



'To Infinity and Beyond!': The Future of Technology in the Non-Profit Sector

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The Future of Technology in the Non-Profit Sector

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"Because only dead fish go with the flow."

Smaller, faster, better, cheaper, anytime, anywhere

- ◆ But what difference is it making?
- ◆ What are the promises technology is making?
- ◆ Why doesn't it deliver?

"Wisdom is to recognise what can be made better and make it better, and to recognise what can only be made worse and walk away." - Glen Duncan

What we want, what we really, really want

- ◆ To be able to do our jobs effectively, economically, efficiently
- ◆ To make a difference to the people we want to help
- ◆ To do things better or do better things
- ◆ Personally, to enhance my life experience (communication and information)

Only benefits, risks and drawbacks matter

- ◆ What difference will this make?
- ◆ What risks will/might arise?
- ◆ What could go wrong – people problems!
- ◆ Technology itself is meaningless...
- ◆ Costs resources but can deliver benefits

The future is about people, applications, communication and access

- ◆ What's driving this?
- ◆ Too often it's technical, individual, financial
- ◆ Not outcomes focused enough
- ◆ What the people need (not want)
- ◆ Killer applications e.g. blogs, VOIP
- ◆ Access to information and communication easily and cheaply

Buzzwords

- ◆ Ubiquity
- ◆ Convergence
- ◆ Plug and play
- ◆ Always on
- ◆ Ease of use

Great ideas which haven't quite made it (yet)

- ◆ E-publishing (websites, blogs)
- ◆ Data warehousing (databases, information structure)
- ◆ Broadband (if you can get it)
- ◆ IT training (too focused on individual programs)
- ◆ Open source (too hard, too geeky)
- ◆ Paperless office (drowning in paperwork)
- ◆ A computer in every home (other priorities?)
- ◆ **Handheld/mobile computing**

What needs to happen

- ◆ Knowing what we do and could do
- ◆ Building a meaningful business case with tangible benefits
- ◆ Appreciating resource costs and measuring against value added/lost
- ◆ Seeing technology as an enabler not a separate function
- ◆ Seeing ICT as fundamental to success (friend not foe, resource not cost)
- ◆ Developing an infrastructure which supports ICT in community organisations

What is already happening

- ◆ Technology being driven from a strategic perspective
- ◆ Organisations of similar types coming together to plan and develop applications, share resources and experiences (good and bad)
- ◆ Applications driven for the NP sector
- ◆ Access to quality, unbiased, focused, professional advice on technology issues
- ◆ Technology supports monitoring and evaluation (outcomes management)
- ◆ Needs driven not wants driven

What is making the difference

- ◆ Technology matures and stabilises, becomes natural
- ◆ Organisations see applications not technology per se
- ◆ People understand impact and benefits
- ◆ Management understands value
- ◆ Meaningful investment and support causes change and enables impact both

Successful applications

- ◆ Mobile email and webmail
- ◆ Blogs – self publishing
- ◆ National resources – thesite.org, web based advice for youth
- ◆ Sub-sector resources – London Housing Foundation and IMFO
- ◆ Local resources/information – www.mymanchester.net
- ◆ Publishing – syndication & sharing information
- ◆ Aggregated databases – local, regional, national through Guidestar.org.uk

Future impacts

- ◆ Access to communication anytime, anywhere (but with an escape clause if you want it)
- ◆ Access to information (power of search)
- ◆ Technology gets more powerful, appropriately portable and does what its supposed to do
- ◆ ICT actually becomes intuitive (but stops being too clever for its own good)
- ◆ Naturalisation - people and organisations see the application not the grey boxes
- ◆ Stop being clever, start being smart
- ◆ Infrastructure supports ICT (strategy, management, technical support, application planning)

My dream is that one day...

- ◆ Using technology will be as natural as having a conversation
- ◆ ICT will encourage, enable and enamour everyone, regardless of age, education, culture, relative wealth or social position
- ◆ The internet becomes truly ageless and classless
- ◆ It will make life easier not more frustrating
- ◆ It supports learning, understanding, communication
- ◆ It becomes as fundamental as finance

Thank you

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