A system and method is disclosed for conducting a raffle. In an embodiment, the method includes providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers that are sold over a communication network in exchange for donations. In particular, credit card information is received over the communication network from at least one purchaser of the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers. Moreover, a fund is generated comprising a portion of the donations. A winner is selected from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers wherein the fund is distributed to a charitable organization via a credit authorization.
FIG. 3
FIG. 4
Events
Mission
Services
Charities
News
Contact Us

• Shopping Cart
• My Account
• Customer Service
• Sign-Up for Info

Charity 1 Heading
Charity 1 Upcoming Raffle Description Text

Pot $0.00
Price $5.00
Starting 5.1.2008
Drawing 6.1.2008

Charity 2 Heading
Charity 2 Description Text

Pot $310.00
Price $5.00
Starting 3.22.2008
Drawing 6.22.2008

Charity 3 Heading
Charity 3 Closed Raffle Description Text

Pot $3,260.00
Price $5.00
Starting 3.1.2008
Drawing 4.1.2008
Upcoming Events

- Charity 1 Heading

April 2008 Events

Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa
1  2  3  4  5
6  7  8  9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30

- Events Starting
- Events Drawing
- Events Ongoing

May 2008 Events

Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa
1  2  3
4  5  6  7  8  9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31

- Events Starting
- Events Drawing
- Events Ongoing

Search Charities

Charity or Event

GO

FIG. 5(B)
Mission

Text Regarding Mission of Raffle Service Provider
Our Mission

Continuation of Text Regarding Mission of Raffle Service Provider

FIG. 6(B)
Text Regarding Raffle Service Provider System And Steps For A Charity To Get Started Using The Services Of The Raffle Service Provider
Licensing Options

Text Regarding Licensing Options Through Various Local Governments

Web

Text Regarding Raffle Event Webpage(s)
Development And Steps Used In Purchasing Raffle Tickets From The Webpage(s)

FIG. 7(B)
Selecting Winners

Text Regarding Raffle Event Deadline/Winners and Administrative Reporting

Prizes & Fees

Text Regarding How Money Received From Raffle Is Split Between Raffle Service Provider, Raffle Winner(s) and Charity

FIG. 7(C)
Pool Raffling System

Text Regarding Option Of Pooling Various Charity Raffles

Search Charities  Charity or Event  GO

FIG. 7(D)
FIG. 8(A)

Sort By [Active Events] ▼ Go

Charity 1 Header

Charity 1 Logo

Description of Charity 1

Charity 2 Header

Charity 2 Logo

Description of Charity 2
Charity 3 Header

Charity 3 Logo

Description of Charity 3

Charity 4 Header

Charity 4 Logo

Description of Charity 4

Charity 5 Header

Charity 5 Logo

Description of Charity 5

Charity 6 Header

Charity 6 Logo

Description of Charity 6

FIG. 8(B)
Description of Charity 7

Description of Charity 8

Description of Charity 9

Description of Charity 10

FIG. 8(C)
Charity 11 Header

Charity 11 Logo

Description of Charity 11

Charity 12 Header

Charity 12 Logo

Description of Charity 12

Charities with Recent Events

Charity 5

Charities with Most Events

1. Charity 7
2. Charity 6
3. Charity 2
4. Charity 4
5. Charity 11
6. Charity 1
7. Charity 5
8. Charity 12
9. Charity 3
10. Charity 8
11. Charity 10
12. Charity 9

FIG. 8(D)
News

Text for News Article Pertaining to Services Provided By Service Provider

Text for Another News Article Pertaining to Services Provided By Service Provider

FIG. 9(A)
Charities and Upcoming Events

Please take a few moments to read up on all of our wonderful Charities.

Our Charities...

View our Events page to Take Action Now!

View Events...
Sign-Up

Text Regarding Service Provider Privacy Policy And How To Ensure Receipt Of Emails From Service Provider

*Required fields bold

*First Name 
Middle Initial
*Last Name
*Address
*City
*State 
Select State... ▼
*Zip Code
*E-mail Address
Your e-mail address is your username. E-mail addresses must be confirmed.
*Phone Number
Numbers only, no dashes or spaces
Billing Info

*Required fields bold

Your card will not be charged. It is only stored for future ticket purchases.

Single Purchase

I wish to make a single purchase and not store my card information permanently

*Name On Card

*Card Type

Select Card Type...

*Card Number

Numbers only, no dashes or spaces

*Expiration Date

Select Month... Select Year...

*Security Code

Your security code is a 3 or 4 digit number located on the back of Visa, Mastercard, and Discover cards

Set Password

*Required fields bold

*Password

Case Sensitive

*Confirm Password

Sign-Up!

Search Charities

Charity or Event GO

FIG. 10(B)
Buy Tickets

Chicagoland Youth Football

Required fields bold

How Many Tickets?

