Not For Profit
e-business report

November 2011

Contents

Help and advice

Turnover, future aims, IT objectives and IT spend

Case studies

Telecommunications, Mobility & VoIP

Customer Management Software

IT & Cloud Services

Process Management Software

Disaster Recovery & Security

Other

Introduction

This is the fifth time in 7 years that we have surveyed the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the not-for-profit/non-profit* sector, with the first two studies in Queensland and the last three Australia wide. The latest national survey of just under 1,500 organisations was completed in October 2011 for this report.

A lot has changed and much remains the same.

The burden of service delivery on the non-profit sector continues to grow. Government expects funded services to do more with less. Funded non-profits are expected to be more efficient, transparent and effective in service delivery. The optimal use of ICT products and services can deliver productivity benefits for all non-profits, funded and non-funded, but federal government neither supports or offers any practical initiatives to help make this happen.

The real difference in ICT capacity development in Australia is being made by non-government organisations like Connecting Up and commercial vendors like Cisco and Microsoft who are making practical efforts to improve ICT capability in the sector.

Why Connecting Up, partly supported by the South Australian government, should do the national job for the Federal Government and the other states is anybody's guess. Once again South Australia punches above its weight.

It is surprising that the federal government is unable to find money to support practical and useful initiatives like the DonorTec program and the Connecting Up IT conferences and events that deliver measurable value year after year to improve capability in the non-profit sector, yet can find tens of millions of dollars to support generic, poorly targeted, "vanilla flavoured" Digital Enterprise programs in the NBN regions. Political not practical.

A small percentage of those millions of dollars channeled to existing proven initiatives could make an enormous difference to the sector. One can only conclude that Stephen Conroy's well meaning and laudable vision for a productive Digital Economy build on the foundation of the NBN lacks adequate managerial support and interpretation in the Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy.

In the 2008 report, Doug Jacquier, CEO, Connecting Up, made the following comment.

"At government level, there have been piece-meal efforts to address technology capacity development for nonprofits across all levels of government…

This is typical of episodic 'pilot' schemes, which, no matter how successful are almost never refunded and are certainly never national in their equity and consistency. This is despite governments of all persuasions being able to find billions to invest in technology infrastructure and capacity development for the government and business sectors.

Meanwhile Australia's Third Sector, which generates more income than Tasmania and is larger than the IT sector itself, is left to fend as best it can, even while often delivering services on behalf of Government."

This comment is still relevant nearly three years on. Nothing has changed.

Yet the ongoing digital revolution and convergence of telecommunication, IT and content is causing

headaches and serious disruption to organisations of all kinds, of all sizes and across all sectors. So there is even more reason for practical support for the non-profit sector.

Add in the Global Financial Crisis, a two-speed economy, mobility, social media, changing customer expectations and what do you get? You get an environment that is confusing not just for the average non-profit organisation but also for the IT and media industries themselves, as well as government.

For anyone who is interested, my new book "Connecting the Dots' explains this new operational environment. It is published by Acumen Media and available from www.db-insights.com.

Things have changed and continue to change. Yet technology can deliver huge benefits to the sector.

In the absence of government help, it is down to the non-profit sector itself, collaborating with two large vendors who have put their hands up to help (Cisco and Microsoft), a number of small vendors and multiple IT services across Australia to make the real difference.

Frustrated individuals, organisations and businesses are increasingly taking the lead in the vacuum created by political and bureaucratic indecision. For the non-profit sector, this isn't anything new. It is what created the sector in the first place.

Leadership now comes from anywhere and everywhere, except the top. The internet provides the medium for sharing and collaboration. It also provides the platform for a wider reaching, shared value, collaborative alliance. This new alliance will ultimately include government at all levels when it finally awakes to the new 21st century reality.

At the sector level there are some great stories from ICT vendors and non-profit organisations getting on with the job. We have tried to include as many case studies as possible in this report demonstrating the value of ICT to the sector.

Many issues raised in the ICT surveys over the years are finally being addressed by software developers and local IT services. But there is still some way to go.

Even the broader issues of training and integration could be addressed if government was willing to help. Reallocating all or part of the Digital Enterprise funding to do something practical rather than just "talk about it" would go a long way towards finding a solution.

