

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Direct Relief



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—Heather Bennett, Vice President for Partnerships and Philanthropy

While Direct Relief routinely responds to multiple disasters at a time, the nonprofit faced simultaneous need on a global scale as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. Thankfully, Direct Relief’s philanthropy team could rely on Blackbaud’s cloud-based solutions to support high-volume online fundraisers—including Diddy’s Team Love Dance-A-Thon—and honor donor intent with transparency through the crisis.

Direct Relief navigates complex fundraising needs, celebrity spotlight with steadfast cloud solutions.

When the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, even Direct Relief, a U.S.-based humanitarian organization responding to disaster since 1948, experienced extraordinary and sometimes surreal moments.

As the first cases were reported in January, Direct Relief delivered critical medical resources into Wuhan, China, including personal protective equipment (PPE), and considered potential scenarios if the virus spread. Once it did, Direct Relief found itself responding to unprecedented needs around the globe, and thankfully, unprecedented giving that was facilitated and supported with Blackbaud cloud-based solutions.

Direct Relief is powered by Blackbaud solutions for:

- ✓ Fundraising and relationship management
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Payment services
- ✓ Modeling and prospect research

After all, the organization has relied on Blackbaud for nearly a quarter century, and in the cloud-based era looks to mainstays such as Blackbaud Luminate Online®, which provides a flexible and reliable online donation solution, and Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge NXT® for fundraising transparency to make certain financial donations are handled as the donor intends.

“Direct Relief is deeply grateful to Blackbaud for ensuring that our technology backbone for philanthropic efforts is robust and scalable,” said Heather Bennett, Direct Relief’s vice president for partnerships and philanthropy. “Blackbaud’s commitment ensures that the extraordinary generosity from individuals and institutions to help keep healthcare workers safe is immediately put to use to help those who help others.”

Tracking Diddy’s Team Love Dance-A-Thon

Then there was the phone call from Sean “Diddy” Combs on a late Friday afternoon in April. The executive rapper wanted to do a 12-hour Team Love Dance-A-Thon on Instagram to benefit Direct Relief and asked for a special donation landing page on the Direct Relief site that weekend.



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“We were floored,” Bennett admitted, though her team quickly recovered. “We thought about it for a minute and said [Blackbaud] Luminate Online can make that happen. So we built a landing page through Luminate where all of Diddy’s fans could go and donate to support Direct Relief through his cause, and then we could track back to him exactly how much his efforts were raising.”

“We’ve got this,” the team’s Blackbaud account executive assured Bennett, and the promise held true.

Diddy and his kids danced virtually with A-list celebrities through the day, doing the Toosie Slide with Drake and even welcoming Diddy’s famous ex Jennifer Lopez and her new guy, baseball legend Alex Rodriguez, as the donation total climbed. The Dance-A-Thon landing page held up even in the busiest moments of giving, and with Blackbaud Luminate Online, Direct Relief’s philanthropy team could add in offline donations, including \$2 million from Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. In the end, Diddy’s Team Love Dance-A-Thon raised more than \$3.7 million.

“And because of that success, we’ve been able to build out more landing pages for celebrities,” Bennett said. That includes international pro-basketball player Jeremy Lin and music superstar DJ Khaled. “It really gives us confidence that we can set up these pages using the tools that Blackbaud has given us.”

Honoring Donor Intent with Transparency

Even before COVID-19, Direct Relief typically assisted multiple communities at a time, working with local groups to provide targeted responses, whether with daily needs or in times of disaster. In a busy hurricane season, Direct Relief might aid several storm-wracked regions at once. With Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT, Direct Relief can direct donations to different causes with ease, ensuring the organization honors the donor's intent for that gift.

"When someone gives to COVID-19 response in the United States, that's actually two specific designations for us, one for the disaster, one for the geography," Bennett offered as an example. "We are able to track that within the solution."

The seamless integration between Blackbaud Luminate Online and Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT also plays a role in Direct Relief fulfilling those promises. "It's really because of the tools that Blackbaud has provided that we've been able to do what we say we were going to do and to give that transparency back to our donors with the confidence that we're using their donations how intended."

Blackbaud has built an invaluable trust in other ways, too. "We really appreciate all the support that Blackbaud has provided to us from the software solutions to the technology to the people, and I think that's what it comes down to—the people at Blackbaud who have supported us and lent a hand."

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Direct Relief experienced unprecedented giving as COVID-19 unfolded and with Blackbaud Luminate Online created landing pages for several celebrities, including executive rapper Diddy, who put on a 12-hour Team Love Dance-A-Thon on Instagram that raised \$3.7 million. Even at the busiest moments, Blackbaud's technology stayed in step and "worked perfectly."



About Blackbaud

Leading uniquely at the intersection point of technology and social good, Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. We serve the entire social good community, which includes nonprofits, foundations, companies, education institutions, healthcare organizations, and the individual change agents who support them.