



Episode 837: Peace Corps Declares War on Philanthropy App Built by My Guest

Guest: Grett Glyer

WOODS: Well, we sure have some stuff to talk about here. Since you were on, by the way, I have used DonorSee several times. And I'm pretty sure you could probably verify that if you wanted to –

GLYER: [laughing] Oh, sure, yeah.

WOODS: Yeah. We've given to various causes on there. And in fact, near Christmas time my four older – I mean, I have a daughter who's two, almost three, who's obviously not really able to understand this, but the others ranging in age from 7 up to 13, the other four girls, obviously they can understand what you're doing. So there was a series of little mini-causes where you only had to give \$25, and it would give somebody a decent meal and a nice Christmas gift. So what we did – there were so many of them. We found a child who was the same age as each of my four –

GLYER: Oh, nice.

WOODS: – and we thought if it as like a – not quite a foster child, but in a way this one kind of belongs to you, this is the one you can identify with. And then we got this beautiful video afterward from all four of them, thanking us for the gifts. And I hooked that up to the TV and I showed that to the kids –

GLYER: Oh, wow, that's awesome.

WOODS: It was really great. So I've really, really enjoyed using the DonorSee app, and I want everybody to go download it. Before we get into your interesting turn of events, not everyone listened to the previous episode, so go ahead and tell people about this amazing app. And by the way, you might, at the end of telling them about the app, tell them about the Tom Woods house, which I had nothing to do with really, but I'll take it.

GLYER: Sure. All right, so the app is called DonorSee, and the basic idea behind it is it's going to help donors see exactly where their money goes in an unprecedented way like never before. So the example is if you give to a girl in Malawi who needs hearing aids, after you give to here, let's say a week later, you will get a video of her hearing for the first time.

Or in the case of your listeners, they all got together – and they all banded together all on their own – and they found this lady who needed a house. It cost I think around \$800 to \$1,000 for this one house. And they all came together and they donated to it and they promoted it, and afterward it got the praise, the Tom Woods house, and people were sharing it like crazy. And all of them got to see that house being constructed, and then they got to see the widow, who the house was for, move into their brand new house. And I've got to say, Tom, you have probably the most generous per-person audience I've ever seen of anyone. For some reason, your audience are some of the most generous people of any podcast or publicity that I've done so far.

WOODS: That's very good of you to say. I love them. They have never ever let me down. That was a wonderful thing about that house. And then in that video, there's a guy in the video who says the names of every donor, every person who gave. He says a "thank you" to each and every one of them. It is amazing. It's amazing. It's amazing that you – and I know that you're not doing it for yourself. I know. I know all the disclaimers. But there'd be something wrong with you if you didn't look at that and say, "Doggone it, isn't it great I did that?" And I hereby give you permission to say that to yourself.

All right, so this is an amazing app, and your goal is for it to be – there are parts of the world obviously that we naturally expect there to be aid campaigns for, but you want to go beyond places we would normally expect and say look, there are worthy causes all over the world. And what an interesting way in the age of the Internet to bring people together to find worthy things, persuade people that they're worthy, and then show people directly on their devices immediately or as soon as possible the real-life consequences of their contribution. What a beautiful idea.

GLYER: Yeah, I'd like to share a quick story that happened about a month after you and I recorded that last episode. So there was Hurricane Matthew, which hit the coast of Haiti and just devastated – it was like a bulldozer came through and just wrecked this one little coastal town called Les Cayes. And so I personally went down to Haiti myself with nothing but my backpack and my DonorSee app, and we fundraised several thousand dollars and provided disaster relief to the people in this town. Like, we're talking sanitation kits and a small amount of food supply and things like that. And we distributed to the victims of Hurricane Matthew faster than any other major organization was able to get down there, so that's something that we're really proud of.

WOODS: That really is great. So you've been running now for – is it just a few months? How long?

GLYER: Four months, just over four months.

WOODS: Okay. All right, what have you learned over the course of that? Let's start there. Is there anything that you've learned from this experience?

GLYER: Yeah, I think I've learned that – Well, there's a bunch, but one of the things that's been really cool is to see how fast we're growing and the ways in which people use the app. So back when we talked, the app had been out for maybe a week,

maybe two weeks. And we had like 40 projects on the app, something very small. And since then we're actually in almost 40 countries as of today, so that's something I'm very proud of. Like, what app that was launched four months ago is being used in 40 different countries? I think that's really something that I'm very happy about.

