inadequate. Within a week we had finished that spreadsheet and had gathered the contact information on 350 celebrities. Most of these are well-known singers like Justin Timberlake, Bono from U2, Britney Spears, and Elton John. The rest of the celebrities are Hollywood actors, directors, etc. I also marked some of the celebrities in the spreadsheet to whom I thought we should reach out first, based on the causes they had already supported as shown on the website www.looktothestars.org.

In order to promote Classwish, my supervisor, co-founder of Classwish Robert Tolmach, came up with the idea that we should use celebrity pictures as the banner on our homepage. But before we could use their pictures, Classwish had to ask for their permission. So my next task was working on the PPTs that Classwish was preparing to send to the celebrities on our contact spreadsheet. Modifying the PPTs has been an ongoing task for a new intern like me, because my supervisor, who had created the template of that PPT, was always changing its content. Once he made a single small change, and as a result I had to fix all the PPTs manually, one by one. These two tasks occurred at the beginning of my internship. During that period of time, I also helped maintain the computers and the hardware in the office. Classwish has three laptops and four desktop computers, and they were in bad shape before I came. I spent two days on them, reinstalling systems, recovering lost files, and gathering and salvaging the accessories.
**Fundraising program**

Once I had completed my first two assignments, my supervisor decided to let me work on the fundraising program for the organization. My research began with three well-known nonprofit organizations in the music education field: Little Kids Rock, VH1 Save the Music Foundation, and Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation. The major tool I used for the research was Foundation Directory Online (FDO). I searched each of the three targeted organizations in the “Search Grant” section on the Foundation Directory Online website. The result is the list below (for details please see appendix B):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Listed Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Kids Rock, NJ</td>
<td>46 (2003-2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VH1 Save the Music Foundation, NY</td>
<td>40 (2007-2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation, CA</td>
<td>28 (2007-2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I cross-checked all the grant makers that had donated to these organizations and picked out those who had donated to at least two of the three targeted organizations. I made those foundations my primary research objective. I gathered as much information as I could get from the FDO, and after that I turned to the donors’ homepages, checking their grant-making requirements.

The next step was putting that data into one Excel spreadsheet. My supervisor didn’t give me any template to work with, so I created my own format: Name; Support Orgs; Geo Focus; Initial Approach; URL; Email; Contact Person; Title; Telephone number; Address;
Giving; Note.

An example of my work is presented below:

---

During the research on hundreds of homepages of various donors, I discovered a website called Give the Gift of Music. It’s a public awareness campaign website made by the Music Business Association and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in 2010. A lot of artists, retailers, and music labels have joined this campaign to encourage people to either help the music education cause or simply give someone a gift of music. Two of my targeted organizations, VH1 Save the Music Foundation and Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation, are listed on the campaign website (see Appendix C). I proposed to my supervisor that Classwish reach out to this campaign website and propose a collaboration. Give the Gift of Music has a strong connection with the music industry in the U.S., and Classwish’s cause fits into its campaign. A collaboration would greatly benefit Classwish’s

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music promotion program. My supervisor was quite occupied with other business and while
acknowledging my efforts, declined the suggestion.

I worked on the fundraising program for Classwish until the end of my internship.

During my time there, I researched approximately 300 foundations and organized the
information that Classwish needed for future fundraising purposes on one Excel
spreadsheet.

**Charity Mall Program**

Toward the end of my internship, I helped to do some research on the charity mall
program. The core concept of the charity mall program is fairly similar to Classwish’s basic
profit model: earning affiliate fees. “Charity Mall” is a rather old concept; it's a type of
affiliate marketing where a charity receives a percentage of each purchase made at the site.

After the research we did at Classwish, my supervisor decided to donate 75% of the affiliate
fee that we got from every purchase, which is the highest percentage that any other
organization offers. The following chart shows how this charity mall works:

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13 Taken from Classwish official document.
For a small non-profit organization like Classwish, the Charity Mall program could be really helpful if its marketing campaign were carried out successfully. But based on what I’ve observed so far, Classwish’s charity mall program was up and running for only a short time and is now “under construction” (Appendix D).

