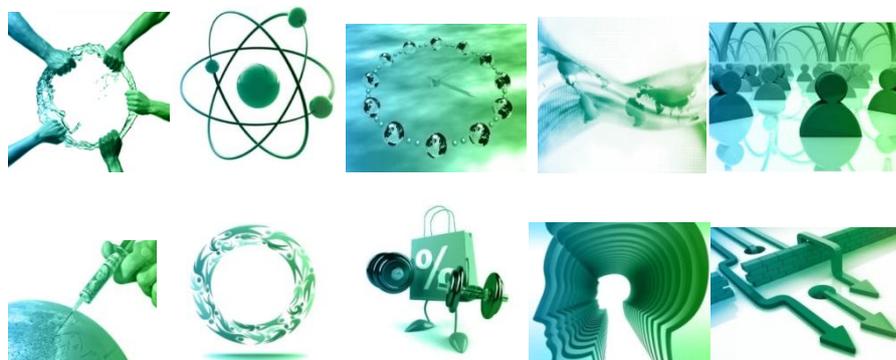


## What's Good? Social Good!



**February 2011:** The end of the year and the start of a new one are traditionally the biggest giving times of the year, but a number of organizations and businesses are finding new ways to even out the donations/cash flow over the year. Tapping into a rising consciousness and desire among consumers, as well as other stakeholders such as NGOs and governments, to *do good* (or be seen to do so) in a world recovering from recession and facing pressing global challenges, these organizations are helping individuals to be *socially good*. What does that mean in practice? Here are a few ideas and examples to get you started on thinking about how your organization or business can become part of this growing momentum – realizing **social good** as well as consumer and business benefits from our daily activities.

### A Quick Definition: What Does Social Good Mean?

A good or service that benefits the largest number of people in the largest possible way. Some classic examples of social goods are clean air, clean water and literacy; in addition, many economic proponents include access to services such as healthcare in their definition of the social or "common good". (Source: [http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social\\_good.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social_good.asp))

As more and more stakeholders wake up to the groundswell of doing good, the realm of social goods is expanding beyond the classic definitions above. Many innovations are emerging, whether in business models, products and services. Some are aided by technology, others have their roots in building communities both online and offline. Here we take a look at social good in action from the perspectives of consumers, communities, businesses and NGOs/public institutions.

### The Consumer Perspective

Consumers are increasingly aware of the price of runaway consumption as global challenges over climate change and the environment become more and more evident. The last two years of recession have also pressed home the point that at some point consumption has to be paid for – unfortunately for many their assets have taken a huge hit, house prices are well down, public sector spending cuts are deep, and jobs are hard to come by, particularly in developed economies. Rapidly developing economies are more fortunate in terms of economic, job and income growth, but consumers there also face challenges as prices rise, along with pressure domestically and internationally to achieve “clean” growth. How’s a consumer to manage the new frugality, not just in terms of money but in terms of planetary impact – think carbon footprint, water footprint, ecological footprint – and still be happy? Happiness is in very short supply in some places, but we

can always help ourselves be happier by doing good. Giving – along with other forms of social good – just feels good! Science confirms this: A NIH study observed people’s brains with MRIs while they made decisions to give. Dr. Jorge Moll, the lead researcher, said what they saw “strongly supports the existence of ‘warm glow’ at a biological level. It helps convince people that doing good can make them feel good.” (Source: Charity News Stories – Giving to charity affects the brain, study finds.) So how is this growing desire to do social good manifesting itself among consumers?