And then I think the other cool thing, as I mentioned earlier, you have some very generous donors. Some of the people who we picked up, some of the donors who we picked up from your show have given to 40 or 50 different projects since we launched four months ago.

WOODS: Wow.

GLYER: Yeah, one of the cool things is that people don't just give once on DonorSee. We never ask people to give more money. We never send out emails saying, "Here are some project you can look out for." We never do that. What happens is people give once, they get feedback, and then the feedback brings them — they get the video or whatever. That video brings them back to the app, and then they give more times. And we have this really high conversion rate for that, so that's a really exciting thing that we've seen.

WOODS: The whole thing is thrilling to me, because I do a lot of episodes of necessity that are not very uplifting sometimes. There are a lot of things in this world that are quite grim.

GLYER: Sure.

WOODS: And then you come along, and it's a great result. Let's shift gears for the time being and talk about the specific reason I wanted to have you back so soon. What is going on with the Peace Corps and DonorSee?

GLYER: Okay, so DonorSee's been trying to interact and talk to the Peace Corps for about a month now. And what DonorSee does is there are some really big organizations out there. One of the organizations that we partner with, it's called the World Race, and they have about a thousand missionaries living all over the planet, and they're out in the field for about a year. And we do a partnership with them where they use our app, and we coordinate things so that they're happy that it's being used properly.

So we tried to do the same thing with the Peace Corps. I mean, this World Race organization is about a thousand people. The Peace Corps has about 7,000 out in the field, and they're really the perfect candidate to use something like DonorSee.

And I'll explain it this way: a week ago there was a little girl named Apulole who was crossing a river in Malawi, and as she was crossing she didn't realize that there was a crocodile nearby, and the crocodile came up and bit her in the torso. And a bunch of guys rushed over to her and wrestled the crocodile away and then took this girl and brought her back to her village. And there was an aid worker in the village named Nicole, who had her phone and had her DonorSee app, and she was able to almost immediately fundraise \$100 to get this little girl the medical treatment that she

needed. So this girl's life was saved. She didn't have to wait around for anything. She was in a really urgent situation, and DonorSee was able to help her very, very quickly.

And the Peace Corps has, instead of choosing to partner with us or discuss things further with us, they've chosen to give us an outright ban. So what that ban specifically means is if it had been a Peace Corps worker instead of Nicole who had tried to fundraise for that little girl who had been attacked by the crocodile, that Peace Corps worker would have been expelled by the Peace Corps. That's how they're enforcing it.

WOODS: Wow. So how are they justifying that?

GLYER: This is where — I mean, this is where it just becomes worse and worse and worse. So on the one hand, they do have their own platform where you can do this, but it's completely non-visual. It looks like their website was built in 1995. And it takes over a month for the funds to get where they're supposed to go. So it's slower and it's very bureaucratic and all this other stuff.

WOODS: So in other words, the very reason you created your app.

GLYER: Exactly, to help people in very urgent situations quickly. Like I said, I mentioned earlier with Haiti, we were able to get disaster relief supplies to people who were in the middle of a cholera outbreak when other organizations were taking over a week to get there. So I mean, I really believe that speed is a necessary component. And we do work with — the Peace Corps, if you really pressed them, I know they would start virtue signaling by saying things like "sustainable development" and, you know, they have just like these vocab words that they can throw out there where they signal to other organizations that they know what they're talking about. But when you really get to the heart of it, they're doing it because they're a very large organizations that is most interested in preserving themselves instead of helping the people that they're supposedly out there assisting.

WOODS: This is amazing. Now, has this gotten any publicity? I mean, you're a guy with an app, and you're up against, for heaven's sake, the Peace Corps.

GLYER: Yeah.

WOODS: That's a David-and-Goliath kind of situation. You've got to go to the media somehow with this — or at least go to sympathetic media, let's put it that way.

GLYER: Yeah, so I'm sure there are plenty of media outlets who would be willing to side with the Peace Corps without even blinking an eye, and so what I'm looking to do is I've targeted the libertarian community like yourself, and I'm looking at getting an article written in FEE later this week. And so there's a few things like that that are hopefully going to get us started, but —

WOODS: Yeah, but you know what I would do? I mean, FEE is great. I'm not putting them down. You should go for FEE. You should go for these places. But I want to go beyond — I mean, it's not my project, but I want it to succeed.