Step 1
• Find the homepage of school or teacher to which you want to donate; then click the "shop online".

Step 2
• Find the icon for the store at which you want to shop; click through to its website.

Step 3
• After you have made a purchase at that online store, a third party affiliate service provider will calculate and pay a percentage of that purchase to Classwish ("affiliate fee").

Step 4
• Classwish donates 75% of the affiliate fee to the school or theacher.
Chapter III: S.W.O.T Analysis

There are many nonprofit organizations like Classwish trying to find their way during their early stages. I’ll use S.W.O.T analysis to present the current status of Classwish in four different ways: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The content below is based on my personal observations plus objective facts; hopefully this S.W.O.T analysis will help the organization in its decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>S</strong></th>
<th><strong>W</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experienced and dedicated board member/co-founder Robert Tolmach</td>
<td>• Unclear financial status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a stable user base</td>
<td>• Missing key staff for several positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Established relationships with vendors</td>
<td>• More programs than it can manage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing nationwide service</td>
<td>• Website improvement badly needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>O</strong></th>
<th><strong>T</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving to the education sector has been growing since 2010 in the U.S.</td>
<td>• Expanding competitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Geographical advantages</td>
<td>• Need to relocate the office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengths

• Experienced and dedicated board member/co-founder Robert Tolmach

As far as I know, Robert Tolmach is the only paid staff in Classwish. He is not only the co-founder, but also a board member and the CEO of Classwish. He has been working on several nonprofit projects in key roles for almost ten years. He is a strong, influential, and a dedicated leader. He once told me the most important thing to keep Classwish operating is to rely on donated goods and services to get the job done. Based on my observation, he is the one that has been carrying Classwish so far.

• Having a stable user base

By the end of my internship, Classwish had over 20,000 registered and active users, half of whom are teachers. The key to success for a nonprofit organization like Classwish is to keep growing and maintaining its user base.

• Established relationships with vendors

Throughout years of effort, Classwish has established 25 vendors covering all kinds of supplies that teachers need for their classrooms. The relationships are well-maintained by the organization.

• Providing nationwide service

Classwish has been building a giant informational database of U.S schools, especially K12 schools, since 2008. Now almost every teacher in the U.S. can find their school’s page
and become a registered user for free. This is an impressive statistic that Classwish has been referencing in its marketing campaign.

**Weaknesses**

- **Unclear financial status**
  
  Throughout my entire internship, I was unable to obtain any financial records (not listed on GuideStar), especially the IRS 990 form. The real income made by the affiliate fee or donations is unknown to all interns.

- **Missing key staff for several positions**
  
  Classwish doesn’t have the professional workforce to move forward. It’s incredibly difficult for all this work to be done with just one paid staff member. Classwish badly needs paid staff in the financing, marketing, operations and HR, business development, and technology and user experience fields.

- **More programs than it can manage**
  
  Classwish has launched too many programs to manage:

  - [http://ClassWish-Decals.org](http://ClassWish-Decals.org)
  - [http://ThankTheCoaches.org](http://ThankTheCoaches.org)
  - [http://ThankTheTeachers.org](http://ThankTheTeachers.org)
  - [http://ClassWish-WebThriftStore.org](http://ClassWish-WebThriftStore.org)
  - [http://ClassWish-Contests.org](http://ClassWish-Contests.org)
These are all ongoing program websites made by Classwish, and there are other programs like those I worked with (music promotion, fund-raising, charity mall). I can’t tell which one of them is the focus or even active; it seems they are just put out there and have waited for something to happen ever since.