### *In Action!*

**Buy one, donate one:** There were times where donations went into a collection box. Today there are multiple ways to help make a difference. Take the rising interest in transaction-based giving, for example: Buy one, donate/give one. It’s simple: You buy a product and give a product away to a less fortunate person for free, without the hassle of having to manage the giving personally. Pioneering [Toms Shoes](#) and [OLPC](#) have inspired worldwide projects like [BoGolight](#), [One World Futbol Project](#), [Baby Teresa](#), and [Blanket America](#). Another easy way to make consumers feel good begins at the ATM – each time someone takes cash advance for him/herself, the ATM asks for a donation to charity, too. Or how about those people who rely on cards rather than cash? They are catered for too: The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ([ASPCA](#)) has a Platinum Visa card through Bank of America. Each time a cardholder uses the ASPCA card, [BOA](#) makes a contribution to the ASPCA. The [American Lung Association](#) has a Visa Signature Card. As with similar credit card rewards programs, the American Lung Association receives a donation for each purchase you make as a cardholder. Even better, from the design on your card, people can see that you are giving... San Francisco based [Swipegood](#) is a little more discreet: Credit card users sign up, select their chosen charity and credit card. Then for each purchase made using that card, SwipeGood rounds up the amount spent to the nearest dollar, donating the difference to the user’s chosen charity at the end of each month (less a 5% fee paid by donors to run the service) – around US\$20 a month although users can set a maximum. The easier it is to give, the more people will give is the principle here.

**Buying local:** The healthier, greener food wave is here, driving an explosion of interest in local food and sustainable living. Consumers now have more choices of products, labels, and ways to shop. Even though buying and eating local doesn’t guarantee that it is produced sustainably (e.g. avoiding pesticides, factory farming, hormone and antibiotic use) the Think Local – Buy Local – Be Local movement helps reduce environmental impact from long-distance transportation of goods. It’s also an investment in the local community, creating more jobs and better service locally. Bought locally, ordered online and delivered to your door. That pretty much sums up the [Poptotheshops](#) business idea which offers the products and services of independent retailers to South Wales residents in the UK. It serves four high street areas, with the retailers in each selling between 3300 and 4500 products using service. [LocalHarvest](#) is the place to look for organic food that is grown close to a specific local community. The US focused website offers services to find nearby farmers’ markets, family farms, and other sources of sustainably grown food.

**Eco-friendly products and services:** Green nations, green cities and green developments are popping up all around the world as we try to reduce our carbon emissions. Driven by the consumers’ demands the trend is towards smart companies and governments moving from ‘merely’ neutralizing and offsetting their undesirable eco-effect to actually boosting the environment by doing something extra. Sustainability is here to stay and companies are under constant pressure to meet eco-friendly consumer needs. Eco-friendly products and services are now to be found within most categories. You name it, you get it - food, cars, energy, hotels and taxi services or what about [Boxsmart](#) which is buying and selling used and surplus cardboard boxes. If you’re looking to embrace a lifestyle that promotes the health of your families, community, and the planet [Green Zebra](#) is the perfect place. The San Francisco based company offers information about where to shop for green products and how to be more environmental aware. Or check in at [Green Living Tips](#) to help guide you towards more green living behaviors.

### *Look Out For...*

**Sharing/Renting versus buying:** This could be the year where sharing and renting really catches the mind of the consumers. Company brands, governments and peer-to-peer sharing and renting solutions are emerging everywhere, in more and more sectors such as transportation, homes, fashion and car parking

spaces. The consumer is pursuing the “owner-less” economy to avoid the greater costs and commitments of traditional ownership versus a fractional ownership or leasing lifestyle. With a rising number of consumers having online mobile access it is getting easier to use these services in a convenient way. (Source: [Trendwatching.com](http://Trendwatching.com)). Need a parking spot? [Parkingspots.com](http://Parkingspots.com) connects those who have parking spots to rent out with those who need them on a monthly basis. The Toronto-based company lets owners in the US and Canada list their off-street parking spots, along with the price they want to charge. Want to rent out space or just want to rent space? [Air BnB](http://AirBnB) is the website to visit. Air BnB is an online marketplace that allows locals to earn money by renting out their extra space as alternative lodging for hotel-weary travelers. Did you get an unwanted gift card for Christmas? [GiftCardRescue](http://GiftCardRescue) is here to help, allowing users to exchange their unwanted gift cards. Create an account and provide details of the card. GiftCardRescue will indicate the redemption value that it is willing to pay. Consumers can then elect either to receive cash via PayPal or select a new gift card from the site, up to the redemption value of their original card. Need to hire anything? New Zealand-based [Hire Things](http://Hire Things) is an online marketplace for 'micro-hire-businesses.' Think everything from tableware to boats.