Which Charity Influenced You To Buy A Ticket For This Event?

- Wildwood Park Seminoles
- Waukegan Chiefs
- Tri City Chargers
- Sandwich Indians
- Evanston Braves
- Homer Stallions

Event Info

- Pot $315.00
- Price $5.00
- Drawing 06.22.2008

Buy Tickets!

FIG. 11
Receipt

Text thanking purchaser for purchase and providing order number.

Order Information
Name: Bart Simpson
Address: 742 Evergreen Terrace
City: Springfield
State: IL
Zip: 60067

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicagoland Youth Football</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional text providing raffle provider's advertising regarding other services/raffles offered and links thereto, and stating that purchase receipt has been emailed to purchaser.
SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CONDUCTING A RAFFLE

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/126,146, filed on May 1, 2008, and incorporated herein in, by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to fundraising and gaming, and more particularly to a system and method for fundraising and gaming via a raffle.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Typically, in a raffle, a lottery is conducted wherein the prize is won by one of numerous persons buying chances. Each chance is sold as a paper ticket having a unique identification number associated with it, which is also printed on a paper ticket stub. Accordingly, one or more winning tickets are selected by randomly drawing one or more paper tickets stubs, and wherein the winner(s) of the raffle receive a portion of the total monies received from the persons buying the chances.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] A system and method is provided for conducting a raffle. In an embodiment, the method includes providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers that are sold over a communication network in exchange for donations. In particular, credit card information is received over the communication network from at least one purchaser of the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers. Moreover, a fund is generated comprising a portion of the donations. A winner is selected from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers wherein the fund is distributed to a charitable organization via a credit authorization.

[0005] In another embodiment, a method is provided that includes providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers that are sold over a communications network in exchange for donations. A fund or pot is generated comprising a portion of the donations. The winner of the raffle is selected from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers. Furthermore, information is provided over the communication network regarding the fund wherein the information is updated on a real time basis.

[0006] In yet another embodiment, a method is provided that includes providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers that are offered for sale over a communication network from a single website in exchange for donations. As such, a fund is generated comprising a portion of the donations, and a winner of the fund is selected from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers. Moreover, an offer to sell unique raffle entry numbers for another charitable event is also provided from the website.

[0007] In still yet another embodiment, a method is provided that includes providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers that are sold in exchange for donations. A portion of the sales are used to generate a fund that is distributed to a selected winner and a charitable organization based, at least in art, on a selection made by at least one purchaser.

[0008] Other embodiments, systems, methods, features, and advantages of the present invention will be, or will become, apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art upon examination of the following drawings and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, features, and advantages be within the scope of the present invention, and can be protected by the accompanying claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The invention may be better understood with reference to the following drawings. The components in the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. In the drawings, like reference numbers designate corresponding parts throughout.

[0010] FIG. 1 is a simplified block diagram of a system for accessing, creating, managing, hosting and conducting a raffle in accordance with the present invention;

[0011] FIG. 2 is a simplified block diagram of an architecture for a raffle system depicting the relationship of the system layers involved in the implementation of FIG. 1;

[0012] FIG. 3 is a simplified block diagram of a computer system that can be used in conjunction with the systems of FIG. 1 and FIG. 2;

[0013] FIG. 4 is an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a home or main webpage;

[0014] FIGS. 5(A) and 5(B) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via an events webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0015] FIGS. 6(A) and 6(B) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a mission webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0016] FIGS. 7(A)-7(D) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a services webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0017] FIGS. 8(A)-8(D) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a charities webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0018] FIGS. 9(A) and 9(B) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a news webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0019] FIGS. 10(A) and 10(B) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a sign-up webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0020] FIG. 11 is an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a buy tickets webpage linked to, among other pages, the home or main webpage of FIG. 4;

[0021] FIGS. 12(A) and 12(B) are an exemplary embodiment of information provided by the system of FIG. 1 via a receipt webpage linked directly or indirectly to, among other pages, the buy ticket webpage having the information depicted in FIG. 11; and,

[0022] FIG. 13 is a simplified block diagram of another embodiment of a system for accessing, creating, managing, hosting and conducting a raffle in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0023] The following descriptions of detailed embodiments are for exemplifying the principles and advantages of
the inventions claimed herein. They are not to be taken in any way as limitations on the scope of the inventions.

[0024] Turning to FIG. 1, a block diagram 100 is provided that depicts an exemplary system environment according to an exemplary embodiment in accordance with the present invention. Block diagram 100 may include a raffle system service provider 102 coupled to a network 104 such as the Internet. In an embodiment, the system environment may be a client-server system environment. In another exemplary embodiment, the system may be an application service provider (ASP). Network 104 may in turn be coupled, in an exemplary embodiment, to one or more workstations 106 of users 108.

