

Let's go virtual - online meeting

In the first of a two part article, we review the pros and cons, review what the tools do and examine the different meeting formats.

Virtual meetings or online meetings or webinars offer a great way for voluntary and community sector organisations to save time and money. What are virtual meetings? Online virtual meetings – also called conferences, seminars or webinars - take place over the internet using features such as audio and video, instant messaging, slideshows and screen sharing.

Why are they significant?

Virtual meetings can be a great way of saving time and money on travel to and venue hire for physical events, as well as an effective way of exchanging information in an interactive and dynamic way. Virtual meetings can also be used to meet needs for different types of event - such as delivering a training session, presenting a topic for information or even hosting a meeting for remote workers. Many of the tools for virtual meetings are also low cost

and within reach of small organisation's budget.

Are virtual meetings right for you?

Do you have sufficient capacity? If done properly, virtual meetings can be a considerable undertaking for an organisation of any size. Experienced providers estimate that it can take from between 20 and 70 work hours to organise, promote, facilitate and deliver a virtual meeting.

Face to face

Whilst virtual meetings may be appropriate for many situations, there are times when only face to face will do – such as engaging hard to reach groups, delivering motivational talks, and networking with decision-makers.

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Know of an initiative we should mention?

We welcome all feedback about *Computanews* so if we've missed something out send us your thoughts or news, or submit an article for inclusion in a future issue.

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Lasa has been providing the voluntary and community sector with high quality and impartial ICT advice since 1984.



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editorial

Just how important is social media to the smaller VCS organisation?

If you believe the converts, it's absolutely essential. If you're not tweeting, have no presence on Facebook, don't blog, make videos or podcasts or have a supporting community, then your organisation is well nigh on invisible to the general public. Or is it?

Think back - fifteen years ago hardly any charities had websites and those that existed, even for larger organisations, were pretty rudimentary. Even email was a bit of a rarity (from an article in *Computanews* 79 from late 1995 if you were interested receiving information about Lasa's new STATS database system you sent a 19p stamped addressed envelope). Five years after that, it was virtually unthinkable not to have a website and predictions were being made (*Computanews* 107, May 2000) about how e-learning would transform society.

As the web moved inexorably from web 1.0 to 2.0 (from passive provision of information to active involvement) about five years ago, it should follow that by now everybody should be web twoed up. And, of course, many are –larger charities have dedicated staff with fancy social media job titles to, ah, digitally engage with their audiences. Smaller ones make do as they always have by piling the responsibility onto the most tech-aware member of staff – if organisation X is twittering then surely we must too? To quote the late but very wonderful Viv Stanshall as Sir Henry Rawlinson, "I don't know what I want but I want it now!"

It seems like there is currently a plethora of events, guides, initiatives, seminars, webinars, meetings, festivals, bootcamps, barcamps, conferences, unconferences and suchlike aimed at explaining, enthusing and sucking the

unsuspecting non-profit into the social media world. Tell your story! Engage! Raise funds! Ah, there's the rub...

Gavin Claybaugh, (CIO at the Mott Foundation), writes in the entertaining *The Message* in the *Cryptex* article on his *Digital Diner* blog (www.digitaldiner.org), that when giving a presentation about social technologies, the baying hordes wanted to know the big secret behind using social tech – how do we raise money online? What tool do we use? If Obama can do it, surely we can too? What Gavin rightly asserts is that if you don't have content (or an Obama) then you haven't got much – or as he puts it "The real secret is this: It's never the tools, it's the content. It's never the medium, it's the message."

And is all this activity actually achieving anything? Does tweeting a hundred times a day mean your work and your organisation's mission is more visible? Or are you just annoying people to your detriment? And how do we keep the personal out of the work environment? Do I really care about where you get your hair cut or what type of muffin you're eating? Isn't it just a huge waste of time and energy (both human and electrical)?

At NDI10, the recent digital inclusion conference, Martha Lane Fox, one-time lastminute.com entrepreneur and now the government's Champion for the Digital Inclusion Task Force stressed that although the internet had done amazing things there was no substitute for getting out there. Interestingly, in *Computanews* 107 (May 2000) we ran a report on Bridging The Digital Divide following a report issued by the Social Exclusion Unit – so maybe not much has changed in ten years.