**Swapping/Bartering:** With the recession still haunting many, savvy consumers are swapping goods to obtain the things and the lifestyle they want without great cost. Swap your books, CDs, video games movies or Kids’ stuff online ([swap.com](http://swap.com); [zwaggle.com](http://zwaggle.com); [swapadvd.com](http://swapadvd.com); [swapbabygoods.com](http://swapbabygoods.com)). All you have to do is pay the shipping cost. In the United States physical “mobile” swapping places in bars and neighbourhoods are popping up around cities allowing you to swap everything from clothes, movies, books and gardening utensils to plants. Even services can be swapped now. [Timebanks.org](http://Timebanks.org) is an interesting website for anyone interesting in swapping skills. Or what about using [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)’s new buyback site to sell back the books recently purchased from them.

## The Community Perspective

Communities are also under pressure, whether from industries laying off staff in developed economies, to villages losing the younger generation to cities in rapidly developing economies. With pressure on the public purse and public services in many communities, due to spending cuts or rapid urban growth, communities are increasingly “doing it for themselves.” Social good in these cases starts at home.

### *In Action!*

**Community services, run by the community:** People at the grass roots level generally know better than anyone else how things should be done best in their area to improve their local neighborhoods. Community ownership in the UK now saves around 10% of village shop closures, and there are more than 200 real community-owned shops in the UK, run in a variety of ways. The small town of Bishop’s Castle in Shropshire, U.K., is home to the [Wasteless Society](http://Wasteless Society). By acting together they learned they could make a positive difference: Collecting and feeding a neighboring farmer’s anaerobic digester with waste helped them not only recycle but also to produce clean energy. People in Kilkenny communities in Ireland have become involved in saving in community banks to prevent borrowing from money lenders and other risky organizations. The community banks allow their users to save regularly for occasions such as Christmas, communions and confirmations, and helping more than a thousand families deal with the credit crunch.

**Community currencies:** Community currencies have been around for a long time. Today the most established models for this kind of social and community development are [Time Banks](http://Time Banks) and [Local Exchange Trading Systems](http://Local Exchange Trading Systems) (LETS). Time banking is a social change movement reaching 22 countries in six continents. For every hour you spend doing something for someone in your community, you earn one Time Dollar. Then you have a Time Dollar to spend on having someone do something for you. LETS is a similar system which is basically a local community-based mutual aid networks allowing people to trade and exchange things without needing money but by earning units to use and as a plus it is benefiting the community.

**Community networks:** We are all members of numerous organised or unorganised community networks. And these are the perfect places to do good whether it is local or global. Bryggenet is a community network in the Brygge Islands area of Copenhagen, Denmark, which serves around 4000 residences with

fast Internet access, cable TV and radio, and telephone services at cost prices. It was started in 2001 by a group of volunteers, initially with the intent of providing fast and cheap internet access to the residents of a number of co-ops in the area. In the same city you will also find parents mobilizing groups to watch/monitor teenagers at night in the inner city to curtail violence (in absence of visible police). Think also about neighborhood surveillance groups, which are found worldwide, running networks to safeguard their communities. Such networks go beyond safety, to actively helping those in need in the local community, for example [Nightwatch](#) in Croydon in the UK, which has been providing direct support for homeless people through a network of volunteers since 1976. In Switzerland, parents' networks share the task of getting their children to and from school. The list could go on and on – the bottom line, technology is enabling communities to connect and organize better than ever.

### **Look Out For...**

**Taking a greater role in running public services:** The “Big Society” is a flagship policy idea of UK Prime Minister David Cameron. The aim is “to create a climate that empowers local people and communities, building a big society that will take power away from politicians and give it to people.” The idea: Get local communities involved in doing more for themselves, for example: Building renewable energy projects, community buyout of pubs, spreading broadband access, increased volunteering at museums, developing neighborhood media and digital content, working on sustainable transport services, developing youth projects and eventually developing community schools.

