

## **Building Bridges to ICT Excellence**

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**CASE STUDY:** Furniture re-cycling organisation looking to streamline systems for managing information and inventory details.

**SUMMARY:** A large charity that helps low income families by providing quality low cost furniture and domestic appliances. Items are donated from the general public as well as private and public bodies.

The organisation recognised it needed to streamline its stock management system from start to finish. This involved finding a system to meet a varied set of needs from scheduling collections for donations through to monitoring item sales and all required reporting information in-between.

A number of possible solutions had been identified already. As well as concerns about the suitability of these solutions the organisation also had concerns about its current ICT infrastructure being able to cope with increased usage resulting from the implementation of a completely new system. Additionally the organisation is also a registered waste carrier and able to collect bulky waste and waste electrical equipment. This requires a high level of monitoring and it is important that any database can cope with these varied demands.

The level of detailed information needed by the organisation means that it is essential that any database can deal with this and allow the organisation to better monitor and report on the high volume of work it is undertaking.

### **WHAT HAPPENED?**

The work of the Building Bridges to ICT Excellence project was two-fold.

- ICT Healthcheck and evaluation of ICT support within the organisation.
- Assisting with the organisations to look at possible database solutions and act as a trusted expert.

The first work carried out was a complete Healthcheck of ICT systems and evaluation of ICT support arrangement.

The first element of the Healthcheck involved assessment of the organisations server. It was identified that although the server was functioning well at present its age and the demand being placed upon it means that it was sensible for the organisation to work on a 12 month timescale for server upgrade. The organisation found this information useful as it would enable planning both in terms of workload for such an upgrade as well as financial planning.

The second element of the Healthcheck was to look at the individual PCs within the organisation. The organisation solely uses donated PCs from local business. As with a lot of organisations these have been donated over a period of time so it was thought that the specification of these machines may vary greatly. Upon inspection it was found that all PCs were of a good standard and could cope well with office procedures, the only issue with them was found to be lack of consistency in software installed on the PCs. It was agreed that the organisation would look at standardising software over the coming 12 months. The main benefit for the organisation of standardising software is ease of support, it is a lot simpler for the person within the organisation and support company to deal with any problems associated with software if the same version is used across the organisation.

The organisation does have a support contract but this is only for major networking issues and there was no real understanding or knowledge of whether this was value for money and level of service they receive. Day to day management of the ICT system is carried out by the Director. It was discovered that the support contract is on a rolling 12 month basis and the organisation was only 4 months in to the current contract.

Information had already been gathered on a number of possible database solutions. The Building Bridges project was able to help the organisation come to a decision about which of these was most appropriate for the organisation. The role of the project was vital in translating some of the detailed technical information regarding the proposed databases in to more appropriate language as well as being able to outline the installation process. It was felt that this gave the organisation confidence in making a decision on what was a vital and expensive ICT development for the organisation.

### **GOING FORWARD:**

A stock management database has been purchased and installed. A programme of training for staff has been outlined on the system.

Confidence about the new system is high and the organisation has developed a real willingness to make the most of it.

Planning has started for the replacement of the current server. Although the organisation does not currently have funds for this it was felt being forewarned about the need for replacement was vital in planning and finances over the coming year. The organisation was signposted to useful resources regarding budgeting, planning and purchasing for ICT to help them make informed decisions.

A review of current ICT support in light of ICT developments has been timetabled to coincide with renewal of current ICT support contract.

The work of the Building Bridges to Excellence project enabled the organisation to better monitor recycling goods stock and therefore offer a better service to users.

## **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>
- What to expect from an IT Support Contract - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/whattoexpectfromsupport>
- Working With an IT Support Company - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/workingwithsupportcompanies>
- So You Think You Want a Server? - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/gettingaserver>
- Server Hardware: What To Look For - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/serverhardware>

- Open Source Alternatives To Windows On Servers - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/opensourceservers>
  - Accepting Second Hand Computers - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/secondhandcomputers>
  - ICT Equipment Replacement Strategy - <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/replacementstrategy>
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