[0025] In an embodiment, user 108a may be referred to as an initiator. User 108b may be referred to as a beneficiary. User 108c may be referred to as an entrant 108d. User 108e may be referred to as a winner. User 108f may be referred to as a visitor. Various other users, such as, e.g., but not limited to, the browsing public may also access raffles hosted or managed on the raffle system service provider server 102.

[0026] An initiator 108a may create a raffle using the raffle system service provider 102. In one exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may pay an initiation fee to the raffle service provider 102. In another exemplary embodiment, the user 108a may create a raffle using the raffle system service provider 102, but the raffle may not begin or be publicized until the raffle system service provider 102 approves the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may select from a plurality of monetary currencies in which to conduct the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may receive preferential placement on a website for a raffle based on, e.g., but not limited to, a particular raffle initiation fee or a listing fee. In another exemplary embodiment, beneficiary 108b may receive preferential placement on a website for a raffle based on, e.g., but not limited to, a particular raffle initiation fee or a listing fee. In one exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may also be the beneficiary 108b. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may also be the raffle service provider 102. In another exemplary embodiment, initiator 108a may receive preferential placement on, e.g., but not limited to, a website based on a commission level or auction bid level. In another exemplary embodiment, initiator 108a may receive preferential placement on a website based on, e.g., but not limited to, an activity level or raffle popularity.

[0027] The terms and conditions of a particular raffle may be defined by the initiator 108a. In one exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define the number of winner(s) 108d that there may be in the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define the payout ratio split between the beneficiary 108b and the at least one winner 108d. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define the duration of the raffle drawing, which may be based on, e.g., but not limited to, reaching a threshold amount of funds raised, a fixed calendar date/time, or expiration of a period of time. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define the party or parties responsible for any administration fee, such as, e.g., but not limited to, beneficiary 108b, winner 108d, another party, and/or a split thereof. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define any bonus "odds" for early entrants 108c to the raffle or for an entry sum exceeding a particular amount. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a defines the nature of a winning prize, which in an exemplary embodiment, may be money or an object. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define a start date or time of a raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may define a cancellation term for the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, initiator 108a may send email notifications or direct links to others to draw their attention to the particular fundraising raffle campaign.

[0028] A beneficiary 108b may benefit from the revenues generated by a raffle conducted by the raffle service provider 102. In one exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may be the beneficiary 108b. In one exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may be selected by the initiator 108a. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may not be pre-determined. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may be determined by performing a task. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may be determined by placing a bid at a threshold amount. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may be determined by being selected from a list of potential beneficiaries who each may pay a price to appear on the list. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may be determined by being selected from a list of potential beneficiaries who were randomly selected. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b may pay, e.g., but not limited to, a raffle completion fee which may be a flat rate or an amount related to the total money raised in the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, there may be a plurality of beneficiaries. In another exemplary embodiment, beneficiary 108b may be selected or voted on from a list of potential beneficiaries by winner 108d or multiple winners. In another exemplary embodiment, beneficiary 108b may provide information or documentation as supporting evidence of the beneficiary’s need for the funds. In another exemplary embodiment, beneficiary 108b may be determined by conducting an additional drawing. In another exemplary embodiment, people seeking to be beneficiary 108b may bid in an auction process for the opportunity to be in a list of one or more potential beneficiaries. In another exemplary embodiment, beneficiary 108b may be selected or may be voted on by the public. In another exemplary embodiment, beneficiary 108b may send a thank you note or email to entrant 108c.

[0029] An entrant 108c may pay money or a fee to the raffle service provider 102 to enter the raffle. In one exemplary embodiment, entrant 108c may participate in a foreign currency raffle by converting the native currency of entrant 108c into the raffle currency, through the raffle system service provider 102, via an exchange rate. In another exemplary embodiment, an entrant 108c may become a beneficiary 108b or a winner 108d. In another exemplary embodiment, raffle entrants 108c may choose a list of potential beneficiaries. In another exemplary embodiment, raffle entrants 108c may vote on a plurality of potential beneficiaries, and these votes may be weighted including, e.g., but not limited to, being uniformly weighted or weighted by the entry amount paid by entrant 108c.

[0030] A winner 108d may be the winner of the raffle that may be conducted by the raffle service provider 102. In an exemplary embodiment, the winner 108d may pay money to the raffle service provider 102 to enter the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, the winner 108d may pay, e.g., but not limited to, a raffle completion fee which may be, e.g., but not limited to, a flat rate or an amount related to the total...
money raised in the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, the beneficiary 108b and winner 108d may split a raffle completion fee which may be a flat rate or an amount related to the total money raised in the raffle. In another exemplary embodiment, there may be a plurality of winners. In another exemplary embodiment, the winner or winners may select from, or a vote on, a plurality of potential beneficiaries.