**More sharing:** See it as a pioneering recycling idea and at the same time doing some social good. The county-run “Swap Shop” in Durham County, USA lets you recycle used furniture, electronics and other items that would otherwise head to a landfill. Whether you are moving, cleaning out your attic or garage, redecorating, looking for an item or just have good useable items you no longer want or need, the Swap Shop is the place to visit. “Swapping” extends both the life of the items and the life of the landfill.

### **The NGO/Public Organization Perspective**

NGOs and public sector organizations have also embraced the community concept, often expanding their networks of donors and volunteers using the latest technologies – online, mobile and social networks. Traditionally weak organizational capabilities in the NGO sector – people participate because they care, rather than because they have MBAs – have also benefitted from new technologies to allow expansion of activities, as well as for smaller organizations to build visibility and following. Necessity is the mother of invention, so with limited budgets, these organizations are showing some really innovative approaches to social good. They are also increasingly engaging with businesses and other stakeholders to realize the opportunities.

### **In Action!**

**Volunteer communities:** In North Carolina, USA, sustainable farms may be able to enjoy the help of wannabe farmers in getting serious work done through [Crop Mobs](#), while in Australia a similar group, [Big Help Mob](#), teams up to lend a helping hand to local good causes like planting 10,000 trees in a few hours, renovating a community centre or cleaning up a place that's long been forgotten. NGOs are always in need of extra manpower and specific professional skills. [Catchafire](#) are matching nonprofit projects with professionals who can help, often with tasks like marketing, PR, design, social media, strategy and finance.

**Philanthropy:** Giving to others makes us feel good and so it seems for a group of billionaires, numbering 58 so far. Through [The Giving Pledge](#) they have pledged to give at least half their wealth to charity -- \$200 billion and counting. That's four times the yearly budgets of (US organizations) National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, the Salvation Army, the United Way and the Red Cross combined (Source: CBSNews 21/12/2010). Warren Buffet is a believer and so is Bill Gates. Together they are spreading the word, most recently in China, that the richest people should give away most of their money when they are still alive. So far only one Chinese philanthropist has joined!

**Peer-to-peer finance/microfinance:** Microfinance and P2P lending has for almost three decades allowed individuals in need to get a new start and begin to earn their own living. The concept has been successful and spread, but while it is still in the right hands in many cases, unfortunately in recent years microfinance and P2P lending has been abused and distorted by some for-profit organisations. What was meant to be a non-profit initiative to help the very poor has in some cases been subverted from its vision, with disastrous results – see our [recent blog post](#) for more.

### *Look Out For...*

**Smart partnering:** [Skype](#) has launched a new partnership with the [UNHCR](#) to provide a bespoke, low-bandwidth version of the popular video-chat software to locations serviced by UNHCR aid workers. Added to this Skype will be hosting a fundraising button where ordinary Skype users can donate money to support computer technology and education for some 43 million refugees who have lost their homes. [TripAdvisor](#) and [UNESCO](#) have a partnership to mobilize travellers' support to preserve natural and cultural sites registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List. TripAdvisor has pledged to donate up to US\$1.5m of support to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and in addition they will collect wisdom and support of TripAdvisor's millions of travelers, and their trusted insights to protect these landmarks.

**More standards for doing good:** In a world of millions and millions of what seem to similar products, more and better information is needed to help the consumer make choices – yet often the consumer is left alone in a vast sea of ratings and labelling. To change this, Dara O'Rourke, a professor of environmental and labor policy at the University of California at Berkeley, founded the [GoodGuide](#). The site provides authoritative information about the health, environmental and social performance of products and companies, helping consumers to make purchasing decisions that reflect their preferences and values. Interestingly, rather than being a traditional commercial organization, it describes itself as a "for benefit" organization, with its commitment to being socially, ethically, and environmentally responsible written into its "for benefit" charter. While less scientific, PSFK's [Good Brand Report](#) of 2010 tries to identify companies that help improve people's lives and are considered "good," including companies such as Jamie Oliver, Google, MIT, IKEA and Ace Hotel.

