
LESSON: PHILANTHROPY

Over 4,000 years ago, Chinese families provided monetary allowances to widows, orphans and elderly people. The Hebrews gave one-tenth of their income as a gift to God and to those in need. References to philanthropy can be found in the Koran, Bible, Torah and in the teachings of many other religions and cultures.

Greek philosopher Plato in 347 B.C. His will instructed his nephew to use the proceeds of the family farm to fund the academy that Plato founded. The money helped students and faculty keep the academy running.

In 1630, John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony preached to Puritan settlers in America that the rich have an obligation to take care of the poor.

- Until the middle of the 19th century, philanthropy in the United States was focused on religion and morality.

- During the 19th century, slavery and education were important issues in philanthropy.

- In the middle of the 19th century, as philanthropists became less interested in religion and moral reform, science started to become a priority in philanthropy.

- In the late 19th century, the Civil War created new demands on philanthropy. Philanthropy provided supplies and services to the troops and helped build morale among civilians.

Perhaps the most famous example of philanthropy came from Andrew Carnegie, simply because of the scale of his giving. Carnegie's wealth helped build more than 2,800 libraries all over the world. Carnegie lived up to his credo that a man who dies rich dies disgraced.

The Great Depression of the 1930s led to an increase in charity, as opposed to philanthropy. Because the need was so great, philanthropists were more concerned about meeting people's immediate needs for food and shelter than solving social problems.

At the end of the 1960s, 18 percent of grants distributed by foundations were used to address poverty, race issues and urban issues.

As much as 32% of charitable donations in 2016 went to religious organizations. Most of the donations to religious groups went to local places of worship. Around 16%, went to educational groups. Coming in third were human services groups, which reaped 12% of donations that year, while health organizations received 9%.

Recent Trends in Philanthropy

Here are some key trends in philanthropy over the last few years:

- **Impact and Outcome Focus:** There has been a shift towards a more results-oriented approach to philanthropy. Donors are increasingly interested in funding projects and initiatives that demonstrate measurable impact and outcomes. They are seeking to maximize their philanthropic investments and create sustainable change.
- **Collaborative Philanthropy:** Many philanthropists and organizations are recognizing the power of collaboration and partnerships. They are joining forces with other donors, nonprofits, governments, and businesses to address complex social issues. Collaborative philanthropy allows for the pooling of resources, expertise, and networks to achieve greater impact and leverage collective strengths.
- **Giving Circles and Grassroots Philanthropy:** Giving circles, where individuals pool their resources to collectively support causes of common interest, have gained popularity in recent years. This trend reflects a desire for more participatory and democratic forms of giving. Grassroots philanthropy emphasizes the power of small-scale, community-based giving, encouraging individuals to support local initiatives and projects that directly impact their communities.
- **Venture Philanthropy:** venture philanthropy involves providing not only financial resources but also strategic guidance, capacity-building support, and long-term investments in nonprofit organizations. Donors are taking a more hands-on approach to philanthropy, actively engaging with grantees and applying business principles to drive innovation and sustainable growth.
- **Technology and Digital Giving:** The rise of technology and digital platforms has significantly impacted philanthropy. Online crowdfunding platforms, social media campaigns, and digital fundraising tools have made it easier for individuals to contribute to causes and amplify their impact. Technology has also enabled transparency, making it easier for donors to track their contributions and evaluate the effectiveness of charitable organizations.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Philanthropy has increasingly recognized the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in all aspects of its work. Donors are prioritizing funding for marginalized communities and underrepresented voices. They are also striving to create more inclusive and equitable philanthropic practices, including diverse representation on boards, equitable grant-making processes, and partnerships with grassroots organizations.
- **Long-term Sustainability and Systems Change:** Rather than focusing solely on short-term solutions, there is a growing emphasis on long-term sustainability and systems change. Philanthropists are seeking to address root causes of social issues, tackle systemic barriers, and drive transformative change. They are investing in initiatives that promote systemic reform, policy advocacy, and social innovation.