[0031] According to an exemplary embodiment, the raffle service provider 102 may manage the creation, and conducting of various raffles created by initiators 108a. In one exemplary embodiment, the initiator 108a may also be the raffle service provider 102.

[0032] A visitor 108c may be a member of the public or a registered member of the raffle service provider 102. The visitor may or may not become an entrant 108c. In one exemplary embodiment, visitors may choose a list of potential beneficiaries 108b. In one exemplary embodiment, visitor 108c may view a raffle in progress and may vote for their choice of beneficiary 108b from a list of a plurality of potential beneficiaries. In another exemplary embodiment, visitor 108c may perform browse or search queries to list raffles by at least one criterion via the raffle service provider 102. In an exemplary embodiment, raffles may be searched by, e.g., but not limited to, category, initiator location, religion, race, or by any specific keyword(s). In another exemplary embodiment, visitor 108c may send an email link to notify others of a particular raffle campaign. In another exemplary embodiment, visitor 108c may become an initiator 108a, a beneficiary 108b, a winner 108d, or an entrant 108c.

[0033] FIG. 2 is a block diagram 200 illustrating an exemplary embodiment of an architecture for an exemplary raffle management system including relationships of exemplary system architecture layers involved in an exemplary implementation of raffle service provider system 102 of FIG. 1. Diagram 200 may include, in an exemplary embodiment, a hardware (HW) layer 202, an operating system (OS) 204, and one or more applications which may be application software programs such as, e.g., but not limited to, a raffle management/hosting application 206 or other applications 208.

[0034] FIG. 3 depicts an exemplary embodiment of a block diagram 300 illustrating an exemplary embodiment of a computer system 102, 106 that may be used in conjunction with any of the systems depicted in diagram 100 of FIG. 1 or hardware layer 202 of diagram 200 of FIG. 2. Further, computer system 102, 106 of block diagram 300 may be used to execute any of various methods or processes such as, e.g., but not limited to, those discussed below. FIG. 3 depicts an exemplary embodiment of a computer system 102, 106 that may be used in computing devices such as, e.g., but not limited to, client 106 and/or server 102 computing devices according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 3 depicts an exemplary embodiment of a computer system that may be used as client device 106, or a server device 102, etc. The present invention (or any part(s) or function(s) thereof) may be implemented using hardware, software, firmware, or a combination thereof and may be implemented in one or more computing systems or other processing systems. In fact, in one exemplary embodiment, the invention may be directed toward one or more computing systems capable of carrying out the functionality described herein. An example of a computer system 300 is shown in FIG. 3, depicting an exemplary embodiment of a block diagram of an exemplary computer system useful for implementing the present invention. Specifically, FIG. 3 illustrates an example computer 300, which in an exemplary embodiment may be, e.g., (but not limited to) a personal computer (PC) system running an operating system such as, e.g., (but not limited to) WINDOWS MOBILE for POCKET PC, or MICROSOFT WINDOWS NT/98/2000/ XP/CE, etc. available from MICROSOFT Corporation of Redmond, Wash., U.S.A., SOLARIS from SUN Microsystems of Santa Clara, Calif., U.S.A., OS/2 from IBM Corporation of Armonk, N.Y., U.S.A., Mac/OS from APPLE Corporation of Cupertino, Calif., U.S.A., etc., or any of various versions of UNIX (a trademark of the Open Group of San Francisco, Calif., USA) including, e.g., LINUX, HPUX, IBM AIX, and SCO/UNIX, etc. However, the invention may not be limited to these platforms. Instead, the invention may be implemented on any appropriate computer system running any appropriate operating system. In one exemplary embodiment, the present invention may be implemented on a computer system operating as discussed herein. An exemplary computer system, computer 300 is shown in FIG. 3. Other components of the invention, such as, e.g., (but not limited to) a computing device, a communications device, a telephone, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a personal computer (PC), a handheld PC, client workstations, thin clients, thick clients, proxy servers, network communication servers, remote access devices, client computers, server computers, routers, web servers, data, media, audio, video, telephony or streaming technology servers, etc., may also be implemented using a computer such as that shown in FIG. 3.

[0035] The computer system 300 may include one or more processors, such as, e.g., but not limited to, processor(s) 302. The processor(s) 302 may be coupled or connected to a communications infrastructure 304 (e.g., but not limited to, a communications bus, a backplane, a mother board, a cross-over bar, or network, etc.) Variouls software embodiments may be described in terms of this exemplary computer system. After reading this description, it will become apparent to a person skilled in the relevant art(s) how to implement the invention using other computer systems and/or architectures.

[0036] Computer system 300 may include a display interface 318 that may forward, e.g., but not limited to, graphics, text, and other data, etc., from the communication infrastructure 304 (or from a frame buffer, etc., not shown) for display on the display unit 320.