### **The Business and Brand Perspective**

Businesses have a range of approaches to social good. Some put it at the heart of their brand and mission, such as [Ben & Jerry's](#). For others it is still an advertising gimmick. However, the trend is moving swiftly from the latter to the former. Today's transparency and potential for rapid backlash against companies seen as "doing wrong" means consumers and communities will simply not tolerate businesses and brands that are not authentic in their social good activities. So what is happening?

### *In Action!*

**Eco-friendly goods and services:** More and more corporations are actively engaging in sustainability issues, realising their own involvement plays a role, and recognizing consumer demands to take action. Some of the world's biggest consumers of water including [SABMiller](#) and [Coca-Cola](#) are working together with non-profits including the [WWF](#), [Water Footprint Network](#) and the [Nature Conservancy](#) on water footprinting issues to better understand the quantity, efficiency and geographical context of the water used to produce their products so that this resource can be better managed. [Tesco](#) has pledged to label all their products with the respective carbon footprint but at the current rate this will take many years. Footwear manufacturer [Timberland](#) has started placing a "nutritional label" on each shoebox, educating consumers about the product they are purchasing, including where it was manufactured, how it was produced and what effect it has on the environment. As a nice touch: messaging inside the box asks customers "what kind of footprint will you leave?" and provides a call to action for them after purchase.

**Green building:** The interest in green building is rising rapidly, with the *Green Outlook 2011* report forecasting that the U.S. green building market would reach \$135 billion by 2015, up from \$71 billion in 2010. A third of all new nonresidential construction is green, a \$54 billion market opportunity. McGraw-Hill Construction predicts that in five years, major retrofit and renovation projects will total \$18 billion.

Green healthcare construction is expected to reach approximately 40% of this segment in 2011. (Sources: <http://buildipedia.com/go-green/eco-news-and-trends/item/1347-forecasting-green-construction-spending-for-2011>) and <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/green-building-market-grows-50-in-two-years-despite-recession-says-mcgraw-hill-construction-report-107547978.html>)

**% of purchase donated:** Today many companies, small and large, are involved in promoting social good in some way. For two days, [Borders](#), popular for its vast assortment of books, awarded any Borders customer that made a purchase in one of their stores nationwide a special US\$15 gift card to donate to the public school of their choice while [NYPD Pizza Delicatessen](#) is helping with autism awareness, donating 15% of purchases to [KIDS ON THE MOVE](#). And when the Haiti earthquake hit, [Bond No. 9](#) announced that for 30 days, 10% of all proceeds from the sale of The Scent of Peace, Bond No. 9's bestselling perfume, was to be donated to [The American Red Cross](#). They were only one among many companies.

**Health advice:** There is no end to it - doctor, newspapers, journals, magazines and television shows are (amongst many more) telling consumers how to stay and live healthier lives. Now businesses are getting in on the act. [ShopRite](#) announced in late 2010 that it had hired in-store dieticians to provide shoppers with nutritional information and guidance at three Connecticut stores. In addition to assisting shoppers to make better food choices when they're in the store and at home, the dieticians will run grocery shopping tours, present healthy cooking classes, offer recipe and pantry makeovers and coordinate other health-and-wellness initiatives and nutritional programs, both in-store and in the community.

