



Car buying tips useful for charity

By Rodney Pitzer

It seems to be a good time to buy a car with many dealerships making competitive offers. Consumers pay attention to the many incentives as well as a plethora of car buying advice in an effort to make a good automobile purchase; however, do donors take the same due diligent approach before they decide in a ministry to financially support? Or, are some apt to decide based on the first "sales pitch"? Perhaps we as donors can learn something from the car buying experience and apply it to giving to a worthy ministry.

In both instances, it would be wise to get information before committing your financial resources. If we were to walk onto a new car lot and consider an automobile to buy (or surf the web, find MinistryWatch.com and consider giving to a ministry), what might we look at in making a decision?

A commuter may really be interested in the most efficient automobile on the lot, so they would look at gas mileage. In general terms, cars have an engine and have an input of gasoline. Gas mileage would be calculated by using the same standard, regardless of type of vehicle, functional use, make, model, where made, who made it, or safety record. Gas mileage would indicate the vehicle's efficiency. By comparison, ministries are exempt from paying income taxes, and have inputs of donated dollars. Similarly, MinistryWatch.com's 5 Star Financial Efficiency Rating uses a standard regardless of sector, function, or values. It is a summarization of the rating system's three efficiency areas. The three efficiency areas are Fund Acquisition, Resource Allocation and Asset Utilization. Some donors may take great stock into how a ministry uses its resources, just as a car buyer may care about gas mileage. They care in how far their dollar can be stretched. **How resourceful are your dollars being used by the ministry you give to?**

A patriotic car buyer may not care about gas mileage, but wants to know, where it was made, or who made it. Some people buy cars based solely on the country it came from or the company. This would be similar to a donor's interest in the values of a ministry. **Are your beliefs as a donor reflected in the ministries you give to?**

A conscientious car buyer may only care about the need for the well-being of family and the safety record of a car (or the need of a ministry). Therefore, the Safety Rating (or needs of a ministry) would be the primary factor that would matter. **Are the ministries you give to in need of additional gifts, or have they built themselves a great nest egg that looks like a perpetual foundation that could live on investments?**

An honest car buyer may be totally turned off by the slick salesman that offered the world, but the reality in the car and deal was far from what the smooth talker implied. In a like fashion, some donors may heed the warning of MinistryWatch.com's Transparency Grade and stay away from the non-transparent ministries and gravitate to those that are truly open in deed. **Is the ministry you give to truly open and transparent, or are they experts in pushing emotional buttons in fundraising persuasion?**

Finally, a car buyer may look at just the function or type of automobile. One may want a pick-up truck, another may need to haul around a dozen people, and yet another person may want the coolest car on the block. In the same way, some people may want to give to a ministry engaged in a particular function or sector, such as evangelism, relief and development, advocacy, Christian growth or others. **What type of ministry function do you want to support?**

It takes knowledge in order to make wise giving decisions. MinistryWatch.com is one tool to use to help donors discern some of the characteristics that may help them conclude which organizations they would like to support. The site contains practical information so that you may become discerning. Wise decisions do not take shape in a vacuum. People need knowledge in order to understand. When people have understanding, they are then able to exercise wise, discerning decisions. MinistryWatch.com encourages donors to examine for themselves, understand and make discerning giving decisions.

Donor Value Questions

- Does the ministry represent your values?
- How is the organization "Christian?"
- Is it Christian in name only?
- Do they just market to Christians?
- Do they evangelize?
- What is their message?
- Do they teach?
- What do they teach?
- How do their theological underpinnings determine their actions?
- Have they strayed from theological beginnings?
- Are their motivations based on a theological premise?
- Do they have a statement of faith or a creed?
- What do they say or not say about God?
- Is it important that the organization is pro-life?
- Is it important how they define family?
- Are denominational connections important?
- Is the organization in fact what it says it is and is it doing what it claims? What are the fruits of their labor? Is the organization just all talk or are they accomplishing great benefits to society?