[0037] The computer system 300 may also include, e.g., but may not be limited to, a main memory 306, which may include, e.g., but not limited to, random access memory (RAM), and a secondary memory 308, etc. The secondary memory 308 may include, for example, (but not limited to) a storage device 310 such as, e.g., but not limited to, a hard disk drive and/or a removable storage drive 312, representing, e.g., but not limited to, a floppy diskette drive, a magnetic tape drive, an optical disk drive, a compact disk drive CD-ROM, a magneto-optical (MO) drive, a digital versatile disk (DVD), etc. The removable storage drive 312 may, e.g., but not limited to, read from and/or write to a removable storage unit 314 in a well known manner. Removable storage media unit 314, may also be called a program storage device or a computer program product, and may represent, e.g., but not limited to, a floppy disk, magnetic tape, optical disk, CD-ROM disk, a MO device, a DVD disk, etc. which may be read from and written to by removable storage device 312. As will be appreciated, the removable storage unit 314 may include a computer usable storage medium having stored therein computer software and/or data.
In alternative exemplary embodiments, secondary memory 308 may include other similar devices for allowing computer programs or other instructions to be loaded into computer system 300. Such devices may include, for example, a removable storage unit 314 and an interface (not labeled). Examples of such may include a program cartridge and cartridge interface (such as, e.g., but not limited to, those found in video game devices), a removable memory chip (such as, e.g., but not limited to, an erasable programmable read only memory (EPROM), or programmable read only memory (PROM) and associated socket, and other removable storage units 314 and interfaces, which may allow software and data to be transferred from the removable storage unit 314 to computer system 300.

Computer 300 may also include, e.g., but not limited to, an input device 316 such as, e.g., (but not limited to) a mouse or other pointing device such as a digitizer, and a keyboard or other data entry device (none of which are labeled). Computer 300 may also include, e.g., but not limited to, other output devices, such as, e.g., (but not limited to) display 320, and output subsystem display interface 318.

Computer 300 may also include, e.g., but not limited to, an input/output (I/O) system 322 such as, e.g., (but not limited to) a communications interface, a cable and communications path, (all not shown) etc., as well as I/O devices 324, 326, 328, for example. These devices 324, 326, 328, may include, e.g., but not limited to, a network interface card, and modems. The communications interface may allow software and data to be transferred between computer system 300 and external devices over a network 104, as shown. Examples of the communications interface may include, e.g., but may not be limited to, a modem, a network interface (such as, e.g., an Ethernet card), a communications port, a Personal Computer Memory Card International Association (PCMCIA) or PC-Card slot and card, etc. Software and data transferred via communications interface may be in the form of signals which may be electronic, electromagnetic, optical or other signals capable of being received by communications interface. These signals may be provided to communications interface via, e.g., but not limited to, a communications path (e.g., but not limited to, a channel). This channel may carry signals, which may include, e.g., but not limited to, propagated signals, and may be implemented using, e.g., but not limited to, wire or cable, fiber optics, a telephone line, a cellular link, an radio frequency (RF) link and other communications channels, etc.

In this document, the terms “computer program medium” and “computer readable medium” may be used to generally refer to media such as, e.g., but not limited to removable storage device 314, a hard disk installed in storage device 310, and signals, etc. These computer program products may provide software to computer system 300. The invention may be directed to such computer program products.

References to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” “example embodiment,” “various embodiments,” etc., may indicate that the embodiment(s) of the invention so described may include a particular feature, structure, or characteristic, but not every embodiment necessarily includes the particular feature, structure, or characteristic. Further, repeated use of the phrase “in one embodiment,” or “in an exemplary embodiment,” do not necessarily refer to the same embodiment, although they may.

In the following description and claims, the terms “coupled” and “connected,” along with their derivatives, may be used. It should be understood that these terms are not intended as synonyms for each other. Rather, in particular embodiments, “connected” may be used to indicate that two or more elements are in direct physical or electrical contact with each other. “Coupled” may mean that two or more elements are in direct physical or electrical contact. However, “coupled” may also mean that two or more elements are not in direct contact with each other, but yet still co-operate or interact with each other.

An algorithm is described directly or indirectly herein, and generally, considered to be a self-consistent sequence of acts or operations leading to a desired result. These include physical manipulations of physical quantities. Usually, though not necessarily, these quantities take the form of electrical or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated. It has proven convenient at times, principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to these signals as bits, values, elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers or the like. It should be understood, however, that all of these and similar terms are to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient labels applied to these quantities.

Unless specifically stated otherwise, as apparent from the following discussions, it is appreciated that throughout the specification discussions utilizing terms such as “processing,” “computing,” “calculating,” “determining,” or the like, refer to the action and/or processes of a computer or computing system, or similar electronic computing device, that manipulate and/or transform data represented as physical, such as electronic, quantities within the computing system’s registers and/or memories into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computing system’s memories, registers or other such information storage, transmission or display devices.