Cont'd on page 4

Computanews now accepts advertisements

If you offer a technology product, service or event aimed specifically at the voluntary sector you can draw attention to it through the pages of **Computanews**.

Computanews is a specialised magazine covering the use of technology within the voluntary sector. It has a key audience of:

- organisation managers and trustees
- staff responsible for their own organisation's IT
- Circuit Riders who provide advice and technology support to other organisations

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The circulation of **Computanews** is currently around 2,500 copies per issue, distributed 4 times a year. We anticipate that the circulation will increase now that it is available as a free, downloadable file.

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Cont'd from page 2

Of course, for every technology there is an appropriate use. Clay Shirky's book *Here Comes Everybody* (reviewed in *Computanews* 153) gives great examples of the use of web 2.0 for everything from recovering lost mobile phones to keeping the world informed of disasters as they happen. The *Social By Social* book and website (reviewed in this issue) gives case studies of organisations that have adopted technologies with great results. But our guess is that these are isolated cases.

So can organisations still afford not to engage with the ever increasing (and changing) tools – surely we can't just sit here and be snide about it all? Of course not, that's not what we're suggesting for a minute. What we would say is that it's worth taking time in assessing what's out there, what message it is that you want to get across and what the best way of doing that is. Yep, it's that good old fashioned strategic approach which has been Lasa's watchword for as long as we can remember – consider what it is you want to do and then match the technology to it.

And don't forget capacity – who's going to do this stuff? These technologies are voracious – there are expectations of how often you'll be needing to feed the social habit. Good luck – and be careful out there...

Discussion forum

What's your view on this? Do you agree or disagree with us? Join the debate at www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/forums/read.php?20,727

**Computanews Editors:
Ian Runeckles & Miles Maier**

What Do Online Conferencing Tools Do?

The basic function of virtual meeting tools is to provide an online "meeting room." Some tools require participants to download a small application the first time they're used, an important consideration if many different people of different technical skill levels will be participating.

These are some of the key features to look for:

Video conferencing - Some more advanced tools let presenters broadcast video of themselves talking. If they have Web cams, participants can broadcast themselves.

Desktop/Screen/Document sharing - This basic feature lets participants see exactly what's on the presenter's screen. Presenters can share anything from simple documents to PowerPoint presentations and software demonstrations. If you need to show desktops for Mac, Linux or Firefox users, look for a tool that supports that.

Desktop remote control - this lets you grant control of your desktop to someone else, allowing them to open and work with the applications on your computer - for example, to provide you with technical support via your machine.

Web site co-browsing - If your conferencing needs are limited to showing or sharing a web site, this is likely to create a better view for the participants, and requires less bandwidth than desktop sharing.

Text chat - This lets participants and presenters "talk" to each other via typed text chat during presentations. Some tools let all participants see such messages, while others allow for private one-on-one messaging. Some more advanced tools even provide for "breakout rooms" where multiple participants can chat privately.

Promote attendees to presenters - If you have multiple presenters, some allow you to shift meeting control temporarily to a participant. They can then show their own desktop, advance slides or demo another application.

Polls - The ability to do quick polls to gauge participants' options or situations can help keep them engaged.

Whichever tool you select, pricing is normally based on a combination of features and a maximum number of attendees.

Virtual meeting formats (cont'd from page 1)

A virtual meeting can be structured in a variety of formats to suit different purposes – think about this before choosing a virtual meeting tool. See the chart below.

| | Description | Pros | Cons |
|-----------------|--|---|---|
| One speaker | A single presenter speaks, demonstrates, and answers questions from the audience. | Fewer people to coordinate and train on the webinar tool. | A lone presenter is more likely to become the authority at the “front of the room,” which might make some in the audience reluctant to participate and ask questions. |
| Interview Style | Interviewer asks a set of predetermined questions. | More engaging to hear multiple voices. The fact that the interviewer is asking questions of the expert(s) often encourages the audience to do the same. | More people to train and coordinate. Scheduling the run-through and the actual webinar may be more difficult. |
| Moderated Panel | Multiple people on the line at the same time, with a moderator facilitating the discussion. | Offers a variety of voices and perspectives | More people to train and coordinate. Scheduling the run-through and the actual webinar may be more difficult. Can be challenging to keep panellists from talking over each other. |
| Interactive | Audience members participate fully via instructor-led exercises and facilitated conversations. | If done well, participants receive a deeper understanding of the topic because they're fully engaged in the dialog and the exercises. | Can only accommodate a small group. Requires a very skilled, experienced teacher/facilitator. |

Source: www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/page11252.cfm

Next issue

In Computanews 157 we'll be looking at virtual meeting tools and the hardware and software requirements necessary to run them.

Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank TechSoup (www.techsoup.org) and Idealware (www.idealware.org) for the inspiration and some of the content for this article.

Knowledgebase

www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/worksmarter

www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/virtualoffice

www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/selectingtraining

Planning, organising and actually delivering a webinar to your online audience can be a daunting task. We look at the steps required for planning and running successful webinars.

1. Is a webinar is the right tool for your needs?

The decision to use webinars should meet your strategic objectives and the needs of your audience. While webinars work well for some topics, they're not suited to every training need.

2. Recruit speakers and a support team

You can't do it all yourself - nominate different people to present, moderate, organise and promote it. Be clear about different roles and responsibilities.

3. Determine the format

Webinars can be structured in a variety of formats to suit different purposes – such as lone presenter, a panel discussion or more interactive with audience participation.

4. Plan your visuals

Since webinars rely on audio and visuals to get the message across, both should be engaging.

5. Pick a tool

Idealware's A Few Good Online Conferencing Tools www.idealware.org/articles/fgt_online_conferencing.php offers a roundup of questions to think about and gives affordable webinar options.

6. Create an agenda

About three to four weeks before

your webinar, hold a conference call with the speaker or speakers and determine what questions will be asked and the order in which the speakers will present.

7. Registration and prices

Before you begin marketing your webinar, determine what tool you will use to register attendees, (see www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/software/page7510.cfm) and if you're charging, take payment (see www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/webbuilding/page6123.cfm)

8. Publicise

Get the word out about your upcoming webinar, especially if you're planning to charge for it. Send out information two to three weeks before the event, including who the webinar is for - beginners or advanced, managers or accidental techies, for example.

9. Plan B – have a back-up

If your presenter cancels at the last minute or equipment fails, your options are pretty limited unless you've planned ahead with backup speakers and spare kit.

10. Schedule a dry run

A few days before your webinar, you should schedule at least one 30 to 60 minute run-through with all participants to work out any unresolved questions or technical issues. On the day, set up your

workspace and check in with your presenters early to avoid any last-minute glitches.

11. Reserve your equipment and space

Reserve a quiet space from which to conduct your webinar. Remember to mute all the lines to reduce background noise.

12. Keep the conversation on track

Once the meeting begins, presenters will need to stay focussed on leading the discussion and relying on their assistants to deal with anything else. Keep the conversation on track by politely moving the topic along.