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Awana Clubs International

By Andy Preslar & Rodney Pitzer



Whole-Hearted Ministry

Awana Clubs International is an evangelical Christian ministry which develops and distributes children's and teens' ministry programs and materials. Awana Clubs are designed to be implemented by local churches. The purpose of the clubs is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to unsaved children and youth, and to get those who believe involved in Bible study and Bible memorization, Awana's hallmark. Older children and teens are also given the resources, guidance, and opportunities to develop leadership skills and to become involved in ministry projects. As an extension of its Clubs program, Awana provides member churches with opportunities to participate in Awana summer camps, leadership training conferences, and short-term missions trips.

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Awana

Transparency Grade

A

Awana demonstrates superior transparency and openness.

5 Star Financial Efficiency Ratings

☆☆☆

Awana is able to accomplish its mission with a relatively average investment in fundraising, administration, and infrastructure.

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Awana takes seriously the importance of training and encouraging Awana leaders in their churches. They have a stake in their spiritual success. A number of churches do not utilize or only partially utilize uniforms and award systems. As a servant to churches it is never Awana's intention to police or govern a church. They see each church as owning, molding, and managing their Awana ministry in a way that best works for them within the culture and socio-economic limitations of their communities. The average cost per clubber for nine months of trained, adult supervision is around \$30.00. Comparing this to Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, Karate, Baseball, Hockey, swim team, and hundreds of other programs, it becomes quite evident that Awana is one of the few still under \$100.00 annually for each child participant. Awana enjoys tremendous popularity among conservative, Bible-believing churches. Awana now serves churches from 88 American denominations. Awana serves more than 15,000 churches in 114 countries.

Part of Awana's appeal, no doubt, is that it provides churches with a specific, integrated, pre-developed plan for doing children's and youth ministries. If you are not sure how to get a youth program started, Awana can provide the blueprint and the materials to get going. Don't know how to teach Bible concepts to six year olds? Awana has proven methods and materials. Furthermore, Awana encourages adults to get involved in ministry. Someone who might not know how to go about preparing a Bible lesson may find that Awana curriculum and leader's manuals provide the "jumpstart" they need to take an active hand. The leadership training available through Awana includes step-by-step leader's guides to be used in weekly Club meetings, director's guides, which contain basic information on running a Club, and leadership training conferences held throughout the country.

Awana is a performance-oriented program. Awana games and Bible studies focus upon measurable achievement, with children being publicly awarded for success. Inter-church competitions such as Awana Olympics and Bible knowledge quizzes ensure that the competitive spirit extends into the larger church community. This approach undoubtedly encourages learning and memorization. It also promotes interest and enthusiasm in Awana games. Clubs are, by anyone's standards, action-packed. By taking a "fun approach . . . to the serious calling of shaping young people's lives," clubs give thousands of children and teens all across the world a unique opportunity to hear the Gospel and to grow in their knowledge of God's word, which is what Awana is all about.

Children's Ministries

Awana's children's ministries program are comprised of three distinct clubs. Awana has developed a different set of curriculum, activities, and goals for each group, but each with the same overall objective: helping children "to know, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ."

Cubbies. This is Awana's pre-school division. The purpose of the Cubbies program is to introduce very young children to the Good News about salvation in Jesus Christ. The "Cubbies" learn Bible lessons, presented by means of puppets and picture books (featuring animal characters), and participate in simple games and crafts. Some Bible memorization is incorporated into the Cubbies program.

Sparks. This is the kindergarten through second grade division. The Sparks program, like Cubbies, is Gospel oriented. "Sparks," however, explore more Bible truths than the younger group. They are introduced

to basic Bible themes, Bible memorization is increased, and achievement in lessons and games is recognized by various awards.

