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for a stronger third sector

Results of The Charity Digital Survey

Background to the research

As part of our Google funded programme of technology events for charities, Lasa wanted to:

- Measure how the third sector is currently engaging with digital, focusing on big picture trends
- Find out how else charities would like to use digital
- Assess the risks if this does not happen

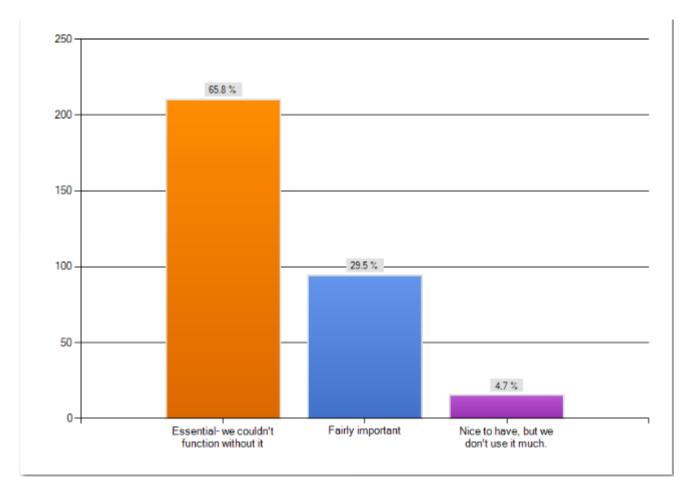The Charity Digital Survey follows our report 'Digital: what every charity leader should know,' launched in October 2012

Summary of key findings

Lasa surveyed more than 334 charity sector professionals across the UK in September 2012 and discovered that:

- 7 out of 10 charity sector professionals (78%) think charities will miss fundraising and income generating opportunities if they do not engage fully with digital.

- Over half (56%) said that their charity needed training to maximise digital's potential, with 55% stating that digital must be a 'core competency for all staff.'

- Two thirds (66%) said that digital is 'essential' to their charities, and that they couldn't 'function without it.' Yet only one in five (21%) believed that they were 'fully engaged with it as an organisation, from board members to junior staff.'

- 94% of charities surveyed use digital for communications (e.g. e-newsletters, social media and apps), 81% use it for essential infrastructure (e.g. remote office access and finance), 70% for service provision, including online information and advice, and 68% for fundraising.

- 50% of respondents described a 'lack of time to get to grips with' digital. 41% felt that there was 'a lack of understanding of digital at board/ director level.' Only 26% cited 'budget cuts' as a barrier.

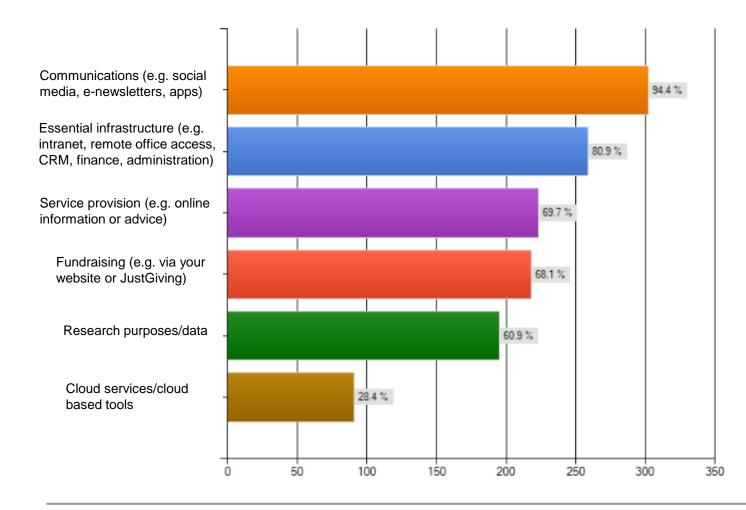- NB: All statistics have been rounded up to the nearest decimal point

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1. How important is digital to your charity?

Two thirds (66%) of respondents said that digital is 'essential' to their charities.
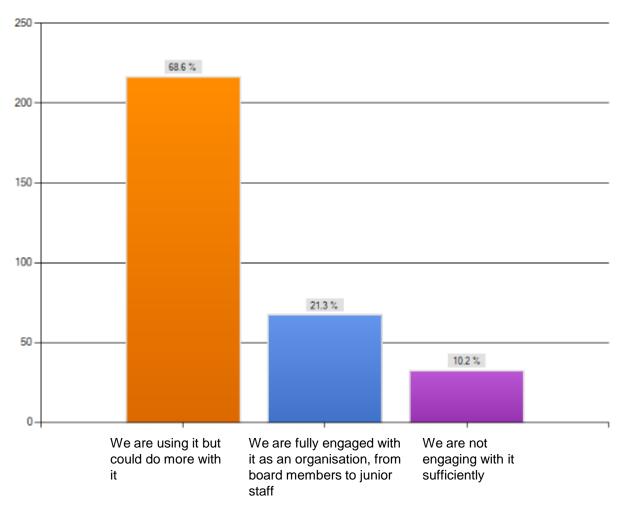
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2. What does your charity use digital technologies for?