### Look Out For...

**Leveraging social networks:** Social networking sites add users every minute of every day, offering a new way to reach a huge audience, worldwide in many cases, to promote products or services. Businesses are using these social networks for advertising, consumer interactions, market research, to promote philanthropic activities and to do recruiting – and no doubt they will think of additional uses very soon. Among the Fortune Global 100 companies 65% are using Twitter, 54% are using Facebook, 50% are using YouTube and 33% are using blogs.) [Starbucks](#), for instance, generated nearly \$68 million worth of free brand exposure between September and November 2010 via its use of social media, Twitter and other online news media, a General Sentiment survey reported. However, the use of social networks by companies is definitely more widespread in Europe (88%) and the U.S.A (86%) than in Asia (50%). (Source: <http://www.flowtown.com/blog/how-are-companies-leveraging-social-media?display=wide>) While business use of social networks will only increase, a key question is how can organizations use these interactions for social good as well as commercial purposes?

**Getting staff more involved:** Instead of cash donations to charities there is a growing trend for companies to encourage and support donations of their employees' time, advice, service and non-cash contributions, along with donations in kind such as computer equipment, software, drugs, foods, clothes and more. One survey suggests these types of donations rose 5% in 2009. [Oracle](#), for instance, has given virtually all of its donations — \$2.1 billion — as computer software. [Deloitte](#) donated the time of more than 33,600 of its employees, or 75% of its U.S.-based workforce, for its day of service last year. More than 150,000 [IBM](#) employees have contributed over than 10 million hours of service in more than 70 countries in the past five years. [Bank of America](#) has pledged to donate 1 million volunteer hours by the end of 2010, which will top 2009's 800,000 volunteer hours. [Walmart](#) and the [Walmart Foundation](#) have pledged to give US\$2 billion in cash and in-kind commitments to help end hunger in the U.S. This includes 1.1 billion pounds of food from Walmart stores, distribution centers and [Sam's Club](#) locations, valued at US\$1.75 billion. ([http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/2010-08-08-corporate-philanthropy\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/2010-08-08-corporate-philanthropy_N.htm))

**Smart partnering:** Companies and people are partnering in unexpected ways and winning the hearts of customers and communities. Companies are doing smart partnering in bigger or smaller scale, for example when many Floridians were fleeing their homes to avoid Hurricane Ivan, their "neighbors" in Florida and Georgia took many small steps to support them. When visiting [Winn-Dixie](#) grocery stores the teller rounded up the food bill to the next dollar, with the extra change going to the local Red Cross chapter for relief efforts. Don't forget [Oprah Winfrey](#), one of the world's richest entertainers. She surprised her fans

by giving each of her (specially chosen and needy) 276 audience members a new car to celebrate the premiere of her show's 19th season. Pontiac, a division of [GM](#), donated the cars, priced at US\$28,400. Among bigger corporations McDonald's has had an ongoing partnership with [Conservation International](#) for almost 20 years, trying to find new ways to tie together on-the-ground conservation efforts with an educational outreach campaign geared towards teaching kids about the importance of protecting threatened species.

**Megacommunities:** The megacommunity approach calls for companies, governments, and NGOs to reach out across sectors (private, government, and civil society) and join together to take action on compelling issues of mutual importance, following a set of practices and principles that will make it easier for them to achieve results. In Italy [Poste Italiane SpA](#), [World Food Program \(WFP\)](#) and energy company [Enel SpA](#) are showing the world how companies, governments, and other organizations can work together to increase their effectiveness. Unsolvable problems with cyber security, a global challenge, made Poste Italiane SpA contact the United States Secret Service and it has now been asked to join the electronic crime task force in New York City. The perspective and involvement of law enforcement is key to the development of a cyber secure planet — and underscores the need for companies to recognize which of their problems are global problems, and correspondingly prepare to move outside their sector. Meanwhile, together with industrial partners such as Enel, [Microsoft](#), and [Visa/MasterCard](#), and with academic partners such as [George Mason University](#) and [Royal Holloway College at the University of London](#), Poste recently opened a global [Cyber Security Center of Excellence](#) in Rome promoting research into how security is reshaping the Web, as well as provide forensic and training support to its members and to other organizations. The Center of Excellence was formed as a not-for-profit organization, a status that makes it possible for government agencies and NGOs to join. (Source: Strategy & Business)

**In March: Look out for trends in action in food, water and electricity security.**