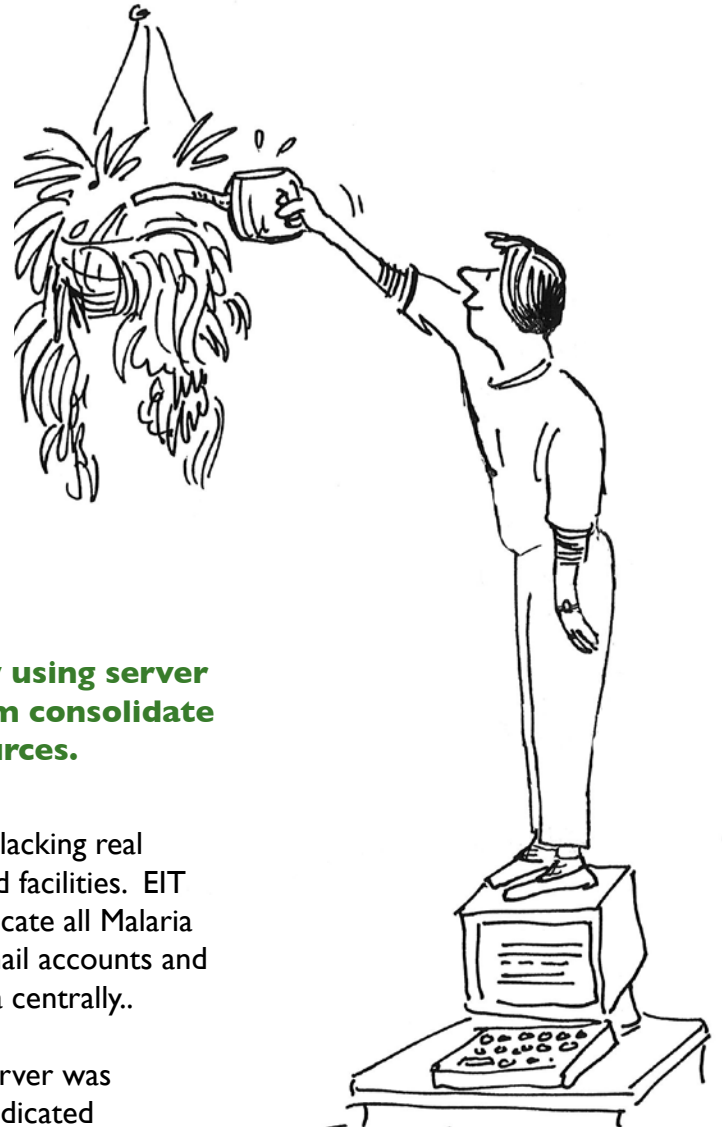
13. Follow up after the event

Be sure to thank everyone for participating and collect feedback. You should also publish a summary online.

Acknowledgement

This is an abbreviated Techsoup article by Kami Griffiths and Chris Peters, and is reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License. See the full article at: www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/page11252.cfm

Carbon savings through co-location



Janine Woodward at Ethical IT looks at how using server virtualisation helped the Malaria Consortium consolidate their ICT and save money, energy and resources.

Operating budgets in social change sector organisations are often tight, and not being able to afford the initial set up cost of a server is common to many in the sector. On top of this, many organisations lack the IT support or expertise to set up, maintain and develop such a system.

Ethical IT's solution to this problem was to set up a shared server, now used by 20 organisations across the country and hosting over 600 email accounts.

One of these organisations is Malaria Consortium. They are dedicated to the control of malaria. For groups most at risk they secure access to prevention, care and treatment of malaria and other communicable diseases. Based in Ethical Property's Development House, London, they began with eight IT users in their central London office, and have quickly grown to over 250 users in the UK, Africa & Asia - that's 250 people accessing emails from all four corners of the globe, often

working in areas lacking real infrastructure and facilities. EIT was able to co-locate all Malaria Consortium's email accounts and backup their data centrally..

When the EIT server was relocated to a dedicated datacentre in London in 2008, we took the chance to upgrade the system. We now have one machine effectively doing the work of several through server virtualisation. Staff in their offices have now got access to advanced email systems, web based mailing, secure anti-spam and anti-virus protection, advanced integration for Blackberry and mobile devices and – if needed – full support from EIT's helpdesk.

There's no end to the capacity for future users to co-locate as further server units can always be added. This reduces both capital and running costs, and provides a secure environment for shared files, backup and databases.

They've also saved a huge amount of energy. Co-locating and sharing

running costs can save 1800 kg of carbon per year, as compared with running a stand alone server.

About Ethical IT

Ethical IT is a strategic partnership between Ethical Property www.ethicalproperty.co.uk and JADe, www.jadegroup.co.uk. They manage all IT connections in Ethical Property centres across the UK, as well as providing comprehensive solutions for other groups around the country.

Contact Janine Woodward at Ethical IT Janine@ethicalproperty.co.uk for more information.

Malaria Consortium
www.malariaconsortium.org/



Raising the dead - PC recovery tools and procedures for Circuit Riders

A recent query on the UKRiders list by Ray Summer started an interesting thread on how Riders approach situations where their client's systems have "more or less ground to a standstill." Ray suggested that "I'm sure Riders have a kitbag of apps and procedures we bring to that kind of clean-up/'MOT' situation, but I am interested to see if there is any kind of consensus amongst circuit riders on the order in which to do things and the best tools for the various tasks?"

Riders responded with a wide range of hardware, software and physical tools and their tips for best practice. This article is a summary of the responses from list members.