GLYER: [laughing] I want the same thing, me too.

WOODS: Exactly, exactly. I think you should also go for mainstream conservative outlets. You should go for *National Review*. Write to *National Review* online. And you know what? Off the air – I wouldn't say I'm close friends with anybody over there [laughing]. I've had choice words for them. But I'm on speaking terms with a couple people, and they would love to – I'm sure some conservatives don't know why they would have something against the Peace Corps, but they would just like to be contrarian, so let's see what we can do off the air to try and spread this around. Because also, people like a fresh story.

GLYER: For sure.

WOODS: And if they write something like that – submit it to Drudge. Who knows where it could go?

GLYER: Yeah, I really think it could get pretty big. And one thing that people may not realize is the Peace Corps is not free from controversy. I mean, they've had their share of really bad situations, and a lot of them have happened very recently. I don't know if you watched any of the *20/20* reports, but the Peace Corps isn't completely free of blemishes.

WOODS: I actually am not aware of that, if you can believe that. There's some scandal I don't know about? You've stumbled upon it.

GLYER: Sure, so a couple years ago there was a 24-year-old American girl. She went with the Peace Corps to Benin, Africa, which is the west coast of Africa. And she was serving in a school there, and one of the other teachers at the school was sexually molesting the girls that he was teaching. And so she sent a report back to the headquarter offices saying, Hey, this is going on. Please don't let him find out that I'm the one who told on him. It'd be a very dangerous situation if that happened. Anyways, they did end up firing this guy, but somehow it got back to this guy that it was her who blew the whistle on him, and he ended up murdering this girl.

So then after that – so the *20/20* report came out, and then all of these other girls were talking about the sexual abuse that they have experienced while in the Peace Corps and how the Peace Corps not only didn't give them anything to help them out with that, but they actually tried to get them to cover it up and make them feel like it's their fault. So it's one of those examples of the Peace Corps being a self-preserving organization that's interested in being an organization primarily instead of making an impact in the world.

WOODS: All right, more to come with Grett Glyer after this message.

[Sponsored content]

Grett, let's talk about the business model for DonorSee, because one of the things that I've been saying to people to promote this – as a matter of fact, I have an eBook coming out probably by late this week or next week, and it's called *Sane Space*:

Libertarian Dispatches from Bizarro America. And the chapter about you was the only non-bizarro thing in the whole book –

GLYER: [laughing] Oh, really?

WOODS: It's just a little bit about – it's the email that I sent out the day that I interviewed you the first time. And I think my headline was, "How to help the world's poor without paying for the aid agency's chauffeur."

GLYER: Exactly, I love it.

WOODS: So that says a little something about your business model. So tell us what it is, because obviously you're doing this because you really believe in the cause, but you too have to eat. So what's the business model?

GLYER: Right, so I guess I always put the disclaimer out there: when I lived in Malawi for three years, I was living off of \$600 a month. And money's just not a very important thing to me, and the only reason I ever moved back to the states was so I could run DonorSee. So I'll just put that out there at the very beginning. The business model is very similar to Kickstarter or Go Fund Me, so every transaction that happens on the site, we take a small percentage. And it's actually smaller than both Go Fund Me or Kickstarter or any of those platforms. We just take a small platform fee.

But I think one of the – the structure of the organization, one of the things that makes it truly revolutionary, like flipping an industry on its head, is if you look at any charity that exists out there, the bigger the charity gets, the more bloated and inefficient and wasteful and dishonest and fraudulent it gets. And it's impossible to avoid that. Once you have these charities who are getting above a billion dollars in revenue a year, they develop corners of their organization that are impossible to manage and have proper oversight over.

So there are a few instances where you have a really big charity who's doing good work, but I would say that's maybe like 1 in 50. And then you have a bunch of really inefficient charities who are getting – they've figured out how to fundraise money and they've just figured out all the right formulas to get money into different places, and they'll use all sorts of different tricks on their numbers to make it seem like they're being transparent, when in reality, I've been on the other side of the world and these charities are a lot of the time not doing a very good job.

So that's the standard. The standard is the bigger an organization gets, the more bloated it gets. The difference with DonorSee is the bigger it gets, the more lean it gets and the more compelling the projects get and the more impactful and sustainable the projects get. And I'll explain why that happens.

