

All for Charity

New Online System Helps Ski Areas Track Donations

Like many entities, charitable organizations have been dealing with decreasing revenues due to tough economic times. These organizations are looking for additional donations to bridge the gap where grant money has disappeared. Ski resorts remain a popular place for organizations to approach with their requests for donations for charity events. Many resorts face a steady stream of donation requests for free lift tickets, meals, and merchandise – all season long.

The time it takes to process these requests can be anywhere from six to eight weeks, and in some cases, an entire season. Yet resorts understand the importance of processing these requests in a timely fashion and in the most professional manner available.

To that end, Bidding For Good – a charitable e-commerce company that connects fundraisers, cause-conscious shoppers, and socially responsible businesses – has developed an automated, web-based platform to track donation requests. Bidding For Good's Automated Item Request System (AIRS) is designed to operate through the ski resort's individual website. Wachusett Mountain ski area in Princeton, Mass., is one resort that implemented the AIRS platform onto its website.

"Responding to donation requests is an important part of our public relations strategy," said Kerry Metcalf, Wachusett Mountain's office manager. "Being a family-run business, we strive to be good neighbors and community supporters. However, the volume of requests is often overwhelming. Switching to the Bidding For Good system saves a tremendous

amount of time and trees. By eliminating the written requests with this new system, the legwork has shifted to the requestor. The mailed letters and faxes have halted and we can focus on the recipients that will truly benefit."

With the automated system in place, ski resorts are able to better manage their impact and significantly reduce the time spent handling requests. A central dashboard tracks how many donations have been processed, which are pending, how much has been donated and to whom the items have been donated. It also features charts on how much has been donated over a given period, providing managers with a full report tracking their charitable contributions over the course of a month or year. The program has also proven useful for accounting departments during tax season.

AIRS provides a user-friendly experience for those seeking donations. User are able to view the status of their requests, and the system is able to generate an approval letter or letter of decline in short order. Resort managers simply refer donation seekers to the website, where the request is a hands-off experience. Another key benefit of the AIRS approach is that the system can help drive website traffic. Other attractions nationwide such as zoos, aquariums and big-name companies such as Brooks Brothers have sought out the following three key benefits of using an automated system:

Streamline and Save Time

Implementing AIRS enabled Wachusett Mountain to enjoy an online, streamlined system that eliminates piles of paperwork but also provides easy access to request and fulfillment records when follow up is needed.

Make It Easier to Just Say No

The automated process helps people follow the charitable giving guidelines. Those seeking donations tend to filter themselves out if their request falls outside of the ski area's parameters.

Save Your Data, Measure Your Impact

The reporting features of the AIRS system can be used to understand more about the audience, target potential customers for other offerings such as event space, quantify and substantiate how the business gives back to the community, and determine how donations affect the bottom line.

For more information and a no-cost 12-month trial of the interactive Automated Item Request System (AIRS), email airs@biddingforgood.com or call (866) 918-0305. ■

