

Fact sheet

This fact sheet has been developed using the information gathered from the Digital Technologies, Connecting Communities project, an AHRC-funded study that took place in 2011.

The information contained in this fact sheet is not meant to be exhaustive; rather is meant to be a guide to some of the issues community groups can consider when thinking about the most appropriate and effective communication technologies to use to get their messages across to their target audiences.

1. Choosing technologies

When thinking about which technologies to use, consider:

Allocating sufficient time for discussion

- Decisions about which technology to use needs careful and often lengthy discussion
- Treat the decision-making process in relation to technology as important as other issues
- Make sure you implement time to manage the technologies as a legitimate work issue

Agreeing on clarity of purpose

- Be sure about the message the group is trying to get across

Contextualising the audience

- Who and where are the group's audience
- What technologies are they using?
- Include disability access issues

Surveying the market

- Find out what is out there already, and what is free and what is not

Getting expert free advice and on-going support

- From members of your group: survey each member for expertise
- From other groups
- From advice services for not-for-profit groups
- From social media surgeries

Paying for advice

- Get recommendations from other groups who pay for IT advice
- Find out how much this would cost for your not-for-profit group

2. Once technology is chosen

Communication technologies need constant servicing so consider:

Training

- Encourage group members to undertake voluntary IT training
- Source free/low cost training for non-profit groups

Diversifying roles

- Resident experts can leave the group: have more than one available
- Make sure more than one group member has access to passwords/log-in details

Accepting trial and error

- Be open to trial and error: technologies change and so do group aims

Allocating sufficient time management

- Be aware that managing several communication technologies (email/facebook/twitter/websites) for example can be time consuming, so allocate time to this

- If you have a website, take control of it so that you are not reliant on an external website developer to upload the latest news, for example

Consistency of message

- Decide if your message needs to be consistent across all technologies
- Regularly check that consistency is not being lost

Responding to your audience

- Interact with your audience if possible to ensure loyalty and connection

Investing in backup equipment

- Use an external hard drive to back up data regularly

Updating information across platforms regularly

- Keep your message up to date and professional-looking

3. Selected sources of free information for not-for-profit groups

Please let us know of more free sources and we will gladly include them here.

Charity Technology Trust

<http://www.ctt.org/>

CTT aims to work in partnership with the third sector to support and guide charities and not-for-profit organisations in the UK to use technology to enhance the way they work and collaborate.

ICT Champions

<http://www.ictchampions.org.uk/>

Website which contains downloadable resources and answers to frequently asked questions about Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and how it can help organisations. It is aimed at staff and volunteers from charities, community groups, social enterprises and other not for profit organisations. Although the project has now closed, there is still a wealth of information available on the site.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/ict/managing-ict>

NCVO website containing resources on ICT (information and communication technology), including:

- Getting started
- Budgeting and buying
- Policies and procedures
- Effective collaboration
- Training and support
- ICT and your role
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Social by Social

<http://www.socialbysocial.com/book/a-to-z>

Social by Social is a practical guide to using new technologies to create social impact. It makes accessible the tools you need to engage a community, offer services, scale up activities and sustain projects. Whoever you are, it shows you how to take technology and turn it into real world benefits. Includes a useful Jargon Buster.

Social Media Surgeries

<http://socialmediasurgery.com/>

Social media surgeries are free informal gatherings of people who want to learn how to use the web to communicate campaign or collaborate. They take place all over the country and are aimed at not-for-profit groups.