



Do you 'speak geek' video transcript

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How do you use technology?

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind: "I wouldn't describe myself as ... top of the technology knowledge tree but I would probably describe myself as knowing a fair amount about technology.

"Personally I use quite a lot of social media routes. I've become quite a fan of Twitter, use Facebook intermittently and of course couldn't survive either my day job or my home life without my Blackberry.

Do you have to 'speak geek' to understand technology?

Sam Mauger, Chief Executive, Age UK London:

"No, I'd have to say that I wouldn't say that I understand IT speak. I can understand the benefits of IT and what I need is someone to explain to me that actually by using this particular part of technology it's going to help you achieve x/y/z result. I don't need to know programming special language or anything else. I just need to know what the benefits are going to be. And I need to know when I'll know when it's going wrong and what to do when it does go wrong."

What are the benefits of taking a strategic approach to technology?

Richard Craig, Chief Executive, Charity Technology Trust (CTT):

"I think most charities don't think strategically, so they still think that technology's a necessary evil. So it's, kind of, well I must be able to (use) word document, I need to generate a website because everyone else is doing it. I'd best get on Twitter because everybody in the press is telling me this is the next big thing.

"So they're not thinking about what the technology is there for, they're not thinking about how do I improve my impact, what reach do I need to have, how do I collect more monies. So the strategic end for me is charities thinking about what's their focus, what's their goal, where do they need to move to and trying to match the technologies to do that. That's one of the things that CTT is trying to change what it's doing in terms of the way that it works is trying to match a need to the technology rather than just pushing technology for technology's sake."

What stops charities making the most of technology?

Sam Mauger: "I think it's the pace of change in comparison to the cost of change. Because most charities will have a very defined IT budget, if they've got an IT budget at all. Every change has a cost impact, whether it's staff time or buying new pieces of equipment. So I think the biggest challenge is probably the cost, and the second biggest challenge is communicating the benefits of change."

What are the risks for charities that don't make the most of technology?

Paul Farmer: "I can't see how any chief executive of any voluntary organisation can do their job effectively without really high-quality understanding of technology and its capabilities. It is a fundamental part of the 21st century workplace, and it therefore needs to be a fundamental part of the 21st century charity chief executive."

"I think we have to sometimes overcome our own personal challenges around that to be able to recognise the power and the potential it can have. I think it throws up some challenges for us, but I think as leaders of our organisations it's really important that we embrace new technology, because if our organisations don't embrace technology they will be left behind."

How can charities use technology in a strategic way?

Sam Mauger: "Up until recently we had changed the technology we used on an ad hoc basis. And then we started to look very carefully at the way we presented ourselves to the people we work with and the people we wanted to work with. And we realised that a lot of our messages, particularly on our website, were aimed at policy makers, who are important, but may not necessarily reach directly some of the older people that we wanted to reach, or carers or other people who might be interested in older people's issues."

"So we decided to add a blog and a Twitter to our website, and also to change the look and feel of our website to make it feel more interactive and more of a conversation. And to encourage people to work with us through volunteering, or donating, or sending us their views or comments. So over the last 12/18 months we've taken a lot more of a strategic approach in terms of building the technology around messaging into how we present ourselves as an organisation."

How could charities save time and money by using technology more effectively?

Nigel Lewis, Chief Executive, AbilityNet: "Yes, sharing resources. I mean it's got to be a good way of reducing cost, hasn't it. So why do we all have to have a finance package, an HR package, email, expenses, etc. There are lots of core things that we as charities do, like fundraising and volunteer management. If we could all buy in

and have a little bit of it, then we would have a shared service that would presumably save us millions across the whole sector.”

What advice would you give to a chief executive about how to get the most from technology?

Paul Farmer: “I’d suggest to any charity chief executive that embracing and finding out more about what technology can deliver is the first place to start, and then taking a strategic assessment about how that can help you deliver your strategic objectives. I think it’s very easy to become seduced by the attractiveness of Twitter and all forms of new technology, simply because it’s a new toy and it looks like it’s fun to play with. I’d counsel against that. I’d have a look at the new toy and see if it can really deliver added value to the organisation but I would equally encourage chief execs to go in with an open mind. It just may be the way you can transform your cause.

About Lasa

“My name’s Terry Stokes, I’m the chief executive of Lasa. Lasa is a long-standing charity, 27 years in existence, we are a social welfare law charity with a profound interest in technology, and have had throughout our entire history. So we are very much interested in how technology can support social welfare provision and advice provision, but also more generally the work of the third sector.

Next steps:

- Get more from technology:
- Book your place at Lasa's European Not for Profit Technology Conference on 14 November 2011 <http://www.lasa.org.uk/ict/conference-registration/>
- Search online for 'ICT Knowledgebase' to get practical tips from Lasa

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