In a similar manner, the term “processor” may refer to any device or portion of a device that processes electronic data from registers and/or memory to transform that electronic data into other electronic data that may be stored in registers and/or memory. A “computing platform” may comprise one or more processors.

Embodiments of the present invention may include apparatuses for performing the operations herein. An apparatus may be specially constructed for the desired purposes, or it may comprise a general purpose device selectively activated or reconfigured by a program stored in the device.

Embodiments of the invention may be implemented in one or a combination of hardware, firmware, and software. Embodiments of the invention may also be implemented as instructions stored on a machine-readable medium, which may be read and executed by a computing platform to perform the operations described herein. A machine-readable medium may include any mechanism for storing or transmitting information in a form readable by a machine (e.g., a computer). For example, a machine-readable medium may include read only memory (ROM); random access memory (RAM); magnetic disk storage media; optical storage media; flash memory devices; electrical, optical, acoustical or other form of propagated signals (e.g., carrier waves, infrared signals, digital signals, etc.), and others.

Computer programs (also called computer control logic), may include object oriented computer programs, and
may be stored in main memory 306 and/or the secondary memory 308 and/or removable storage media units 314, also called computer program products. Such computer programs, when executed, may enable the computer system 300 to perform the features of the present invention as discussed herein. In particular, the computer programs, when executed, may enable the processor 302 to provide a method to resolve conflicts during data synchronization according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Accordingly, such computer programs may represent controllers of the computer system 300.

[0051]In another exemplary embodiment, the invention may be directed to a computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium having control logic (computer software) stored therein. The control logic, when executed by the processor 302, may cause the processor 302 to perform the functions of the invention as described herein. In another exemplary embodiment where the invention may be implemented using software, the software may be stored in a computer program product and loaded into computer system 300 using, e.g., but not limited to, removable storage drive 312, storage device 310 or communications interface, etc. The control logic (software), when executed by the processor 302, may cause the processor 302 to perform the functions of the invention as described herein. The computer software may run as a standalone software application program running atop an operating system, or may be integrated into the operating system.

[0052]In yet another embodiment, the invention may be implemented primarily in hardware using, for example, but not limited to, hardware components such as application specific integrated circuits (ASICs), or one or more state machines, etc. Implementation of the hardware state machine as to perform the functions described herein will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s).

[0053]In another exemplary embodiment, the invention may be implemented primarily in firmware.

[0054]In yet another exemplary embodiment, the invention may be implemented using a combination of any of, e.g., but not limited to, hardware, firmware, and software, etc.

[0055]Exemplary embodiments of the invention may also be implemented as instructions stored on a machine-readable medium, which may be read and executed by a computing platform to perform the operations described herein. A machine-readable medium may include any mechanism for storing or transmitting information in a form readable by a machine (e.g., a computer). For example, a machine-readable medium may include read only memory (ROM); random access memory (RAM); magnetic disk storage media; optical storage media; flash memory devices; electrical, optical, acoustical or other form of propagated signals (e.g., carrier waves, infrared signals, digital signals, etc.), and others.

[0056]The exemplary embodiment of the present invention makes reference to wired, or wireless networks. Wired networks include any of a wide variety of well known means for coupling voice and data communications devices together. A brief discussion of various, exemplary wireless network technologies that may be used to implement the embodiments of the present invention are discussed. The examples are non-limited. Exemplary wireless network types may include, e.g., but not limited to, code division multiple access (CDMA), spread spectrum wireless, orthogonal frequency division multiplexing (OFDM), 1G, 2G, 3G, 4G wireless, Bluetooth, Infrared Data Association (IrDA), shared wireless access protocol (SWAP), “wireless fidelity” (Wi-Fi), WIMAX, and other IEEE standard 802.11-compliant wireless local area network (LAN), 802.16-compliant wide area network (WAN), and ultrawideband (UWB), etc.

[0057]Bluetooth is an emerging wireless technology promising to unify several wireless technologies for use in low power radio frequency (RF) networks.

[0058]IrDA is a standard method for devices to communicate using infrared light pulses, as promulgated by the Infrared Data Association from which the standard gets its name. Since IrDA devices use infrared light, they may depend on being in line of sight with each other.

[0059]The exemplary embodiments of the present invention may make reference to WLANs. Examples of a WLAN may include a shared wireless access protocol (SWAP) developed by Home radio frequency (HomeRF), and wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi), a derivative of IEEE 802.11, advocated by the wireless ethernet compatibility alliance (WECA). The IEEE 802.11 wireless LAN standard refers to various technologies that adhere to one or more of various wireless LAN standards. An IEEE 802.11 compliant wireless LAN may comply with any of one or more of the various IEEE 802.11 wireless LAN standards including, e.g., but not limited to, wireless LAN compliant with IEEE std. 802.11a, b, d or g, such as, e.g., but not limited to, IEEE std. 802.11a, b, d, and g, (including, e.g., but not limited to IEEE 802.11g-2003, etc.), etc.

