

Building Bridges to ICT Excellence

CASE STUDY: Organisation supporting charities working with offenders and their families, struggling with database issues.

SUMMARY: A medium size charity that has staff based around the country.

The organisation has come to increasingly rely on ICT to help meet their developmental and information needs. The general standard of hardware within the organisation is good, as is their website and email communication.

The organisation has a large and complex membership. This has never been managed by one central database, instead a number of systems using a range of software (Microsoft Access, Excel and Outlook) has grown over a number of years to meet membership and client needs.

A project had been started to a number of years ago to address this issue and develop an organisational database that would allow for better recording of membership and client information.

For a number of reasons, not least because of significant organisational growth the initial project had stalled.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The work of the Building Bridges to ICT Excellence project was asked initially to look at the current database system in conjunction with the proposed database project proposal.

Upon meeting the organisation it was clear that information gathering for the organisation was complex and needed to serve a number of purposes:

- Populating an online organisational database
- Membership subscriptions and renewals (this includes those members eligible to vote on organisational issues)
- Training course delegates, both from organisations and individuals.
- Conference and events monitoring

- “Friends” of the organisation who are interested in the work the organisation undertakes.
- Subscriptions to information sources, email bulletin, newsletter etc.

Once the information needs of the organisation had been identified contact was made with the original database developer to assess whether original proposal could meet these needs.

GOING FORWARD:

It was agreed with the organisation that the original database proposal did not meet the current information requirements and a new database specification should be put together.

Working with the organisation the Building Bridges project was able to give guidance on developing a specification for a new database. Ensuring that when putting together the new specification all the information needs of the organisation were taken in to account and as much of the information processing as possible could be automated as though the organisation worked nationally it was staffed by a relatively small number of employees.

Using the Suppliers Directory (www.suppliersdirectory.org.uk) the project was able to put forward a number of database developers that have experience and skills with working with voluntary and community organisations. This was then reduced to a shortlist of possible suppliers who have been approached to tender for the work of developing of a new organisational database.

Going through a thorough appraisal of required database elements got the organisation to think through their information needs and ensured that there was buy-in across the organisation for this vital organisational development.

The work of the Building Bridges to Excellence project enabled the organisation to better plan how they are going to use and store information so that they can be more responsive to their members needs.

RESOURCES:

- Planning a Database - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/planningadatabase>

- Buying a Database for your organisation - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/buyingadatabase>
 - Using Your Database - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/usingyourdatabase>
 - Choosing a Database Developer - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/choosingdatabasedeveloper>
 - Suppliers Directory – www.suppliersdirectory.org.uk
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