• Website improvement badly needed

Though Classwish’s website has been online since 2010, it still badly needs improvement. First of all is the graphic design. From the homepage to the teachers’ personal pages, the styles are inconsistent throughout. Second, the mechanism to get the school supplies to the teachers is not user-friendly. On the donor’s side, people who wish to donate to a certain teacher must try to find that teacher’s personal page by simply searching for it. It’s a method that is out of date and discouraging. As for the teachers, once they have reached the preset donation goal, they can’t make the purchase on the Classwish vendor’s website. For example, take Quill.com. They have to email their shopping cart contents in the request form to Classwish, then Classwish makes the purchase for the teacher on Quill.com. In my opinion, the entire process is inefficient, complicated, and definitely not user-friendly. They certainly need to redesign this part.

Opportunities

• Giving to the education sector has been growing since 2010 in the U.S.
Giving to education has been growing steadily. And based on the Giving USA annual report, that growth is mainly driven by giving to K-12 schools and higher education in the years 2010, 2012, and 2013\textsuperscript{13}. This is an advantage for an organization like Classwish, which focuses on serving K-12 schools and teachers. Classwish should grab this opportunity by strengthening its marketing campaign among those targeted areas.

- **Geographical advantages**

  Classwish is located in New York City, which is a great advantage in getting resources.

### Threats

- **Expanding competitor**

  DonorsChoose is the greatest competitor Classwish has within its target market. It has been rapidly expanding since 2008. Now it’s becoming the dominant organization in the

---

education field. Though Classwish claims to be better than DonorsChoose, the fact is that Classwish still has a long way to catch up with DonorsChoose.

• Need to relocate the office

   Due to the building renovation, Classwish has to move out of its donated office.

Finding a new space may cause increased overhead if donated space can’t be found.
Classwish is one of many dedicated crowdfunding nonprofit organizations in the education field. Those most similar to Classwish are DonorsChoose, AdoptAClassroom, and GoFundMe. The most famous and successful one is DonorsChoose. I want to compare Classwish with DonorsChoose, because each organization started out with only one passionate leader and a limited budget. And since DonorsChoose has a much longer and successful history, dating from 2000, there are definitely some things Classwish could learn from it.

DonorsChoose Organizational Profile

- **Background**

  DonorsChoose is a nonprofit organization founded by Charles Best in New York City in the year 2000. When Charles Best started DonorsChoose he was a 25-year-old first-year history teacher in a public school in the Bronx. He had the brilliant idea of applying the crowdfunding method to the Internet platform at a time when Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Kickstarter didn’t even exist. His idea finally took shape on a website which enables teachers to request materials and resources for their classrooms and makes these project requests available to individual donors. Donors can give $1 or more to projects that interest them, which are searchable by school name, teacher name, location, school subject, material, and keywords. If the needed level of funding is reached within four months, then DonorsChoose purchases the requested supplies and ships them directly to the schools.
Every project contains a line-item budget and a description of the project. All donors receive photographs of the project taking place in the classroom and a letter from the teacher.

Donors who contribute $50 or more to a project also receive hand-written thank-you notes from students.\(^{15}\) If a project has not reached the total amount after four months, the donations will be refunded. Then donors can use that refund to benefit other projects posted on the website.

Below is the timeline of DonorsChoose’s history:\(^{16}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>DonorsChoose launched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Oprah Winfrey praised DonorsChoose on her show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secured a $1.1 million funding in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Secured a $2.4 million funding in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>DonorsChoose.org sent to all public schools in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas after Hurricane Katrina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>DonorsChoose went national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stephen Colbert supported DonorsChoose on his show, then became one of its board members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DonorsChoose secured $14 million in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>DonorsChoose became self-sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>DonorsChoose ranked #21 in Fast Company’s annual ranking of the 50 Most</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Innovative Companies in the World. (First charity on list)

| 2013 | Raised $58 million in donations in just a year |

Today, DonorsChoose has a staff of 65. It has raised $275 million in donations since 2000. It has helped 205,581 teachers, raising money successfully for 507,285 projects (Appendix E). The organization has been given Charity Navigator’s highest rating every year since 2005.