John Sheridan
CEO
Digital Business insights
www.db-insights.com

* The term non-profit = not-for-profit throughout this report

Background

Australian Government productivity studies show that any use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) delivers productivity benefits and improves business performance. Benefits are – informational, strategic, transformational and transactional.

Information

Information sharing within an organisation is critical to success. Decision-making has to be based on knowledge not guesswork. The ability to gather, organise and share information easily encourages more collaboration, common purpose and teamwork.

Gathering information on customer habits allows communication to be better planned and targeted. Accessing information on wider issues, such as legislation, trade agreements, trends and changes in customer behaviour, is important to long term survival.

Strategic

ICT helps an organisation make strategic decisions. Competitors and customers can be monitored and tracked. Gathering and analysing product, price and performance information means a manager can direct an organisation with eyes wide open. No more fire fighting, fewer unexpected problems. Decisions can be informed, timely and relevant.

Transformational

Technology has a transforming effect on organisations. Faster information, analysis and decision making, the automation of mundane processes and tasks, quicker response times and turnaround all make organisations more efficient and productive. Workers become more flexible and managers can think and plan more effectively.

Transactional

ICT has sped up and automated ordering, booking and payment. It has reduced the cost of training, professional services and advice, supply and marketing. Technology lets small organisations have a bigger impact and profile in the market place than ever before.

Productivity benefits can be found in all organisations, regardless of industry type and size. So productivity improvements can be enjoyed by all organisations regardless of where they are, who they are and what they do.

The non-profit sector

For purposes of simplicity the not-for-profit sector is referred to as non-profit throughout this report.

The non-profit sector in Australia includes over 700,000 non-profit organisations, 100,000 incorporated associations and 10,000 companies limited by guarantee.

For practical purposes, there are probably around 60,000 active funded non-profits and another 60,000 active non-funded organisations, though nobody really knows for sure.

The sector can be broadly divided into public-serving or member-serving organisations. Public serving organisations typically deliver health, education or community services. Member serving organisations exist for the benefit of their members, in the areas of sport and recreation and common interest. Common interest organisations include peak bodies, religious organisations, political parties, lobby groups and unions and professional and business associations.

Non-profit organisations are increasingly adopting and using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve their productivity, service delivery and enhance the many ways they interact with government, businesses and the community.

The value of ICT to an organisation varies depending on the organisation size, type, location and services delivered. Some business processes are common to all non-profits and some are specific to public serving or member serving organisations.

Public serving	Member serving
Accounting, database, security, backup/storage, telecommunication, internet, website, compliance, ordering, buying,	
Reporting, tenders, volunteers, rostering, client management	Fundraising, member management, collaboration

It also helps to understand the value ICT can deliver by looking at the relationships the organisation has. All organisations have internal relationships and activities, as well as external relationships with customers or clients, suppliers, competitors and complementary organisations.

Internal
ICT enhances various internal administrative business activities for the non-profit sector – accounting, payroll, records and information (database), rostering, internal communication and so on.

Accounting – MYOB, Quickbooks, Arrow, Attache, SAP, Calxa etc
Database – Access, Excel, SQL, Filemaker etc
Rostering – Excel, Time Target
Security – Norton, AVG etc
Backup/Storage – Hard Drive, NAS, SAN, DVD, CD, Tape, Memory stick
Intranet – web developer

Customer
Customer relationships will vary depending on the type of non-profit organisation. ICT can enhance communication through telephone, SMS, email, email newsletter and website, and also help with the active management of relationships through client and customer relationship software.

Phone – Telstra, Optus, Vodaphone etc
Internet – Telstra, Optus, TPG, Pacific Internet etc
VoIP – Skype, Asterisk, Avaya, Cisco etc
Website – web developer
CRM – MS CRM, EventPro, Front Desk, IMIS, Access, Outlook etc
Client Management – CareManager, ionmycare, IT Integrity Tectura, QikKids etc

Supplier
Supplier relationships will also vary depending on the type of organisation. For public serving organisations funded by government, there is an ongoing cycle of tendering for funding and reporting on services delivered. Member-serving organisations manage member fees.

Both types of organisations may raise funds and sign up and manage volunteers. All organisations may buy general goods and services. ICT can support all these activities through fundraising software, telemarketing, Government tender and reporting portals, and general supplier websites and portals.

