

CIVIMIX™ Mondo Mondo Cookie Sale

One of the best graffiti ever, protesting school budget cuts, read; “Keep money for schools- If the Air Force wants another bomber, let them have a bake sale.” There is a sacred mythology surrounding the myriad ad-hoc non-profit public school sales campaigns that are such a part of the American landscape; everyone has at some time been a part of one in some way.

Anyone who is not bowling completely alone knows that throughout the course of a year the average middle-class citizen of this country, by virtue of his various social connections is harassed, wheedled, enjoined, pitched, hawked, and finally sold a panoply of school bake-sale cupcakes, Kiwanis boxed fruit, band candy, Catholic Church enchiladas, Methodist spaghetti, magazine subscriptions, shopping coupons, calendars, logo pencils, thin mints, Masonic pancake breakfasts, carwashes, luminarias and raffle tickets of all stripes. And that does not take into account the totally heinous chain restaurant fundraisers and direct brand named product sales that detail our kids like little corporate geeks. Now even this is relatively benign, because assuming that you are not, in fact, a totally isolated basement-dwelling pedophile, you are yourself likely to be a school child’s parent, a Rotarian, a soccer mom, and/or a communicant of the Southern Baptist Church, and thus are not only a buyer, but also a potential seller in the great cross-pollinating, civic-based, NGO, fund-raising economy.

When we think of all the time and effort spent on all the Saturday mornings dutifully manning cookie-box laden card tables in front of malls, schlepping half-bushels of rapidly rotting fruit, waving flimsy cardboard car-wash signs (sorry, but its true that cute cheerleaders in shorts get more customers than Victory Outreach dry-outs, go figure), and slopping brisket and pickles in the school gym, it just comes to one sort of naturally that there has to be a better way.

Well, there is. We are an ingenious nation (notwithstanding that all the call centers are in Bombay. I’ll bet THEY don’t do band candy) and the home of both the modern computer and time-and-

motion efficiency studies. We have the technology to do this academic/civic agora-thon in a much more effective and productive way.

Let us start with John Q. Citizen's household and apply our descriptors *vide supra*; i.e. say J. Q. or Mz Q is a member of the Rotary Club (pancake breakfast), soccer mom (fruit baskets), member of one, if not more PTA/PTO's (one of the big differences is that the PTO is enjoined from interfering in local school policy and is **specifically** relegated to fund-raising, so listen up) selling band candy, collecting old newspapers, and baking iconic cupcakes, and the Southern Baptists washing cars and cooking hot dogs and hamburgers in the church basement after Sunday Night Sodality. Add to this the Kiwanis Canned Goods Drive, the dollar-a-ticket raffle for the Kid-Who-Needs-a-Kidney, and the odd intercalated pitch from the Police Benevolent League (turn them down and see what your next rolling stop nets you. You have to believe that on the judgment calls a nice paid up sticker from the Cops and Coats and Kids campaign on the window might be the silent tie breaker, so, pay them the \$200 and get the benefit of the "just a warning this time" as well as the tax write-off, or risk still paying them the two hundred but feeling like a dick-head having to waste all day down at the Hall with the other miscreants waiting to pay the ticket). And then there are the bell ringing Santas (no doubt confusing to kids as duplicated and out of place), the Veteran's Day poppy sellers, and the plain old un-franchised rando-weirdo spare change city ghosts.

It is certainly not that the spirit of any of this is wrong. It is not the actual expense of buying, or even the time spent in the selling that one decries. And if your *kids* actually have anything to do with the selling of their goods, it may be a lesson in marketing 101.

The real objection here is the lack of organization at the meta-level. So as the alternate version, the first advance in 300 years, the Big Kahuna of Charity in mid-America, we offer the new ***Civimix System*** TM

What you ask, is Civimix? How can it bring the blessing of deadly sweat-shop efficiency to the bothersome necessity to actually "mix" with one's neighbors during prime time? Simply have every

citizen of the town fill out a brief on-line questionnaire regarding their various affiliations, kids' schools and teams, then have all the 501 C3 non-profits fill in their plans in terms of what commodity they are hawking, its wholesale cost, and the actual amount they hope to raise (including our nominal fee). And just for interest sake, what it is that these raised bucks are going for. With this information our patented Civimix™ softwear will quickly calculate first, the aggregate amount required by the whole community of organizations, and then, break out the individual organizations as to the number of units of their particular commodity they need to move. Simultaneously, we will determine the number and alternative "A", "B", and "C" spreads of those commodities that you as an individual must buy in order for all the entered organizations to go "over the top". United Way meets E-Bay. A few days after completing your survey, you will receive a print out that tells you, what particular set of dreck you need to pick up and your net net single check amount to write or Paypal to negotiate. (to our central clearing house) and then on a single, given day, at a single given location, (e.g. high-school football field, or city park) you simply show up to one massive day-long distribution frenzy. A civic Holiday. Get there early for your six orders of pancakes and sausage, and stay to watch the Pop Warner football game in the AM that the pancakes finance, then proceed to the Big Line and per your pre-paid printout pick up your 2 fruit baskets, three boxes of band candy, 12 cupcakes, a calendar, two different tee-shirts, three boxes of Girl Scout cookies, a baseball-style cap with your high-school kid's logo, and 3 dozen pencils with your youngest kid's elementary school name embossed on them, while in the meantime the various car washers are washing and waxing everything parked out in the lot. By now it is near noon and Baptist Hot Dogs hit the spot before you sit back to actually listen as the band (remember them?) actually plays a concert, marching or not, depending. By evening the Knights of Columbus spaghetti rounds out the day's menu as you listen to the massed high school choruses serenade you with the set-list for the trip-to-sing-in-Oklahoma-City that you and each and every other fellow citizen in the stands is fronting.

All done in a day. Now that's what we call rational democracy. Or micro-Babbity.