• **Organizational Structure**

DonorsChoose has a highly-organized structure involving 65 staff members on six teams: the Executive Team; Partnerships & Business Development; Marketing; Finance; Operations & Human Capital; and Technology & User Experience. DonorsChoose also has a very active and engaged board of directors made up of enterprise leaders and celebrities.¹⁷

• **Most Important Difference between Classwish and DonorsChoose**

The essential difference between Classwish and DonorsChoose is in their operational models. DonorsChoose is a project-based crowdfunding platform, whereas Classwish is a user-based one.

On DonorsChoose’s homepage, the first thing you see are group projects (Appendix F), and all other functions of the website have been developed with the object of helping the searcher find the kind of project he or she wants to support. People who want to donate to one specific teacher or school have to search by keyword or zip code, then browse

through dozens of projects to find their target. And sometimes the search result is not accurate enough.

By contrast, Classwish employs a user-based method on its website. To start with Classwish, people have to find the school they want to support by searching city, state, or zip code (Appendix G). Then they will be redirected to a results page containing lists of schools instead of projects. After locating the target school’s or teacher’s homepage, viewers can then start to donate.

So, you may ask, which one is better? In my opinion, the project-based method is ‘way better than the user-based one. A recent research project\textsuperscript{18} concludes that:

Donations that complete a project by raising the total amount stated as its goal are significantly larger than other donations.
Completing a project appears to have special appeal. This completion bias also leads to donors being more likely to return and donate again in the future, and to larger future donations.

The user-based method that Classwish uses is not a good solution either for securing nor for attracting more funding. People find it all but impossible to find the ongoing projects posted by some unfamiliar teachers on Classwish, compared to DonorsChoose.

\textsuperscript{18} Rick Wash, Michigan State University, “The Value of Completing Crowdfunding Projects,” 2012
DonorsChoose Branding Strategies

- **Branding--Ensuring integrity**

  Under ordinary circumstances, when people are looking into a nonprofit organization like DonorsChoose, they first want to see how professional it is; second, how much impact it has made so far; then, whether it is “legit” or not. Finally they may start to volunteer or even make donations. Among all these considerations, the third one—legitimacy—is the most important. A recent study points out: Strong cohesion and high levels of trust contribute to greater organizational capacity and social impact. A cohesive organization is able to make more efficient and focused use of existing resources, and high external trust attracts additional talent, financing, and authority. This increase in organizational capacity enhances an organization’s social impact. By leveraging the trust of partners, beneficiaries, and policymakers, an organization can make greater strides toward achieving its mission. On the flip side, those organizations that face challenges in terms of internal organizational coherence, or the erosion of trust held by external constituencies (either because of scandals or misperceptions), struggle to build organizational capacity and impact.¹⁹

  Nonprofit organizations rely on establishing trust with many external audiences (partners, beneficiaries, participants, and donors); therefore it is crucial that they do what they say they will do.

  Through the history of DonorsChoose I can see that ensuring integrity and transparency are the core values of the organization. “We vet every classroom project request, purchase the materials and ship them directly to the school, provide photos of the

  ———

project taking place, and supply a cost report showing how every dollar was spent.”

Every step in this process is designed to eliminate concerns that donors may have. As to transparency, DonorsChoose has designated a whole webpage to provide its financial and legal documents (Appendix H). After ten years of development, DonorsChoose has benefited by its high level of integrity, both internal and external. This has created a virtuous cycle for the development of DonorsChoose.

- Branding—Getting Publicity

Getting publicity is one of many key factors in building a public organization. An article from “Nonprofit Management 101” points out some principles that nonprofit organization should follow when getting ink for their causes: Tell Unforgettable Stories; Build Relationships of Trust with Reporters; Simplify Your Issue; Harness Influential Messengers. DonorsChoose has applied all those principals in its PR strategies and achieved great success so far.

Tell unforgettable stories

Like they said, “At the heart of every successful PR strategy is a compelling story”. DonorsChoose presents their stories on a designated webpage on their homepage.