Firstly, the hardware and tools:

- Netbook and 3G dongle(s)
- Compact USB external hard disk drive
- Portable DVD rewriter

- USB hub
- Portable mouse and mini keyboard
- Screw driver and assorted bits
- Eyebrow tweezers
- SATA and

- IDE to USB Converter
- Air cylinder and/or mini vacuum cleaner for dust removal
- Disposable rubber gloves
- Network and USB cables
- Mobile phone that can also get the netbook online (and calling for help!)
- PC and monitor for loaning
- Spare switch and router

A wide range of software was suggested to help with rescuing, cleaning and generally bringing systems back into working order:

- Boot disc - Bart PE bootable live Windows CD/DVD www.nu2.nu/pebuilder or Hiren's BootCD which includes various cleaning and restoration tools www.hiren.info/pages/bootcd
- Memory tester - Memtest www.memtest.org/
- Data recovery and disc

maintenance – Spinrite www.grc.com/spinrite.htm or Norton Ghost www.symantec.com/norton/ghost

- Application platform - Portableapps <http://portableapps.com/>
- All current Windows Client and Server Operating Systems
- Windows SQL 2000-2008, Office 2003 and 2007 applications
- Various Linux operating system discs including Puppy www.puppylinux.org (which can also be used for rescuing data from a Windows PC) and bootable USB stick
- System rescue (Linux) – SystemRescue www.sysresccd.org
- Diagnostic software - Micro-Scope www.micro2000uk.co.uk/products/microscope/microscope.html
- PassMark performance testing and burn-in software www.passmark.com/

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- System information - SIW www.gtopala.com/
- Password Changer - Ophcrack <http://ophcrack.sourceforge.net/>
- Latest Service Packs and Autopatcher www.autopatcher.com/
- Anti-virus - free AVG and AVIRA www.avira.com/en/pages/index.php or ClamWin open source www.clamwin.com
- Anti-malware - Malwarebytes www.malwarebytes.org or Spybot
- Search and Destroy www.safer-networking.org or AdAware www.lavasoftusa.com
- Backing up - Syncback - backup and synchronise files to: the same drive; a different drive or medium (CDRW, CompactFlash, etc); an FTP server; a Network; or a Zip archive - www.2brightsparks.com/syncback/syncback-hub.html
- Monitoring - Filemon - monitors and displays file system activity on a system in real-time - www.microsoft.com/technet/sysinternals/utilities/filemon.msp
- Process explorer - Procexp - shows information about which handles and DLLs processes have opened or loaded - www.microsoft.com/technet/sysinternals/Utilities/ProcessExplorer.msp
- Network analysis and auditing – Spiceworks www.spiceworks.com
- Web browsers - FireFox,

Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Opera and Safari

For procedures, the following apply mainly to Windows PCs but the general “good practice” points apply to computers of any variety of operating system:

- First thing is to get as much information about the problem from the client as possible (preferably before the visit so can be better prepared and know what tools to bring). It may also be possible to solve the problem over the phone or using remote access if available.
- Keep the user informed of what is being done at all times using non-patronising plain English
- Before doing anything which could have an adverse effect on data advise on risks and obtain permission at critical points where data might be lost or affected
- If the PC is booting, for Windows PCs check “msconfig” and disabling or uninstalling background applications if not needed
- If the computer doesn't boot (and assuming there's power getting through) could use a POST (power on self

