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MICRO-VOLUNTEERING

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The nonprofit sector is creating new terms these days like a volcano in full eruption.

A new one is micro-volunteering, and the concept will soon be ready for prime time.

Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images

The micro-volunteering movement is being led by an organization called The Extraordinaries. The organization's pitch, as stated on its website, is, "The Extraordinaries delivers micro-volunteer opportunities to mobile phones that can be done on-demand and on-the-spot."

Basically, micro-volunteering will allow us to do small volunteer tasks in small snatches of time through our mobile phones. Let's say you're waiting for your bus to go to work. You'll be able use your smart phone to quickly do a little translation for your chosen nonprofit, or maybe spot some urban birds for a university research project.

The Extraordinaries is developing a very cool mobile phone application that will coordinate these efforts and match micro-volunteers with charitable organizations. You'll eventually be able to download the application and then click on the available opportunities. Doing the "tasks" will be a matter of click, click, click from anywhere.

The founders of The Extraordinaries credits the idea of "crowdsourcing" volunteer tasks to Jeff Howe, who, literally, wrote the book, *Crowdsourcing*.

We've known for a long time now that it is hard to get people to volunteer for long periods of time. We're just too busy. But we are a generous group and want to help. Micro-volunteering would allow us to donate the scraps of time in and around our busy lives without the hassle of traditional volunteering.

Micro-volunteering is not to be confused with virtual volunteering, which is done from one's computer. Nor is it mobile giving, which is sending a small donation via mobile phone to a charity.

The new "smart" mobile phones have made micro-volunteering possible, plus created a generation of young people who use them constantly and with ease.

But, Jacob Colker, Co-Founder of The Extraordinaries, is more interested in harnessing that spare time, than in any particular application. He says:

"Micro time is best reached through mobile, because 90% of us have a phone within reach, 24 hours a day. However, we will also have a web widget for when you are sitting at your desk at work and have a few minutes free. So, yes, we are the mobile guys right now. But moving forward we'll also be on any platform that allows us to reach people with a few minutes free -- mobile, web widget, or any future technology.

"Essentially, people spend 9 billion hours playing solitaire each year, and we want to tap into that same energy for social good."

Will micro-volunteering get people addicted to social good? The Extraordinaries hope so.

Resources:

View a video by Extraordinaries co-founder, Jeff Colker, plus a demonstration of the application in development.

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