



JOHN SCHNEIDER

Charity prevails

10 percent cut seems about par for the course

Chris Sheldon thinks I've been too hard on Events International, the professional fund-raiser based in Sarasota, Fla. Sheldon lives in East Lansing and has worked as a telemarketer for various professional fund-raisers.

Last week I quoted figures from records in the office of the Michigan Attorney General. The figures told the story of a telephone-solicitation campaign Events International conducted last year for a local non-profit group. They provided an astonishing glimpse at the economics of professional fund-raising. The two important numbers:

■ Gross revenue: \$7,150,49
 ■ Amount retained by charitable organization: \$5,638,83.

Did Sheldon dispute those figures? Did he accuse the Attorney General's office of making them up, or me of misquoting them? Nope.

Did he argue that the charitable organization in question actually got more than 10 percent? Nope.

Standard practice

Sheldon's whole point was that Events International shouldn't be singled out because a 90 percent-10 percent split is common in the realm of professional fund raising.

"A lot of groups out there are doing the same thing," he said.

Take, for example, a group for which Sheldon used to work — Midwest Publishing Inc. of Northville.

Last year Midwest conducted a statewide campaign for a group called Paralyzed Veterans. Sheldon provided the figures, which I confirmed through the Attorney General:

■ Gross revenue: \$744,855.
 ■ Amount retained by charitable organization: \$89,383.

That's a 12 percent cut for the Paralyzed Veterans.

I called Midwest Publishing to see if 88-12 was their customary arrangement. The man I spoke to said it was typical. He pointed out that his company not only did all the fund-raising for the Paralyzed Veterans, but also published the group's bi-monthly magazine. He declined to answer any further questions and refused to tell me his name.

Attorney General spokesman Chris DeWitt said the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that states can't limit a professional fund-raiser's cut.

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