

THE HD TECH WAY

Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably

HOLIDAY SCAMS IN DISGUISE:

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR
WHEN DONATING ONLINE



Even in good times, scammers circle around generosity. But during the holidays, when giving increases and emotions run high, they truly pounce.

A few years ago, a massive telefunding fraud was shut down after authorities discovered that the perpetrators had made 1.3 billion deceptive donation calls and collected over \$110 million from unsuspecting donors. (Federal Trade Commission)

At the same time, academic researchers from Cornell University found that on social media alone, more than 800 accounts operated donation scams, pushing victims toward fake fundraisers over platforms like Facebook, X and Instagram.

For a small business, one misstep in charitable giving can do more than lose money – it can connect your name to fraud, damage your reputation and erode trust with clients, partners and your community.

Here's how to vet fundraisers, spot red flags and keep your business (and goodwill) safe this season.

How To Vet A Fundraiser Before You Donate

A legitimate fundraiser should answer these clearly:

- Who is organizing this, and what's their connection to the recipient?
- How exactly will the funds be used, and over what timeline?
- Who is controlling withdrawals? Is there a clear path for funds to reach their target?
- Do close contacts of the recipient (family, friends) publicly support the campaign?

If any of those are vague or missing, ask for clarification first. Silence or evasive answers is a red flag.

Red Flags That Often Signal Scams

If you see any of these, pause and investigate:

- Misleading or patently false information on the fundraiser page

- Funds not being used for the stated purpose in a reasonable time frame
- Impersonation of another person or copying someone else's story
- Stories that seem too perfect or emotionally manipulative

When you spot multiple warning signs, report the fundraiser and don't donate.

Vetting Charities (Not Just Crowdfunds)

Even established charities can have sketchy practices. Here's what to look for:

- Transparent program descriptions, financial breakdowns and annual reports
- Clear information about how much of a donation goes to programs vs. overhead
- Charity names that appear in searches with words like "fraud," "scam" or "complaints"

A lack of detail or negative reviews should spark caution.

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Common Tactics Charity Scammers Use

Watch out for:

- Demands to donate via gift cards, wire transfers or crypto – legitimate charities accept credit cards or checks.
- Websites missing https (look for the “s”) – that means insecure data transmission.
- Pressure to donate right away – urgency is a trick to stop you from thinking.
- Claims you already pledged or gave without remembering – always double-check before you pay.

Scammers are clever. Even polished websites and thoughtful-sounding headlines may hide malicious intent.

Why This Is Important For You

When your business gives to charity – publicly

or privately – that generosity becomes part of your brand. A donation to a scam, or even an employee giving through your company name, can drag your brand into a fraud story.

Worse: The same tactics fraudsters use in charity scams – urgency, impersonation, phony websites – are also used to target businesses. That overlaps with phishing, invoice fraud and wire transfer scams. Teaching your team to spot fake fundraisers is training them to spot fraudulent tactics across the board.

How To Protect Your Business (And Your Goodwill)

These steps help ensure your giving is safe and smart:

- **Donation Policy For Your Business:** Define how and where the company will donate, and put approval thresholds in place.
- **Employee Awareness:** Educate your team on fake fundraisers, urging them to double-check and verify before donating under your company name.

- **Use Trusted Channels:** Donate via charity websites, not through random links in e-mails or social media.
- **Transparency:** If your business publicizes that it donates, it's worth verifying the charity you publicly support.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** After donating, check that funds are used as promised (many charities publish impact reports).

Keep Your Holidays Generous – Not Risky

The holidays are a chance to give back, not a season for regret. Smart checks and policies protect your money and your reputation.

Make sure your team knows how to spot these scams – whether it's a fake fundraiser, a phishing e-mail or a bogus payment request.

Because the best gift you can give your business (and your community) is trust that cannot be taken.



"I DIDN'T KNOW"

Unfortunately, That Excuse Doesn't Replenish Your Bank Account, Resolve A Data Breach Or Erase Any Fines And Lawsuits.

It's coming...

- That day a hacker encrypts critical data, rendering your systems useless...
- That day when your bank account or credit card is compromised...
- That day when your customers' private data is exposed...



Cybercriminals and hackers are constantly inventing NEW ways to infiltrate your company, steal your assets and disrupt your life. The ONLY way to STOP THEM is this:

You Must Constantly Educate Yourself On How To Protect What's Yours!

Now, for a limited time, we have the perfect way to help reduce your risk and keep you safe! Simply sign up to receive our **FREE "Cyber Surf Report"** We'll send these byte-sized quick-read tips to your e-mail inbox. Every tip is packed with a unique and up-to-date real-world solution that keeps you one step ahead of the bad guys.

Get your FREE "Cyber Surf Report" at: www.hdtech.com/cyber-surf-report

CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"All I'm saying is we could be collecting more data than just naughty and nice."

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

PART 3: FINDING AND ELIMINATING WASTE



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We previously explored the importance of creating well-defined procedures and using the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle to refine them. Today, let's take a closer look at a tool that supports the "Plan" step: **Value Stream Mapping (VSM)**.

VSM is a simple but powerful visual method for spotting waste and inefficiencies. You don't need fancy software to get started – sometimes a flowchart or even Post-It Notes on a whiteboard is enough to map out each step in your process. Once mapped, every activity can be classified into three categories:

- **Value-Added and Necessary:** Steps that directly enhance a product or service in a way customers are willing to pay for. These activities change the form, function, or quality of the output.

- **Non-Value-Added but Necessary:** Tasks like regulatory paperwork, safety checks, or quality inspections. They don't add customer value but skipping them could cause serious issues.