94% of respondents said that they use digital for communications, whilst 8 out of 10 use it for essential infrastructure and 70% for service delivery.
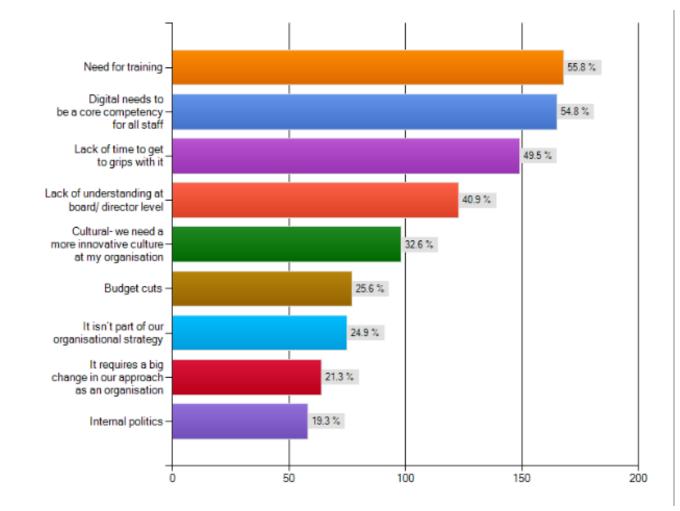
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3. How do you feel about your charity's use of digital technology?

More than two thirds (69%) of respondents said that they are using digital but could do more with it. Just 1 in 5 (21%) felt they were fully engaged with it across the organisation, from board members to junior staff.
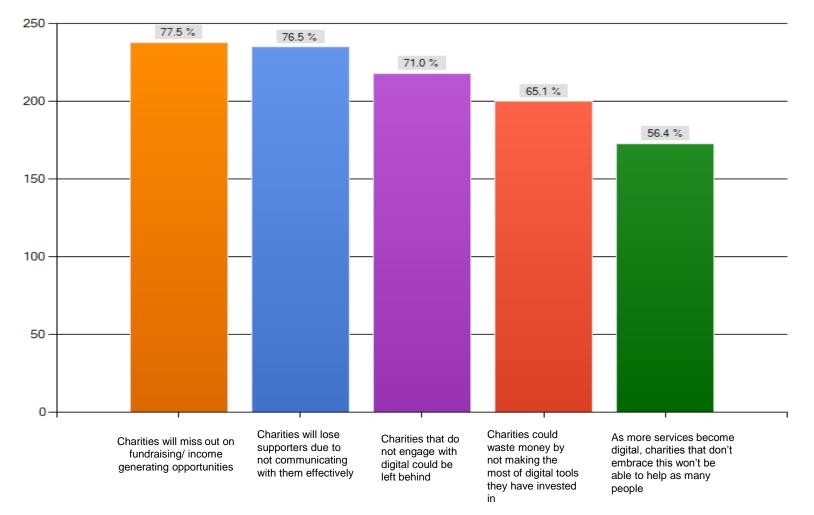
4. What do you think are the main barriers to your charity engaging as fully as possible with digital?

Barrier	Percentage
Need for training	55.8 %
Digital needs to be a core competency for all staff	54.8 %
Lack of time to get to grips with it	49.5 %
Lack of understanding at board/ director level	40.9 %
Cultural- we need a more innovative culture at my organisation	32.6 %
Budget cuts	25.6 %
It isn't part of our organisational strategy	24.9 %
It requires a big change in our approach as an organisation	21.3 %
Internal politics	19.3 %

Over half (56%) identified training as an issue and 55% felt that digital needed to be a core competency for all staff .
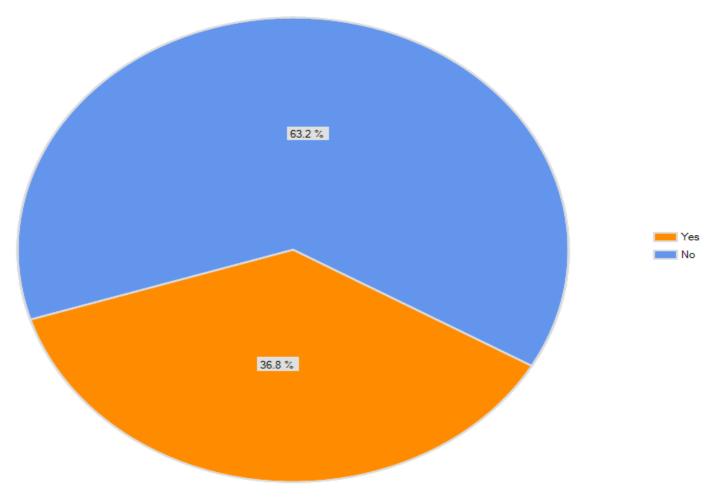
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5. If charities do not engage fully with digital, what do you think the risks are?