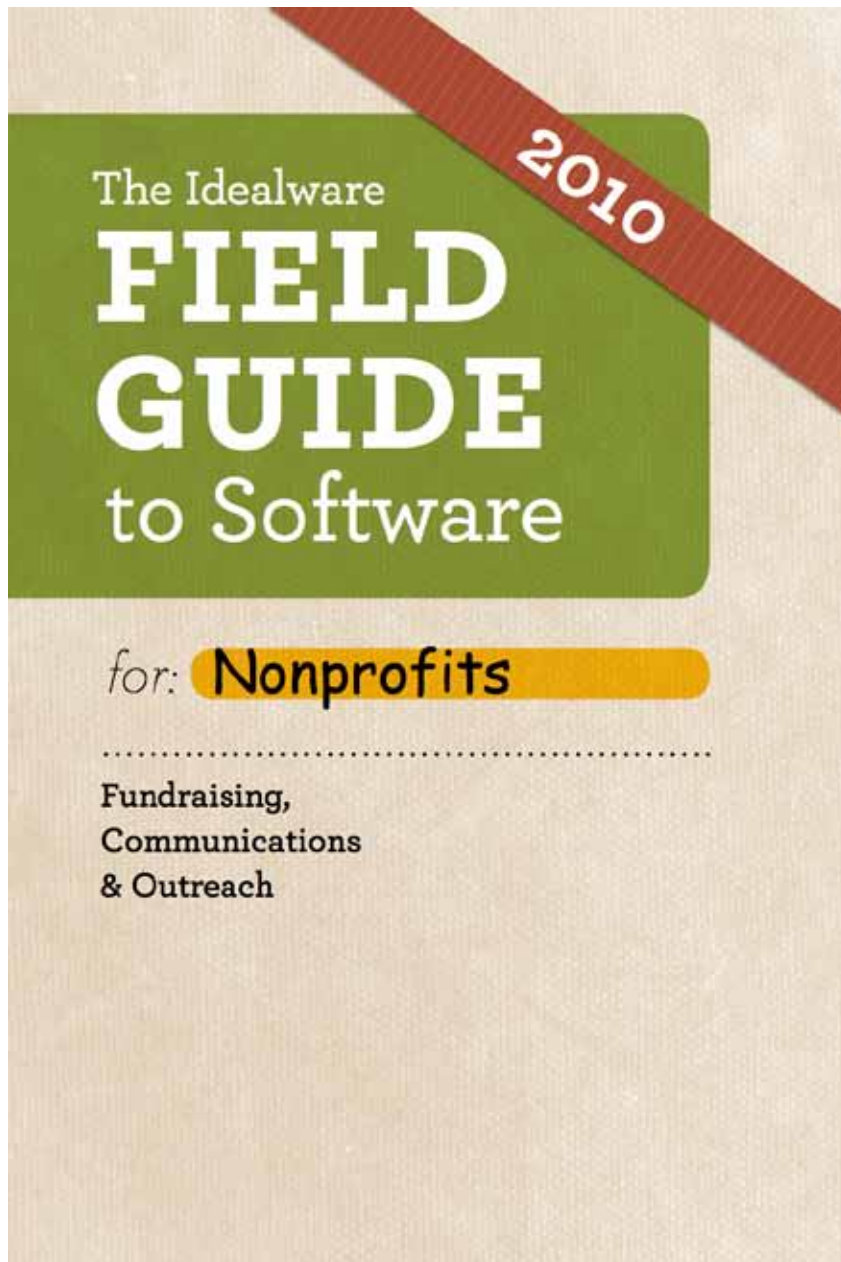


WHEN YOUR TECHIE LEAVES YOU.

test) probe which plugs into a PCI slot and obtain a diagnostic. Also use MicroScope for problem analysis and PassMark's burn-in/performance test as part of our healthcheck routine.

- If there is still an issue then more investigative work is required, perhaps using (for example) BartPE and Memtest
- Provide an estimate of the time it is likely to take and, if you charge for your services, the potential cost would be helpful
- Give the client a written list of steps undertaken to resolve (or not!) the problem

Thanks to Ray for raising the initial query and Orlando, Paula, Jae and Marcus and others who contributed to the original UK Riders thread. You can join the UKRiders mailing list at <http://lists.lasa.org.uk/lists/info/ukriders>



Field Guide to Software for Nonprofits 2010

By Laura Quinn, Kaitlin LaCasse, Chris Bernard

Published by Idealware (81 pages) £12.71

Buy from: www.idealware.org/fieldguide

Buying the right software or system to meet your organisation's goals can be a minefield of jargon, confusing choices, tight deadlines and limited

cash. Idealware's Field Guide to Software for Nonprofits helps you identify what you need to get it right first time.

The guide divides into three main sections - Understanding What You Need, Case Studies and Types of Software – which each provide a straightforward overview to help organisations pinpoint the types of software that might be useful for their needs.

In Understanding What You Need, the guide starts with software everyone is likely to need, and then looks at five different typical organisational goals - Raising Money, Reaching Out, Managing

Events, Engaging Supporters, Listening and Measuring - and the types of software that might be useful for your organisation's particular situation and level of technical expertise.

