

The New York Times

December 18, 2009

Dec. 31 Is a Big Day for Online Charity

By [STEPHANIE STROM](#)

For charities that solicit donations online, Dec. 31 is more than [New Year's Eve](#) — it is the most lucrative day of the year.

New data from [Convio](#), a software company, shows that charitable donors that use Convio's online giving systems made 13.2 times more gifts last Dec. 31 than the daily average for the rest of 2008, and that the charities raised 22.5 times more money than they did on an average day.

Convio, which estimates that as much as 10 percent of online giving moves over its systems, also found that in the last week of 2008, the average gift size was 57 percent larger than the weekly average for the rest of the year.

“The bottom line is that the last week of the year and, in particular, the last day of the year, is huge for online fund-raising,” said Gene Austin, Convio's chief executive.

Tabetha Leinweber, director of direct marketing at [Susan G. Komen for the Cure](#), which fights breast cancer, said the sharp spike in contributions in the last week of the year also occurred through other giving channels, like direct mail. While the organization keeps in touch with its donors throughout the year, an extra e-mail message goes out on Dec. 29, a final reminder that if a donor wants a tax deduction that year, he or she better make it fast.

“All through that weeklong time frame, nonprofits are pushing those last e-mails,” Ms. Leinweber said. “It makes strategic sense.”

The data also suggests that tax considerations play more than a negligible role in giving, as a donor making a gift online at 11:59 P.M. on Dec. 31 will receive a confirmation making it eligible for deduction this year.

Or it could simply be that year-end giving has become part of the holiday spirit.

“The broader base of givers doesn't itemize, and so they don't have tax considerations in mind,” said Leo Arnoult, a fund-raising consultant. “I think giving has just become part of what you do during this season.”