> Reporting – Excel, Access,
> Volunteers – Outlook etc
> Fundraising – Blackbaud, Donor Management, Give Now, Open Alms, ThankQ etc
> Ordering/Buying – Supply/Buy website, portal

Competitor

All public serving organisations compete for funding. Members-serving organisations compete for members. The internet provides a simple, quick research platform for competitive intelligence gathering as well as a research resource for proposals and reports.

> Tenders – Government portal
> Research – Web browser

Complementary

Non-profit organisations often collaborate in service delivery, lobbying, promotion and education. ICT provides a number of collaborative platforms including weblogs, wikis and portals.

> Information portal – InfoXchange, Our Community, Connecting Up etc

Case studies in the report

Case studies were gathered from a selection of non-profit, other organisations and vendors. The case studies are included to demonstrate some of the issues involved in finding and implementing an appropriate solution. The solutions mentioned in each case study are representative of ICT products and services available and do not illustrate all "best of breed" solutions on the market.

Summary

A survey of 1,485 non-profit organisations was undertaken during September and October 2011. All respondents use computers and are connected to the internet at work or at home. Organisations are increasingly mobile with most having laptops, 40% using smart phones and 21% tablets. The internet is being used with confidence and organisations are using a wide raft of different services from banking, through social media and YouTube to podcasting. 83% have a website and more than half of these have an interactive website of some kind.

Organisations are seeking ways to become more productive and actively searching for software solutions, and seeking to integrate and connect the solutions they use every day.

ICT satisfaction and concerns

Three hundred respondents raised issues with ICT products and services. The main issues were – lack of software designed and customised to the sector needs, software not fully integrated or able to be easily integrated with other software, not intuitive and not easy to use.

The cost of hardware and software, and cost and availability of training required to use it effectively are two other major issues holding non-profits back from increased productivity and effectiveness.

Telecommunication

Phone, Fax, Mobile and Internet are the most used telecommunication services. Organisations are better connected than ever and the telecommunications service choices reflect the operational requirements of each non-profit category. VoIP adoption continues to increase and there is a 6% rise in VoIP use from 16% to 22% compared with the 2008 survey.

Thirty three percent of respondents use a PABX system with Commander and NEC having the highest percentage of users (6%).

Computer use and operating systems

100% percent of respondents use computers. Most services use one or more versions of Windows as the computer operating system. Apple use has doubled since the last survey for two main reasons. The Intel chip allows use across Mac and Windows operating systems, and the adoption of iPads and iPhones by the market has introduced new users to the Apple platform. 60% of organisations use Windows as the server operating system and 2% use Linux.

Most respondents (74%) used digital still or video cameras for work purposes and digital cameras are used for a host of work and customer related reasons.

Software use and data storage

Most respondents (92%) use a Microsoft email client of some kind, with Microsoft Outlook being the most common (76%). Web-based email is used by 21% of respondents. Most organisations (83%) name an accounting software package of some kind, with MYOB being the most common (56%).

Eleven percent of organisations use membership/customer relationship management software. Most organisations rely on Outlook and Outlook Express or another email program for maintaining relationships with members or customers. Twenty six percent of respondents use client management software, with use spread across a wide range of products.

Not all non-profit organisations raise funds. Of those that do, only a small percentage of respondents (4%) use software specifically designed for the purpose. Social media is now being used extensively for this purpose (5%) to replace or complement other methods and approaches.

Seventy eight percent of respondents use database software. Excel and Microsoft Access are the most popular database applications. Some organisations use two or three different applications.

External Hard Drives (62%) are the most popular storage choice, followed by USB memory sticks (51%). Storage systems largely reflect the size of an organisation.

Internet connection, use and security

All organisations surveyed can access the internet, either at home or at work. 99% of organisations are connected to the internet at the office. Most organisations are connected to the Internet by broadband (96%) with ADSL being the most popular connection (68%). Email (100%) and research (77%) are the two primary reasons specified for using the Internet.

Use and trust of the internet continues to grow. Most organisations use online banking, buy and order goods and services. Collaborative use of the internet has grown through social media, and many organisations are using Facebook, Linked in, Twitter, YouTube and Blogs to extend their reach for customer and client contact as well as for advocacy, recruiting and fundraising.

