

Why Should Non Profits Care About Web3 - with WaterAid

with WaterAid's IT Director, **Stuart Wilson** & **Sarah Kershaw**, Digital Acquisition Lead at WaterAid America

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What are both your backgrounds and experience in the charity sector?

Stuart: WaterAid is actually my first non profit role and I've been here 2 years. Prior to that I spent 27 years in the private sector in a variety of technology roles. And now I'm the IT Director at WaterAid.

Sarah: This is also my first job in the charity sector. I live in NY. WaterAid is a small satellite charity in the US. My background was very digital, SEO consulting and tech stuff. Which has been useful in fundraising, digital especially.

When and why did you get into Web 3/ Blockchain?

Stuart: I got into it when it wasn't referred to as Web3, probably 2013, 2014 I got into bitcoin as a concept, when I worked at American Express. Around 2015/2016 I started working with a company in San Francisco called Comakery who have since rebranded as Upside and are pretty massive in the States for managing NFTs, DAOs etc. And I was a blockchain consultant before I joined WaterAid.

Sarah: When the pandemic hit we were looking at different means of fundraising, and Crypto was on my radar and I'd been pestering my boss and....

eventually she agreed for me to look further into it. It coincided with WaterAid becoming very relevant with regards to handwashing and the pandemic so it was a good time to try it out. I was then put in touch with Stuart who knows so much about Blockchain. I work with the Giving Block, they are always really helpful, their customer service is genuinely helpful and I like the way they sit on top of the Gemini Crypto exchange. Gemini is very proper, which helped us reassure the board. We were able to say, no look it's fine, you're not going to lose your lifesavings and all that nervousness that comes up. Gemini are like the gold standard of an institution.

What first made you think about the potential for Web3 and the charity sector to cross over?

I read the [MercyCorps White Paper](#) and they had some really powerful statements about blockchain technology reaching communities who have not already been reached.

That was a lightbulb moment for me, people who have not already been served by traditional financial systems, with the advent of blockchain technology, are now suddenly reachable. That was a real moment of inspiration for me.



Stuart: When I worked as a blockchain consultant we were trying to generate a conversation with charities regarding an end to end traceable impact model through blockchain. Which in an area of low trust with charities and money raised, could support different models of fundraising and drive more trust with donors and other stakeholders. Essentially blockchain is designed to solve the trust issue, its an internet ledger that people trust. So if you take that technology and implement what you want to do with driving impact with people's money and then maybe flip it and drive fundraising through demonstrated impact and show that through the blockchain, that's huge.

What do you wish people understood about Web3?

Stuart: Don't believe the Daily Mail negativity because the first barrier you have is talking people out of it by saying it's only being used by criminals, scammers and bad people and then the second barrier you have is most people don't really understand Web2, and now you're moving from Web2 to Web3. I think maybe we just need to redesign the way we talk about Web3 so it doesn't require you to understand web1 and web2 first. I don't know if that is feasible. But most people don't understand what's there now and what the issues are. People get excited about the clickbait stuff,, 'bitcoin ruining the planet with its carbon footprint etc... everything that is launched fails, there's no inherent value' and all that sort of negative stuff. The way i describe it if you wanted to get out your physical wallet and take out some money and hand it to someone to put in their wallet, that isn't how the banking system works today but this is the way that Web3 works, and those wallets are electronic and the money is moving around in codes that you don't understand.

Sarah: To get anything discussed you have to put it in to a Web 2 or Web1 example which is limiting if understandable. It's frustrating that people don't listen to reason, it's not always a fair comparison. And it's not really advancing the conversation. Web3 is a hard principle to grasp, so there is an education element. It's so new. For example, do you remember when the internet first became popular, at some point we all learnt that the magnifying glass icon meant 'search' and the cog icon meant settings, that's pretty standard knowledge now but we all had to learn that as those icons gained traction across lots of different sites. Right now, we're still in the learning phase. It (Web3) will start to become clearer to people as ideas bed in.

Would you encourage charities to explore Web3?

Sarah: Definitely!

Stuart: yes definitely, but I would suggest approaching it in steps. if you go all in you will probably confuse people.

How would you convince charity boards to care about crypto?

Sarah: In terms of the Board and convincing anyone, I often just start with saying; look we are not as established in America and we have a lot of competition. Look at the figures, our end of first year ROI (for crypto giving) was 12:1, end of second year 20:1 and it doesn't require tremendous amounts of work because it's so new. it will get harder, but there is an opportunity here, so I always use that as an example.

WaterAid's Crypto Philanthropy page can be found [here. https://www.wateraid.org/us/donate-cryptocurrency-bitcoin](https://www.wateraid.org/us/donate-cryptocurrency-bitcoin)