[0060]FIG. 4 depicts an exemplary embodiment of general information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1, or other like electronic service provider system, to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 400 can be provided via a webpage. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 400 can serve as an index or table of contents to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102.

[0061]The information 400 can include, but is not limited to, links 402 to other associated webpages provided by the raffle service provider wherein the webpages include the information depicted in FIGS. 6-11. Text or graphic links 404 and 408 can also be provided to specific independent or separate raffle events hosted (i.e., provided) by the service provider. One or more enlarged graphic links 410 can also be provided regarding one or more featured raffle events hosted (i.e., provided) by the service provider. A search box 412 can also be provided for a user to enter text to search for a charity having a raffle event hosted (i.e., provided) by the service provider. By clicking on button 414, the service provider, via the computer system, electronically conducts the search and returns the search results to the user via a webpage.

[0062]As conventionally used by those having ordinary skill in the art, the term link as used herein is a graphic or text provided on a webpage wherein, by the user selecting or clicking on the graphic or text, another webpage is displayed that is linked or associated with the selected graphic or text. For instance, by a user selecting link 404, the information depicted in FIG. 11 is provided on another webpage. Similarly, by a user selecting link 408, associated information is provided to the user on another webpage.

[0063]FIGS. 5(A) and 5(B) depict an exemplary embodiment of events information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 500 can be provided via a webpage and includes events (i.e., raffles) hosted (i.e., provided) by the service provider. Preferably, but not necessarily,
the webpage information 500 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4 and 6-11.

[0064] The information 500 can include, but is not necessarily limited to, statistics 502 regarding each raffle event hosted (i.e., provided) by the service provider. The statistics 502 can include, but are not necessarily limited to, the value of the pot or ticket purchases for each event, the price of each raffle ticket for each event, the date when the raffle starts and the date when the raffle drawing is scheduled to occur for each event. Preferably, but not necessarily, the amount of the pot is updated in real-time. Stated another way, the amount of the pot for each event is electronically computed, via the computer system, to reflect its increase in value immediately after each raffle ticket purchase.

[0065] FIGS. 6(A) and 6(B) depict an exemplary embodiment of mission information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 600 can be provided via a webpage and includes the mission of the service provider. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 600 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-5 and 7-11.

[0066] FIGS. 7(A)-7(D) depict an exemplary embodiment of services information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 700 can be provided via a webpage and includes a listing and description of at least some of the services offered and provided by the service provider. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 700 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-6 and 8-11.

[0067] FIGS. 8(A)-8(D) depict an exemplary embodiment of charities information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 800 can be provided via a webpage and includes a listing of charities offering or participating in a raffle via the service provider. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 800 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-7 and 9-11.

[0068] FIGS. 9(A) and 9(B) depict an exemplary embodiment of news information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 900 can be provided via a webpage and includes news items pertaining to the raffle services, clients and raffles provided via the service provider. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 900 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-8 and 10-1.

[0069] Figs. 10(A) and 10(B) depict an exemplary embodiment of sign-up information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 1000 can be provided via a webpage and includes fields for a user to enter information for registering to purchase raffle tickets. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 1000 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-9 and 11.

[0070] FIG. 11 depicts an exemplary embodiment of buy tickets information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 1100 can be provided via a webpage and includes fields for a user to enter information for purchasing raffle tickets. In an embodiment, a box 1102 is provided wherein a user can enter the number of raffle tickets to be purchased. Conventional radio buttons 1104 are also provided for the user to select from. Based upon the user's selection, the funds provided (i.e., donated) by the user are electronically calculated and distributed to the selected charitable organization(s) based upon the portion of the funds remaining after the service provider and raffle winner are paid. The funds can be distributed via a credit authorization to the charitable organization(s) wherein the raffle service provider 102 electronically credits a bank, credit, or other like account of the charitable organization in a conventional manner over the communication network by using computer system 300 (FIG. 3).

[0071] Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 1100 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-11. Further, button 1106 is linked, directly or indirectly, to a webpage having the information of FIG. 12. Therefore, after the user selects the number of tickets to purchase and how the funds are to be distributed, the user clicks on button 1106.

[0072] FIGS. 12(A) and 12(B) depict an exemplary embodiment of receipt information provided by the raffle service provider 102 of FIG. 1 to one or more users 108 of FIG. 1. In an embodiment, the information 1200 can be provided via a webpage and a graphical representation of a raffle ticket and a raffle entry number(s) 1202 associated with the ticket(s) purchased by a user. Preferably, but not necessarily, the webpage information 1200 is linked to other documents or files stored and provided by the raffle service provider 102 such as, but not limited to, webpages containing the information and links of FIGS. 4-11.