So let's take a business model like YouTube. At the very beginning with YouTube, you had people sitting in front of a webcam, blank wall behind them, terrible audio, and people came. Like tens of thousands of people came to YouTube just to see those people talking into their webcams. And then one day someone added a DSLR video camera. And then the next day someone added better audio equipment. And then

someone started cutting their videos in a really compelling fashion. And then you started getting these really interesting personalities. And over time there was this perfect storm of both users, viewers, and content creators that just got better and better and better. And then today you've got some of the most amazing content on YouTube.

So we're seeing some of the same patterns happen with DonorSee. As we get more donor dollars onto the platform, there's more competition for those donor dollars and better and better projects are being created to get those donor dollars.

WOODS: What are your goals for 2017 for DonorSee?

GLYER: Our goals are – I mean, the stated goal internally is to do 75 million in revenue, which would be really great. But the real goal behind that is to help millions of people who don't have the ability to help themselves. And I want to emphasize this. When you think of poor people, you think of the little kids that you helped with your family, these are not a fringe group of people living on the outskirts of the world or living in dark corners of the Earth. We're talking about 50% of the population that lives on a dollar or two a day. So 3.5 billion people. That's the scale that we're talking about of people living in extreme poverty. So our goal is to really expose some of that to the American conscience and then do something about it.

WOODS: Well, again, it's great. It's something I'm really glad to be a part of as a person who downloaded it. Anything in this process, by the way, that surprised you or you weren't expecting, either in a good way or a bad way?

GLYER: Yeah, I mean, the Peace Corps ban was obviously a surprise, but I think one of the things that has been super cool is when I created the app – I think I mentioned it on the last podcast with you – a year ago I crowdfunded \$100,000 to build a girls' school in Malawi. And it's a completely 100% sustainable girls' school. It runs off of tuition, but there's 120 girls going to school right now in this rural village because of the one-time \$100,000 fundraiser that we did. And that's something that I'm very proud of. And the way we did it is we broke it up into stages, and we showed people: oh look, the foundation's built, the walls are built, the roof is on, and so forth, every step of the way. And my vision was for that to start happening on DonorSee some day. I hoped that at some point people would take up that model and use DonorSee to fundraise that way. I didn't expect it to happen so quickly.

So there's a girl on the platform – it's happening in a few different places, and I'm talking to people all the time who are interested in implementing it. But on the Staff Picks section, which are the projects that we personally recommend, there's a girl there named Kristen Johnson who's raising money for an orphanage called Little Hands of Hope. And that orphanage has already fundraised the first phase, so they've already built the foundation. And now they're building the walls, and they're fundraising for that. So seeing those really big project happen is really gratifying thing for DonorSee and for me.

WOODS: Well, of course people can get DonorSee and sign your petition – they should sign the petition. Let's try and get some attention for this outrage from the Peace Corps. They can do all that at TomWoods.com/837, but I do want to give you a chance

to tell people exactly how they could bypass that page if all they want to do is just go get the app. How do they do that?

GLYER: Sure. If someone doesn't have a smartphone for whatever reason, you can go to DonorSee.com, and it works just fine on there. But we really emphasize that people should get the app if they want the truest experience, the most immediate experience. And so the way you do that is you just go to the Android or the iOS store, and you type in "DonorSee," and most variations of spelling will turn it up. So yeah, you just go to the App Store and search it, and you'll find it there and it's free.

WOODS: All right, well, you keep on fighting. It's very much worthwhile, the cause, as you know. And we'll do what we can to spread the word. And I hope people listening: spread this on social media. I mean, I know a lot of us these days are frustrated on social media. Everybody is really polarized. Who the heck is going to be against DonorSee? A lot of times on Facebook people say, "If you believe blah, blah, blah, unfriend me now." And I always think, go jump in a lake, you creep, when people say that. But I kind of feel like this, if you're not in favor of DonorSee, I mean, really. What is the matter — you might as well turn in your membership card to the human race at this point. So this gives you something nice that you could post that improves the world and helps a good guy and a good cause. So get out there. Help Grett Glycer by taking the resources we have at TomWoods.com/837 and spreading them far and wide. Grett, thanks a lot, and I hope we can catch up again some time in the future.

GLYER: Definitely. It was a pleasure to be back.