In my opinion the most eye catching story is the first story about the founder of DonorsChoose, Charles Best.

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Charles Best, a history teacher at a Bronx high school, is spending his own money on school supplies. So are his colleagues. He sketches out a website where teachers can post classroom project requests--and where anyone with $5 can be a philanthropist. His colleagues post 10 projects, but Charles doesn’t know many donors, so he anonymously funds those projects himself. His colleagues think that the website actually works, and rumor spreads.23

This story is the most successful DonorsChoose has told so far. It is short and compelling, and triggers public response, especially among educators and people who care about education. Nearly every article I found about DonorsChoose included this story.

Build Relationships of Trust with Reporters

Though nowadays the media is shifting to the internet based social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, journalists still play an essential role in selecting what appears on the major channels. It is important to gain trust from journalists for all nonprofit organizations. The founder of DonorsChoose used his identity as a former educator to start the relationship with journalists. And step by step, DonorsChoose delivered a brand image of integrity and transparency to journalists. It gained the trust of reporters and benefits from it.

Simplify Your Issue

Many of the issues that nonprofit organizations work on can be complicated. They should let people understand their cause by delivering a simple message of what they do and who they benefit. In order to make it simple, DonorsChoose presents itself as a nonprofit organization that gets school supplies to teachers. This is conveyed in DonorsChoose’s tagline on its logo: “Teachers Ask. You Choose.” In contrast, if DonorsChoose

publicly labeled itself as an education reformer it would not be as successful.

Harness Influential Messengers

“Sometimes the messenger is as important as the message.”

Influential messengers can help nonprofit organizations reach out to the public, especially when the messengers are trustworthy celebrities. DonorsChoose provides a perfect example of harnessing influential messengers. The first is Oprah Winfrey, who praised DonorsChoose on her television show in 2003. The second is Stephen Colbert’s support of DonorsChoose on his show, followed by his becoming a board member of DonorsChoose in 2007. DonorsChoose has gained huge attention and support from the public with the help of celebrities. It has also created a chain reaction, motivating more and more celebrities to support DonorsChoose.

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Chapter V: Recommendations

Classwish started off in a bad economic environment in 2008. After making a few achievements throughout the years, the organization now appears to be facing many difficulties.

Management

Classwish should take a step back and start to build a management team. A fully-functional management team is the foundation of a nonprofit organization to fulfill its mission. As budget allows, Classwish should recruit managers for each of its teams. Should that prove to be impossible, Classwish should at least hire three key staff members: a program manager in charge of designing and overseeing programs; a fundraising manager taking charge of research and applying for grants; and a general assistant for handling interns and daily operational issues. I also recommend that Classwish adopt the following managing techniques listed below:26

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**Well-defined Roles and Responsibilities**

The more employees understand what is expected and required of them, the better they can work toward achieving those goals. A clear understanding of how one fits into and supports the organization allows for a healthy degree of self- and peer-management.

**Regular Management Check-ins**

Both managers and their employees benefit from periodic reviews and consultations. This ensures that all parties remain on the same page and presents a forum for self-reflection, reevaluation, and open communication.

**Meshing of Styles**

Each member of your organization has his or her own way of approaching a task and interacting with managers and fellow employees. It’s critical to establish an environment in which varying work styles can coexist and flourish.

By doing so, Classwish would improve staff morale and operate more efficiently.

**Branding**

- **Increasing people’s awareness**

  Classwish claims to be a well-known national nonprofit organization. But in fact Classwish lacks even community awareness at its home base. As a crowdfunding nonprofit organization, people’s awareness of its existence is essential for its success. The organization needs to start with some basic moves to draw people’s attention:

  a. let its logo to be widely seen

  b. deliver its brand message to great crowds of people

  c. “speak” for the brand

  d. have templates and standards set up for all promotional materials.
Classwish already has a well-designed logo; however, the brand logo is getting less exposure than it should have. Organizations should have a complete visual system. Not only should it have the name and logo on advertisements, but Classwish should also have its name and logo on every possible piece of promotional material. “Teachers ask. You choose.” is DonorsChoose’s slogan. A simple phrase tells its audience what the organization does and whom it serves. Learning from DonorsChoose, Classwish could also use a slogan which can effectively and efficiently explain its function and mission to the public.