Truth and Training (T&T). The T&T division is for children in the third through the sixth grades. T&T is more discipleship oriented than Sparks. The children's handbooks cover much of the same ground as in the younger division, but on a deeper level. The Bible-centered curriculum is designed to encourage group interaction. Children in the T&T program are required to memorize 310 verses over the course of the year. They also learn dozens of Scripture lessons and participate in a ministry project.

Teen Ministries

Awana's teen programs differ somewhat from the children's programs, partly by being more in-depth, and partly by focusing more upon specific life issues and building character and leadership qualities. But the greatest difference, at least for the Club leaders, is that Awana allows churches much more flexibility in implementing the teen programs. Because of the unique challenges posed in teen ministries, Awana has designed these programs to be more adaptable to the needs of particular churches.

Trek. The Jr. Varsity division of Awana is designed to help seventh and eighth graders begin to learn how to deal with "real life" issues from a biblical perspective. The JV program reaches out to young people on three levels: (1) Come see – which is an invitation to the unsaved, (2) Come follow – an invitation to saved teenagers to grow in the faith, and (3) Come serve – an invitation to spiritually maturing young people to avail themselves of special leadership training.

Journey. This is the high school (9th – 12th grades) division of Awana. The Varsity program seeks to show young people that the Christian walk is a life-adventure. Bible lessons are designed to be energetic, highly applicable, and thought-provoking. For example, Varsity materials which guide students through the book of Romans help to bridge the supposed gap between theological issues and the lives of modern youths by breaking Romans down into manageable sections and assigning each section a title with which the young people can readily identify. Thus, the lesson on Romans 7 is called, "The Real World," and the lesson on Romans 8, "The Real Solution." As with the JV division, Varsity provides students with leadership training and ministry opportunities, including one-time ministry projects, short-term missions trips, and chances to work as an assistant leader in the children's divisions.

Camp Ministry

Awana Camps are extensions of Awana Clubs. The opportunity to attend camp is based upon achievements in the clubs. Camps are week-long events scheduled during the months of summer. The emphasis is on fun, friendships, and faithful counselors who help children and young people to grow spiritually. Awana camps are held at multiple sites in every major geographic region of the U. S., and are divided according to age group.

Missionary-in-Training

Awana's missionary training program (Missionary-in-Training) allows young people and married couples from Awana churches to experience hands-on missionary work in a location away from home. Before embarking on an Awana-sanctioned missions trip, students and leaders must first complete a five-day training course referred to as "boot camp." Once each member of the team has completed the training, there are three levels at which churches can become involved in Awana missions: a short-term trip in the U.S. (e.g., to minister in urban settings or other places where support is needed), a 7-10 day trip to a foreign missions site, or a two to three week trip to a foreign missions site.

Organizational Details

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Federal Law	EIN: 36-2428692 Tax-Exempt Tax Deductible
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Worldwide Ministry

Awana Clubs is not just a U. S. phenomena. Awana has been implemented internationally in 3,000 locations in 114 countries. The keys to Awana's international growth are planning, partnership, training, and financial support. As regards planning, Awana has adopted an aggressive mission of quadrupling its international church base over a five-year period. To this end, Awana works with several partner ministries, such as Child Evangelism Fellowship, Global Missions Fellowship, and New Tribes Missions, to connect with children worldwide. Awana provides foreign churches with the "necessary materials to build a comprehensive youth program." Awana missionaries and volunteers then go overseas to train national Awana leaders and help them to implement the programs. Because many foreign churches lack the funds to pay for materials and training, Awana needs the support of its U.S. churches. It raises this support in a variety of ways, including sponsorship programs such as "Adopt-a-Club," in which an Awana church in the U.S. agrees to provide the monthly support needed to fund an Awana Club in a foreign church. Opportunities to give to Awana Clubs are made available via its website. Member churches, in addition to purchasing products and paying annual fees, often choose to financially support Awana missionaries and make general contributions to Awana.



Contact Us

MinistryWatch Direct aims to spur donors to examine ministries and make discerning giving decisions.

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