These trends demonstrate the evolving nature of philanthropy, with an increasing focus on strategic approaches, collaboration, innovation, and social impact measurement. By staying informed about these trends, philanthropists and organizations can adapt their strategies and make more informed decisions to create lasting change.

Technology and social media have played a significant role in facilitating and promoting philanthropic activities in recent years. Here are some key aspects of their impact:

- *Increased Accessibility:* Technology and social media have democratized philanthropy by making it more accessible to a wider audience. Online platforms and digital tools have eliminated geographical barriers, allowing people from all over the world to engage in philanthropic activities. Individuals can now contribute to causes, donate funds, and volunteer their time without being physically present.
- *Online Fundraising and Crowdfunding:* Platforms like GoFundMe, Kickstarter, and DonorsChoose have revolutionized fundraising by enabling individuals and organizations to create online campaigns and raise funds for specific projects or causes. Social media platforms amplify these campaigns, helping them gain visibility and attract support from a wider audience.
- *Real-Time Engagement and Transparency:* Technology and social media allow for real-time engagement between donors, nonprofits, and beneficiaries. Donors can follow the progress of projects, receive updates, and see the direct impact of their contributions. This transparency builds trust and encourages continued support. Nonprofits can also leverage social media to share stories, photos, and videos that humanize their work and showcase the impact they are making.
- *Viral Campaigns:* Social media platforms have the potential to make campaigns go viral, reaching millions of people within a short period. Memorable and impactful philanthropic campaigns have gained widespread attention through social media, attracting support and raising awareness about various causes. Hashtags and social media challenges, such as the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, have created a sense of community and encouraged individuals to donate and participate.
- *Data Analytics and Impact Measurement:* Technology allows for data collection and analysis, enabling philanthropists and organizations to measure the impact of their initiatives more effectively.

While technology and social media have revolutionized philanthropy, it is important to acknowledge potential challenges, such as the digital divide and concerns over data privacy. However, the overall role of technology and social media in philanthropy has been transformative, empowering individuals, amplifying voices, fostering collaboration, and driving positive change on a global scale.

Here are a few notable philanthropic initiatives or campaigns that have gained attention in recent years:

The Giving Pledge: Launched in 2010 by Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates, The Giving Pledge is a commitment by some of the world's wealthiest individuals and families to dedicate the majority of their wealth to philanthropy. Signatories publicly pledge to give away at least half of their wealth during their lifetimes or in their wills. This initiative has encouraged a culture of giving among the ultra-wealthy and has inspired others to consider philanthropy on a significant scale.

#MeToo Movement: The #MeToo movement, which gained momentum in 2017, highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault. It sparked a global conversation about gender-based violence and discrimination. In response, various philanthropic initiatives emerged to support survivors, raise awareness, and advocate for change. Prominent figures and organizations, such as the Time's Up Foundation, have contributed funds and resources to combat gender inequality and harassment.

COVID-19 Relief Efforts: The COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed numerous philanthropic initiatives and campaigns to address the health, economic, and social impact of the crisis. Foundations, corporations, and individuals have donated substantial funds to support healthcare systems, vaccine development and distribution, food security, and economic recovery. Examples include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's COVID-19 response.

Black Lives Matter Movement: In response to systemic racism and police violence, the Black Lives Matter movement gained widespread attention in recent years. Philanthropic initiatives emerged to support racial justice, equity, and anti-discrimination efforts.

Climate Philanthropy: Climate change and environmental issues have become prominent focuses of philanthropy in recent years. Initiatives such as the Climate Emergency Fund and the ClimateWorks Foundation are dedicated to mobilizing resources and funding innovative solutions to mitigate climate change and its impacts. Philanthropic contributions are supporting renewable energy projects, climate research, conservation efforts, and environmental justice initiatives.

These are just a few examples of notable philanthropic initiatives or campaigns that have garnered attention in recent years. There are numerous other impactful philanthropic endeavors addressing a wide range of social issues, each with its unique objectives and strategies.