A great brand image results from fastidious attention to every operational detail. Both how you present yourself and how you interact with people can contribute to the image building process. Speak for the brand. Let people know the brand like a person. Is the “person” friendly? Is the “person” loving and caring? Last but not least, a standard for its visual system should be established. People need to receive the same brand information repeatedly to remember it.

- **Trust and Transparency**

Classwish started off to be a platform for teachers and schools to get help from nationwide donors to purchase educational materials. Teachers and schools wish to get the materials they need, and donors want to know that their donations have reached the causes and are wisely spent. Serving these two parties well is crucial to Classwish’s brand image. However, with Classwish, donors can’t trace their donations, and there is no information about the donations’ whereabouts. Take DonorsChoose for example: its project-based donation form allows donors to know exactly where their money is going
and what it will be used for. Entering each project, teachers can see its donation history and express their gratitude toward the donors, and donors can see purchasing details for the fund the project has received.

This is what Classwish lacks: transparency. "Transparency means telling the truth about your organization, your partnership, and your goals. It means disclosing who is benefitting from a campaign, how much they are receiving, and precisely how and when funds are being raised and disbursed." But when you hold information back from your audience, doubts arise. Donors would doubt whether their money really was used on what they donated for, and beneficiaries would wonder whether they received the full donation amount. Doubts such as this hurt the brand tremendously. Negative voices online against Classwish are also hurting the brand deeply, and Classwish needs to clear these doubts for the public, using social networks to state the truth about the organization or prove its efforts in correcting its operational method.

Classwish should consider the following suggestions when building its transparency:

**Have You Updated Your Listing at GuideStar?**
GuideStar publishes your 990 information from the IRS. But, you can also include much more information about your organization by updating your listing with your mission, programs, leaders, goals, accomplishments, and needs. GuideStar is one of the first stops when a donor or a foundation is looking for information on a nonprofit.

**Is Your Charity Rated at CharityNavigator?**
This watchdog organization rates 501(c)(3) charities based on their financial efficiency, among other factors. Not all nonprofits are on

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its list, but it does provide a guide for donors looking for solid nonprofits. CharityNavigator assesses the ratio of overhead expenses (particularly fundraising expenses) to a nonprofit's overall budget. Donors want most of a nonprofit's revenue to go toward its programs. CharityNavigator cannot evaluate every nonprofit, but by following its criteria for highly-rated organizations, you can bolster your reputation among donors.

**Does Your Nonprofit Have a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity Seal?**

The Wise Giving Alliance at the Better Business Bureau provides a way for citizens to check up on nonprofit behavior just like they can do with businesses. Anyone can check its site to make sure a nonprofit has met the BBB's standards for accountability.

**Do You Post Your 990 on Your Website?**

Your IRS form 990 tax return is a public document. It is available to the public through the IRS, and on websites such as GuideStar. You must have a copy available in your office for people who inquire. Why not make it easy to find by posting it on your website as well? In addition to your 990, put contact information on your site, a list of your board of directors and senior staff, and consider posting your most recent audit and a summary of the most recent board activity and decisions made.

These are essential steps that Classwish should take to restore public trust. I suggest Classwish act immediately and be more conscientious regarding transparency in the future.
Chapter VI: Conclusions

Classwish began with good intentions, but its plans have been poorly executed. Its operational structure can’t support its expanding ambition. Insufficient and rapidly changing staff run more projects than they can handle. Opaque transactions have discredited the organization. Classwish needs to step up and take action now to restore people’s trust. It has geographic advantages: New York City is full of opportunities, and Classwish can work on building its own connections there and improving its community awareness. Before it is capable of fully operating at national scale, Classwish should give more attention to the New York City community, starting locally and then spreading out with proper staff and a solid development plan.