[0073] FIG. 13 depicts another embodiment of a system for accessing, creating, managing, hosting and conducting a raffle in accordance with the present invention. The system 1300 includes: a computer system 1302 having software for generating raffle tickets; kiosks or computers 108 for purchasing tickets; Internet service to allow purchases through the Internet, televisions, texting or other such remote terminals 1304; and a display 1302 to show the amount of the pot wherein, in an embodiment, the display is mounted in a casino.

[0074] In an embodiment, the system 1300 is similar to a conventional raffle having a split the pot theme wherein players purchase a ticket and at the designated time a number is drawn and the winner keeps half of the pot and the house keeps the other half. Software similar to that used in the system previously described can be used by a casino to run the game inside the casino.

[0075] In the casino, additional prizes can be added such as a chance for a free night at the hotel, free dinner, or the like, to help entice persons to play. Players can be asked to buy a
ticket upon check in. Players could also purchase tickets via their laptops, blackberries or tv’s in their rooms. On the casino floor kiosks or computers could also print tickets. In an embodiment, but not necessarily, hotels would have an 11:00 p.m. (or other designated time) split the pot drawing party, wherein the winning number would be drawn as well as consolation prizes.

It should be emphasized that the above-described embodiments of the present invention, particularly, any “preferred” embodiments, are possible examples of implementations merely set forth for a clear understanding of the principles for the invention. Many variations and modifications may be made to the above-described embodiment(s) of the invention without substantially departing from the spirit and principles of the invention. All such modifications are intended to be included herein within the scope of this disclosure and the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising the steps of:
   (a) providing, via an electronic service provider system, a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers;
   (b) electronically selling the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers over a communication network in exchange for donations;
   (c) electronically receiving credit card information over the communication network from at least one purchaser of the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers;
   (d) electronically generating a fund comprising a portion of the donations;
   (e) electronically selecting a winner from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers; and,
   (f) electronically distributing at least a portion of the fund to a charitable organization via a credit authorization.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of providing information over the communication network regarding the fund wherein the information is updated on a real time basis.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps selling the unique raffle entry numbers from a website and offering to sell unique raffle entry numbers for another charitable event from the same website.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the fund distribution is based, at least in part, on a selection made by at least one purchaser of said unique raffle entry numbers, and one offered selection is to split the distribution evenly between two or more charities.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of providing a kiosk for selling at least a portion of the unique raffle entry numbers.

6. A method comprising the steps of:
   (a) providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers;
   (b) selling the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers over a communications network in exchange for donations;
   (c) generating a fund comprising a portion of the donations;
   (d) selecting a winner from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers; and,
   (e) providing information over the communication network regarding the fund wherein the information is updated on a real time basis.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of distributing the fund to a charitable organization via a credit authorization.

8. The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps selling the unique raffle entry numbers from a website and offering to sell unique raffle entry numbers for another charitable event from the same website.

9. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of distributing at least a portion of the fund based, at least in part, on a selection made by at least one purchaser of said unique raffle entry numbers, and one offered selection is to split the distribution evenly between two or more charities.

10. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of providing a kiosk for selling at least a portion of the unique raffle entry numbers.

11. A method comprising the steps of:
   (a) providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers;
   (b) offering to sell the unique raffle entry numbers over a communication network from a single website;
   (c) selling the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers in exchange for donations;
   (d) generating a fund comprising a portion of the donations;
   (e) selecting a winner from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers; and,
   (f) offering to sell unique raffle entry numbers for another event from the website.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of distributing the fund to a charitable organization via a credit authorization.

13. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of providing information over the communication network regarding the fund wherein the information is updated on a real time basis.

14. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of distributing at least a portion of the fund to a charitable organization based, at least in part, on a selection made by at least one purchaser of said unique raffle entry numbers, and one offered selection is to split the distribution evenly between two or more charities.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of providing a kiosk for selling at least a portion of the unique raffle entry numbers.

16. A method comprising the steps of:
   (a) providing a plurality of unique raffle entry numbers;
   (b) selling the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers in exchange for donations;
   (c) receiving a selection by at least one purchaser from the plurality of charitable organizations;
   (d) generating a fund comprising a portion of the donations;
   (e) selecting a winner from the plurality of unique raffle entry numbers; and,
   (f) distributing the fund to the plurality of charitable organizations based, at least in part, on the selection made by the at least one purchaser, and one offered selection is to split the distribution evenly between two or more charities.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of distributing the fund includes the step of crediting the account of at least one of the plurality of charitable organizations via a credit authorization.
18. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of providing information over the communication network regarding the fund wherein the information is updated on a real time basis.

19. The method of claim 16 further comprising the steps of providing a website for selling the unique raffle entry numbers and offering to sell unique raffle entry numbers for another charitable event from the same website.

20. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of providing a kiosk for selling at least a portion of the unique raffle entry numbers.

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