- **Non-Value-Added and Not Necessary (Waste):** Activities that drain time, money, and resources without benefit.

Japanese industrial engineer **Taiichi Ohno**, the father of the Toyota Production System, famously identified **seven types of waste** that appear not only in manufacturing but also in office and service processes:

1. **Transportation:** Unnecessary movement of products, materials or information between people, departments or systems.
2. **Inventory:** Stockpiled materials or information beyond what is immediately needed—tying up space and money.
3. **Motion:** Excessive or inefficient movement by people, such as searching, reaching, or walking more than necessary.
4. **Waiting:** Idle time caused by delays, bottlenecks, or dependencies.
5. **Overproduction:** Making more than the next step(or customer) needs, which often leads to excess inventory.
6. **Over-Processing:** Doing more work than required, often due to poor design, unclear requirements, or redundant steps.
7. **Defects:** Errors that result in rework, scrap, or dissatisfied customers.

It's not unusual for processes to contain **50% to 75% waste** before optimization. That's why taking the time to map **"the life of an order"** is so valuable. By clarifying how value flows (or gets stuck) through your business, you uncover hidden opportunities to reduce waste, improve efficiency, and deliver more value to your customers.

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Poly - Voyager Focus 2 Headset

Elevate your focus and productivity with the Poly Voyager Focus 2 UC headset - designed for professionals who need clear calls and all-day comfort. Featuring Bluetooth connectivity, USB-A & C compatibility, and advanced hybrid active noise canceling (ANC), this headset ensures you stay productive whether you're in the office or on the go.



With up to 19 hours of talk time, smart features like Dynamic Mute Alert and Poly Acoustic Fence technology, it's the ultimate solution for SEAMLESS collaboration on Teams, Zoom, and more. If you're in need of a new headset, or are looking to upgrade your meeting/call experience, reach out to your IT liaison or submit a ticket request!

Tool Spotlight

Strety

Strety is an officially licensed EOS® (Entrepreneurial Operating System) software platform designed to help businesses implement and manage EOS digitally.

Strety is your centralized hub, combining meeting management, project tracking, people management, and performance monitoring into one integrated solution.

Interested in discussing how Strety can help your business, or in starting your EOS journey? Then give us a call today at 877-540-1684 or put a request in with your IT Liaison.

HOLIDAY TECH ETIQUETTE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

(OR: HOW NOT TO ACCIDENTALLY RUIN SOMEONE'S DAY)

The holidays are stressful enough without technology tripping you up. Customers are trying to squeeze in last-minute errands, employees are juggling family schedules and everyone's expectations are cranked up to 11. The last thing you want is to accidentally frustrate people with avoidable tech slip-ups.

Think of this as your "Holiday Tech Manners Guide" – because nobody wants to be that business that ruins someone's Tuesday.

Update Your Online Hours (Before The First Angry Phone Call)

Picture this: A customer rushes across town during their lunch break because Google says you're open, only to find your door locked and lights off. Congratulations, you've just created someone's villain origin story.

What to update:

- **Your Google Business Profile** (the big one!)
- **Facebook, Instagram, Yelp** – anywhere customers might find you
- Your **website banner** with a friendly holiday schedule
- **Apple Maps** (yes, people actually use it)

Sample message: "Happy Holidays! We'll be closed Thursday, Nov. 28 to Sunday, Dec. 1 to spend time with family. We'll be back to regular hours Monday morning, probably with a slight turkey hangover but ready to help!"

Set Friendly Out-Of-Office Replies (That Don't Sound Like Robots)

If you're taking time off, don't leave customers in e-mail purgatory, wondering if you've disappeared into the holiday abyss. A good auto-reply is like a friendly doorman – professional but human.

Sample out-of-office message: "Thanks for reaching out! Our office is closed for Thanksgiving from Nov. 28 to Dec. 1. We'll respond as soon as we're back and caffeinated. If it's urgent, call our support line at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Wishing you and yours a wonderful holiday!"

Don't Overshare In Your "Out Of Office" (Nobody Needs Your Itinerary)

Keep it simple. Customers don't need to know that you're visiting Aunt Carol in Denver, that your office manager is flying to Cancún or that Bob from accounting is doing a "Friendsgiving potluck tour."

Besides being TMI, sharing too many details can create security risks. Stick to dates, response times and alternate contacts. Save the travel stories for social media.

Test Your Phone Systems (Before They Test Your Patience)

Holiday callers are often in a rush and already stressed. Make sure your voicemail greeting actually matches your hours and doesn't send people on a wild-goose chase.

Pro tip: Call your own number. Yes, really. You'd be surprised how many businesses have outdated greetings from 2019.

Sample voicemail: "You've reached [Business Name]. Our office is currently closed for the holiday weekend. Please leave a message and we'll return your call Monday morning. If this is urgent, press 1 to reach our on-call team. Happy Holidays, and thanks for your patience!"

Communicate Shipping Deadlines (Before The Panic Sets In)

If your business involves shipping or deliveries, communicate deadlines clearly and early. Post your "order by" dates prominently online and send reminder e-mails to customers.

Delayed packages are frustrating, but missed expectations are relationship-killers. Nobody wants to explain to their spouse why the anniversary gift is arriving in January.

The Bottom Line: Good Etiquette = Happy Customers = Good Business

Holiday tech etiquette isn't rocket science. It's about setting clear expectations, communicating like a human being and respecting your customers' time. A few quick updates can prevent a lot of frustration and keep your business reputation merry and bright.

Remember: The goal isn't just to avoid problems – it's to make your customers feel taken care of, even when you're not there.