This is the first time I have worked for an American nonprofit organization. The internship has given me a chance to look deeper into this field and develop a better understanding of business operations. This experience has taught me the importance of transparency and management structure to a successful nonprofit organization, and has contributed significantly to my preparation in arts administration.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Classwish Teacher’s Wishlist

This page contains a screenshot of a Classwish page for Ms. Marlene Walters. The page includes a summary of her wishes and the items she has requested, such as geometry kits, telescopes, watercolor kits, and soccer balls. The page also shows the progress towards funding these items.
### Appendix B: Foundation Research

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Appendix C: Give the Gift of Music

While music can be a great gift to give to a friend or a loved one, there are children, hospital patients and others who could use the gift of music to make them smile. Unfortunately, music education programs and musical instruments are not always available to people who truly need them. With Give to Those in Need, we want to highlight organizations whose mission it is to brighten the lives of others with a gift of music. The following organizations accept donations to help fund various musical initiatives, whether it be to get instruments into classrooms, provide music lessons to underprivileged children, or by giving an iPad to a nursing home patient. To help these organizations succeed, they need people like you. Click on the links below to see how you can give the gift of music to those in need.

A Gift For Music
A Gift For Music (a program of A Gift For Teaching) is the only program of its kind in Orlando, Florida, teaching high-needs students to play a stringed instrument in a classroom setting. The mission is to help children with special educational needs to develop their self-esteem, discipline, and confidence through musical achievement. A Gift For Music is opening the door for one more chance to shine. To donate funds to provide a child with this opportunity, please click here.

Charity Music Inc.
Charity Music Inc. is a nonprofit public service organization whose mission is to help children in need of music education to expand their horizons. To donate instruments, sheet music, concert tickets, and other music-related items and monetary funds, please click here.

Hungry For Music
Since 1984, Hungry For Music has provided musical instruments from coast to coast to individual children who can’t afford them as well as to underfunded schools, community programs, social service agencies, and orphanages. In 2011, they donated over 500 new and gently used instruments to children with a hunger to play. To donate an instrument, volunteer, or supply funds for this work, please click here.

Keeping The Blues Alive Foundation
After spending over two decades volunteering and donating to various music advocacy programs, Joe Bonamassa founded his own foundation called Keeping The Blues Alive 501(c)(3) as a direct way to fund music scholarships (such as the Joe Bonamassa Blues Guitar Scholarship at Musicians Institute), music education programs, and to promote the heritage of Blues to the next generation. All donations to the nonprofit are allocated to grass-roots school programs all over the country – repairing music instruments and equipping music classrooms with necessary learning tools – truly giving the gift of music to children in a direct and meaningful way! To learn more about Keeping The Blues Alive Foundation and to find out how you can support music programs everywhere, please click here.

The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation
The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation keeps music alive in our schools and communities by donating musical instruments to under-funded music programs, giving youngsters the many benefits of music education, helping them to be better students and inspiring creativity and expression through playing music. To donate funds to provide instruments to children in need, please click here.
Ryan’s Song Inc.

Ryan’s Song is a Florida non-profit that was formed in 2007 with 2 goals in mind: (1) To help distribute musical instruments to children who cannot afford to purchase their own instruments and (2) To provide scholarships towards children’s music programs. To donate funds to aid Ryan’s Song, please click here.

Studio 09 Online

Studio 09 Online is looking to share the gift of music with those who share the gift of freedom. We are offering six months of free lessons in Guitar, Voice and/or Piano to qualifying dependents of deployed Military Reserves and Wounded Warriors of any branch. Click here to give the gift that keeps on giving!