Many non-profits raised concerns about social media. Concerns were about resources, relevance, policy and strategy, time and demand. Most organisations using social media in a serious way have one or more part time staff managing their strategies. 30% of organisations use part time staff and volunteers to manage social media. Five percent of organisations have full time staff allocated to social media. Larger organisations are most able to afford full time staff for this purpose, especially in the membership based Business and Professional associations and Philanthropy and Volunteering.

Most organisations had some form of security in place, with virus protection used by most organisations along with software and hardware firewalls. Spam was a continuing frustration for many organisations. Few respondents have no measures in place (19).

Technology adoption

Organisations were asked how they rated their technology adoption with answers ranging from "leading edge" to "in trouble". 24% rate themselves early adopter or fast follower for technology adoption. 25% rated themselves as Lagging Behind or In Trouble. These are similar percentages to the 2008 survey and coupled with the high percentage of issues raised by the sector (20% is twice the percentage of issues raised in other sectors) indicates an ongoing uncertainty with the best use of ICT to improve productivity and effectiveness.

Websites

Most respondents (83%) have a website. 23% use their website for collecting information with surveys and 28% use the website for selling goods or services. Some non-profits use web based sites as collaboration tools. Thirty percent of respondents have an Intranet (an internal website for staff).

Usually larger organisations have an Intranet for internal resource sharing, but some small organisations with offices in a number of locations find this useful also. Nine percent of respondents have an Extranet (a website with private access for suppliers, other organisations or clients).

Technical support and advice

Three quarters of respondents (75%) say they can get local support and rate the quality of support as good. Service, sports and social clubs have the biggest problem with finding support, along with child care and child services.

Trusted advice on information and communication technology (ICT) comes from three main sources, a) friends, family and colleagues, b) IT suppliers, services and consultants and c) for larger organisations with IT staff, advice comes from systems integrators, the internet and IT staff networks.

Nearly a third of organisations surveyed use their local software/hardware supplier or the Internet for advice. Smaller organisations are most likely to have nobody they trust to help, or rely on friends and family for advice. Larger organisations are more likely to use suppliers and consultants, or be confident enough to find help online or in the IT press.

New technology and best practice

Most organisations get advice on new technology and best practice from other non-profits or through email newsletters and newspaper articles. The source of information is rated as important (industry association or other non-profit) and practicality of information (workshop or seminar) is also important.

Practical experience is also highly rated in the next question, "How would you prefer advice and information". The Department of Broadband, Communication & Digital Economy (DBCDE) was the least used source of advice (42%) and rated least valuable (3 out of ten), which is the same result as the last two surveys.

Of the non-government organisations focused on the non-profit sector, Connecting Up (39%) and Our Community (33%) are used most often and are largely complementary with the information and resources they offer. Connecting Up is focused on IT issues and Our Community is focused on non-profit best practice and governance.

Future aims, IT & training budget and IT objectives

Fifty seven percent of respondents intended to expand and grow. Forty three percent intended to maintain steady income and business as usual.

Seventy percent of organisations nominated an IT budget. Fifty six percent of organisations nominated a training budget. More than half of respondents spend $4,000 or less on training.

Seventy four percent of respondents noted their main future IT objective was to get more out of their system, rating this objective 7.2 out of ten. The next main objective was to protect and recover critical data and applications and this was rated most important at 8.1 out of ten. These are the same top two objectives as the last survey in 2008.

Disaster recovery and security are in three of the top four positions and rate most important of all objectives, 7.7, 7.9 and 8.1 out of ten. Mobility (58%) and Cloud (52%) are well down the list of IT objectives with just over half putting them on their "to consider" list and rating them below average in importance.

Apart from security, organisations recognise the need to become more productive, and "introduce new applications", "right info at right time", "integrate and analyse data" and "single view of customer" are all rated above average in importance.

ICT satisfaction and concerns

About three hundred respondents raised specific issues with ICT products and services. The main issues were – lack of software designed and customised to the sector needs, software not fully integrated or able to be easily integrated with other software, not intuitive and not easy to use.

Organisations need the right client management software, staff management software, customer relationship management software, membership and fundraising software to operate effectively.

