



To whom it may concern:

Back in the 1980s, I worked for MCI as the Chief Engineer for a proprietary electronic mail system (MCI Mail). At the same time, Gary Oppenheimer worked as an independent sales agent from a house boat in New York City helping to sell and support MCI Mail globally. He found most of the MCI Mail customers never saw the information sent by postal mail about the service and soon realized there was a need for a better way to communicate with its MCI Mail customers. He solved the problem by creating the first email newsletter that we know of. He resolved a disconnect between MCI and its customers by connecting the dots using existing technology – MCI Mail. A simple idea but one that has since changed the way business communicates with their customers.

He's done it again.

Five years ago, he became aware of the disconnect between the staggering amount of freshly harvested but not consumed food by tens of millions of growers nationwide that was being left to rot in the garden or worse, thrown away, and that tens of millions of Americans who were hungry or malnourished were left unfed. It was particularly upsetting to him that this fresh food and the need for the food were side by side in communities all across America. As a grower himself, he did not want to see the fruits of his labor wasted. Literally, especially when a neighboring family might be in desperate need of it. He solved the disconnect between the growers and America's food pantries by connecting the dots again using existing technology – the Internet. A simple idea but one that has changed the landscape of the food bank network in America and is being replicated in other countries.

His work has now made it possible for about 7,000 food pantries to get fresh food – most of the first time. The impact of this is a reduction in food waste and a dramatic improvement in the nutrition at the pantries. In hindsight this is an “anyone could have done this” solution but the reality is that no one ever had. He came up with the idea, created the solution, sought out thousands of hard to find food pantries nationwide, reached out to millions of gardeners across the country, created partnerships with government, non-profits and others, created the marketing and social media campaign and most importantly, helped America see that at least one problem could be addressed in millions of back yards rather than Washington DC. He saw the need to educate people to donate the food, encourage them to donate it and then enable them to donate it.

Then he did it.

He created an entirely new supply side channel between growers and food pantries – one that involves no logistics, no need for refrigeration or storage, and one that didn't cost the community or the country any additional money. He even included an ethical component to help prevent the potential for accidentally humiliating food recipients. And I know he isn't done with his innovative ideas yet.

In the technology world, we call this a disruptive innovation. Everyone else just calls it wonderful.

When first apprised of this idea, Google recognized the extraordinary potential of AmpleHarvest.org – when he applied for a grant for Google Adwords only weeks after his program was created, it was approved in two weeks rather than the normal six months. Google has been providing about \$480k/year of free Adwords advertising for AmpleHarvest.org since then. Google believes in his work and so do I.

With this preamble in mind, I nominate Gary Oppenheimer for the World Food Prize, and strongly urge his selection as the worthy recipient.

Gary's AmpleHarvest.org is a terrifically positive message in a time when positive messages are in short supply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vint Cerf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Vint Cerf
VP and Chief Internet Evangelist, Google