VH1 Save the Music Foundation

The VH1 Save The Music Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring instrumental music education in America’s public schools, and raising awareness about the importance of music as part of each child’s complete education. Since its inception in 1997, the VH1 Save The Music Foundation has provided $48 million in new musical instruments to 1,800 public schools in more than 100 cities around the country, impacting the lives of over 1.8 million children. To donate funds to provide instruments to public schools, please click here.

Youth Music Education Foundation

The Youth Music Education Foundation (YMEF) is a registered non-profit organization in the state of Minnesota that works to provide funding to music education for youth on a financial need basis. They are dedicated to “Helping youth in need attain an education.” To donate funds towards a musical education, please click here.
Appendix E: DonorsChoose’s Impact

Appendix F: DonorsChoose’s Programs

2014, 10, 4
Appendix G: Classwish’s Program

OUR VISION

Devastating budget cuts leave schools without the resources students need to succeed. ClassWish is the only nonprofit that lets people contribute to fund any K-12 school or teacher in the country. We help educators and schools get the supplies they need for their students to excel.

Start by finding your school

City & State OR Zip Code » Search

or click here to see what other students need
Appendix H: Transparency of DonorsChoose

Functional allocation of expenses

- Classroom projects materials: 80.5%
- Classroom projects processing: 7.7%
- Classroom projects advocacy: 6.1%
- Gen. Administrative: 2.4%
- Fundraising: 3.3%

Highest standard of efficiency

Charity Navigator

Opening our data and sharing insights

We are open about our performance, our data and are committed to sharing insights and lessons learned with the education, startup and philanthropic communities.

Every classroom project provides choice and transparency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Vendor</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HH875K - Building Vocabulary Listening Center Skill Packs - Complete Set</td>
<td>Lakeshore Learning</td>
<td>$139.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$139.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL556K - Literacy Skills Learning Centers - Complete Set</td>
<td>Lakeshore Learning</td>
<td>$119.00</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>HH560K - Building Comprehension Listening Center Skill Packs - Complete Set</td>
<td>Lakeshore Learning</td>
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<td>$139.00</td>
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<td>HH555K - Hands-On Math Listening Centers - Complete Set</td>
<td>Lakeshore Learning</td>
<td>$79.95</td>
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<td>LAB02 - 8-Station Junct Box With Volume Controls</td>
<td>Lakeshore Learning</td>
<td>$24.95</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fulfillment labor

- Writing each project
- Coordinating delivery of the materials
- Processing thank you letters and photos
- Customer service

Fulfillment materials

- Postage from classroom to our office
- Postage from our office to donor
donations

15% of one’s donation to a classroom project is devoted to overhead, teacher outreach, maintenance and build-out of the DonorsChoose.org website. Donors may opt out (about a quarter reduce or eliminate the allocation) while partners leave it intact.

Financial & Tax

- FY2013-2012 Financial Statements
- FY2012-2011 Financial Statements
- FY2011-2010 Financial Statements
- FY2010-2009 Financial Statements
- FY2013 Tax Return (2.7MB)
- FY2012 Tax Return (2.9MB)
- FY2011 Tax Return (8.7MB)
- FY2010 Tax Return (2.7MB)
- FY2014 W-9 (279K)
- FY11 Annual Report

Regulatory Filings

- 501(c)(3) Designation
- Restated Certificate of Incorporation (400K)
- By-Laws (1.1MB)
- Form 1023 application for tax-exempt status (700K)
- State Tax Exemption Certificates (13.2MB)

Corporate Governance

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Non-discrimination Policy
- Policy on Board Member Expense Reimbursement
- Compensation Committee Charter
- Cause-Marketing and Co-venture Disclosures
- Corporate Governance Committee Charter
- Name Change Amendment
- Audit Committee Charter
- Gift Acceptance Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
Chi Ma is an international student from China. He grew up in Beijing and attended Capital Norman University after graduating from high school. In 2010 he received his Bachelor Degree of Management in information technology and management. In the spring of 2012 he enrolled in the Arts Administration Master’s program at the University of New Orleans. He will graduate in December 2014.