78% of respondents are concerned that charities will miss out on fundraising/income generating opportunities if they do not engage fully with digital.
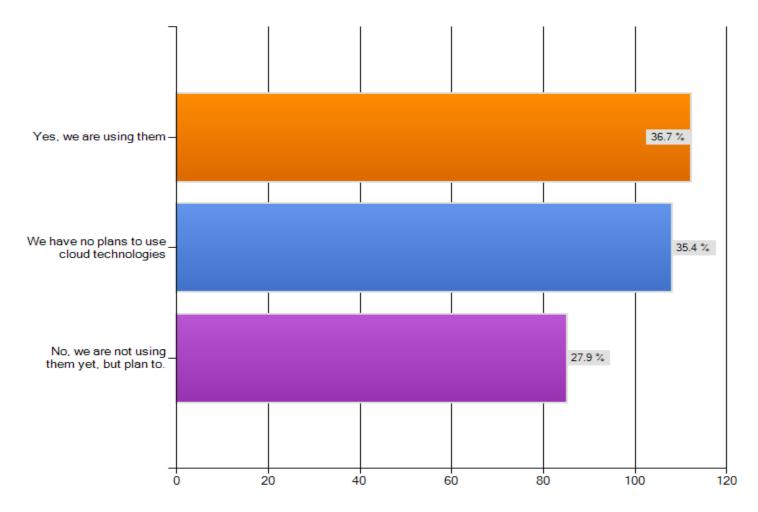
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6. Is your charity using mobile technology, e.g. for fundraising, apps, a mobile friendly website?

Almost two thirds of charities (63%) are not using mobile technologies.

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7. Is your charity using cloud technologies (internet hosted services)?

Over a third of charities (37%) are using cloud technologies.

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8. Do you have any other comments about the charity sector's use of digital?

SAMPLE OF QUALITATIVE RESPONSES:

"Many people at the highest levels (CEOs, Chairs, Board members) are not comfortable with digital, and are missing opportunities to holistically support the organisation."

"Confidence is one of the biggest hindrances to using digital media in most sectors."
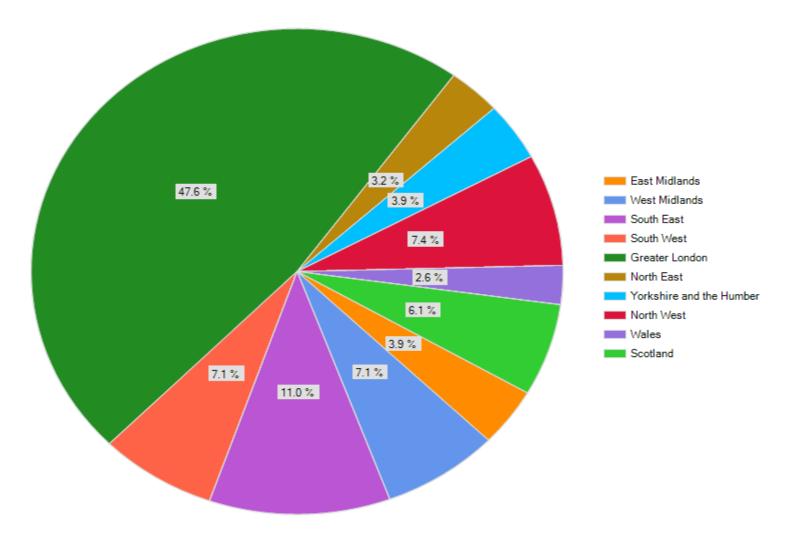
"There's lots of good work being done on low budgets by small teams."

"Those who embed digital in their organisation and structure will win."

"The issue is less about fundraising or campaigning and more about simply working efficiently and cost-effectively. We are a disparate organisation with over a thousand staff and 700 volunteers across England and Wales; all of these people have skills and knowledge that could be better shared through digital channels."

"Those who do not start to use digital will not survive."

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9. Whereabouts in the UK is your organisation based?

Legend:
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- South East
- South West
- Greater London
- North East
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- North West
- Wales
- Scotland

Percentages shown: 47.6 %, 3.2 %, 3.9 %, 7.4 %, 2.6 %, 6.1 %, 3.9 %, 7.1 %, 11.0 %, 7.1 %

Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey.

This research was undertaken by Zoe Amar and the Lasa technology team.

To find out more about the ways in which Lasa could help you and your organisation please see www.lasa.org.uk. For Lasa's technology services see http://www.lasa.org.uk/ict/

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