Each type of software – such as Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) – is described in terms of what it is and why it's important to understand the goal it relates to. Even better, the guide goes on to remind organisations to think ahead to future needs – important if you don't want to invest in a system that's instantly out of date.

The Case Studies section looks at this same information from a more practical angle. It walks you through the different types of software and how to use them effectively, as demonstrated by fictional, but realistic, non-profit case studies.

The section on Types of Software covers 35 different types of software in alphabetical order – these range from blogs to online conferencing, photo editing, web analytics and wikis, along with well known product vendors and US prices. Usefully, each type of software is defined with links to further Idealware resources for more in-depth information.

Overall, the Field Guide to Software for Nonprofits is a handy summary - of types of software matched against organisational goals - that can help non-profits operate more efficiently and effectively. Although the rough guide lists US prices and vendors, it's still a useful indication of what UK buyers might expect to pay.

Reviewed by: Miles Maier

Social By Social
by Andy Gibson, Nigel Courtney, Amy Sample Ward, and David Wilcox

Price: £9.99 including UK postage and also available online at www.socialbysocial.com

Commissioned by NESTA
www.nesta.org.uk
Published by OpenMute
www.openmute.org

Work for Sussex Community Internet Project (SCIP) helping charities and community groups in Brighton use technology tools like WordPress to create and run their own community websites. Social By Social “is a practical guide to using new technologies to create social impact”. So I’m ripe for a book like this, with an overview of the current situation, predictions for the future and lots of useful case studies.

Aimed at small charities, large organisations, civil servants and concerned citizens (but no mention of community activists, circuit riders or technology development workers...) there are some great ideas, authentic stories and examples of using technology.

The book is arranged with a general introduction, then a guide to planning and implementing a social technology project, some examples of pioneering social technology work (including Simon Berry’s ColaLife Campaign, TuDiabetes, Talk2Croydon and Patient Opinion), a “manifesto” for successful projects, jargon buster, links to other sites, what this means to the social by social community and personal perspectives from the authors.

Social by Social was launched as a website in August and it works well as an online resource. I’m less convinced by the print version, which feels slightly bloated and much less easy to navigate. Essentially it feels like a print out of the website.

Annoyingly, although the how-to introduction notes that links are colour coded, they aren’t (it’s mainly a black text on white paper book) and they tend to be hard to read as they are light grey which is also not great for accessibility. Very few actual URLs are given in the book so you’ll need to fire up the website and run it alongside the book to find out what the links are!

The decision to use an A4 format in landscape makes it much less easy to read through - it’s a w-i-d-e book and on some pages the text stretches across the whole page. In addition there’s a lot of “stuff” surrounding the text – ideas, thoughts, quotes, reflections by

the authors that breaks up the flow and fudges the value of the book. Some careful editing would have enabled the core messages to come to the surface more easily. It’s hard to find specific practical how to stuff compared to the website.

I’d still suggest that people who do the sort of work I do - supporting community activists in the use of social media - should get a copy and read around the subject a bit more. But I’m not convinced it works as well for the community activists, who perhaps just want to set up a website and may be better sticking to the online version.

In conclusion, this feels like a policy document or artefact rather than its advertised purpose of being a practical guide. Six or seven out of ten.

Reviewed by Mark Walker, SCIP. Editing and some additional input from Ian Runeckles, Lasa



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multikulti

information + advice in community languages
www.multikulti.org.uk

rightsnet

the welfare rights website for advisors
www.rightsnet.org.uk

About Lasa

Established in 1984, Lasa has provided ICT advice to the voluntary sector for 25 years. Its two main aims are to promote social inclusion through access to social welfare law, information, advice and guidance; and to promote an efficient and effective sector through improving access to impartial ICT advice and support resources – such as Computanews and the London e-bulletin (www.lasa.org.uk/lasa/mailling-lists)

Our online ICT Knowledgebase (www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk) is a comprehensive source of independent expert ICT advice for VCS organisations, now containing over 300 articles. The Suppliers Directory (www.suppliersdirectory.org.uk) connects VCS organisations with over 100 approved suppliers of ICT products and support services across England. Lasa is also noted for its consultancy work and leadership in developing the Circuit Rider model of local ICT support. (<http://ukriders.lasa.org.uk/>)

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