Overall problems with IT & software

Integration, compatibility, software bugs, not focused on non-profit	33%
Old software, can't afford to upgrade	32%
Can't get training, can't afford training, need support, can't afford it	28%
Want to analyse data and generate better reports	5%
Want open system solutions	2%

"Need to provide software that is everywhere and everywhen"
<div align="right">

Church, NSW
</div>

The cost of hardware and software, and cost and availability of training required to use it effectively are two other major issues holding non-profits back from increased productivity and effectiveness. It is only the enthusiasm, flexibility and commitment of the sector to service delivery that compensates for flaws in the tools that are available to them.

"Prices are prohibitive for small non-profits"
<div align="right">

Creative & performing arts, Vic
</div>

Many issues are common to all organisations regardless of their size – integration, reporting tools and CRM. Larger organisations manage their own training needs effectively.

Issues by size of organisation

1-2	Training, need database and reporting tools, cost
3-4	Upgrades expensive, need CRM, Adobe products expensive, training
5-9	Integration, no funds for training, compatibility, reporting, need upgrades
10-19	Integration, training, support, Adobe costs, need CRM
20-49	Integration, need CRM, support, training
50-99	Integration, reporting, need custom CRM
100-499	Integration, reporting, support, inflexible vendors, CRM essential
500+	Integration and support

Since the last survey, there are signs of improvement in this area as a result of the overall trend towards open systems, web based solutions and managed services. But not all software developers are moving in this direction fast enough for the sector.

Effective analysis and reporting demands an integrated operational platform and many non-profits wrestle with hardware and software that is not fully integrated, open system, up to date, supported and funded, often using a mixture of hardware and differing versions of software.

This situation is further compounded by government and peak bodies developing and providing reporting databases and portals that are clunky, slow, non intuitive and not well supported, and then expecting non-profits to use them as the primary reporting tool for their funding.

Legacy hardware and software increasingly causes problems. Many organisations can't afford to upgrade their hardware and software, and can't afford to train staff (especially volunteers) and maintain new ICT products even if they could afford them. This reinforces the requirement for all non-profit software to be intuitive, easy to learn and use.

The DonorTec program and the annual Connecting Up events are two programs that lead the way in trying to improve some of these issues.

Connecting Up, Our Community, Infoxchange and Church Resources also work individually and together to lobby state and federal government for more and better directed initiatives to improve capability across the sector.

As a result of this lobbying there are signs that hardware and software vendors in Australia are developing, updating and providing more solutions that are valuable to the sector. But it is slow and the current financial environment is clearly affecting many smaller ICT developers.

Cisco and Microsoft have supported the DonorTec program from the beginning. Existing CRM products are now being repurposed and configured to reflect the needs of non-profit organisations. Other software products have been customised for the sector.

Many of the issues raised in the 2006 and 2008 surveys are still with us today and most of the quotes from organisations in the 2008 report could just as well be used in the 2011 report.

Lack of appropriate software

An issue raised by non-profit organisations was the lack of off the shelf software developed with their needs in mind, specifically Customer Relationship Management software (CRM). Many products address only part of an organisations needs. There is a perception that software is developed for business…not the non-profit sector. This is especially true with CRM software.

"Can't find good CRM for a small organisation" Youth Services, Vic

"We need a CRM with integrated fundraising"
Multiple Services, Tasmania

"We need a CRM system" Law & Advocacy, Vic

"We have outgrown our custom-built CRM"
Philanthropy, Vic

Another perception is that state and federal government are not software developers, and when they build web-based tools for reporting or other reasons…they don't do a good job. Software has bugs, is slow, isn't intuitive or user friendly, is not supported…and users inherit the blame.

The dissatisfaction is wide ranging – "Transport Access - slow and limited, CLSIS legal database – poor and out of date, Health Network – slow and frustrating, CAIS – flawed and doesn't meet our needs, prescribed by DHS so only meets their needs and can't be modified to also meet internal needs, VPAD - Government provided and very poor".

"Government provided software is difficult to use and has reliability issues."
Disability Service – NSW

Compounding this problem is the growing operational desire to integrate and share data across a range of applications. Funded non-profits have to report to funding bodies regularly and this requires software integration to avoid multiple data entry, and to be able to create tailored reports effectively.

Some larger organisations have addressed this issue by using external integrators and software developers to create solutions, or implementing fully integrated (ERP) systems. This option isn't realistic for smaller organisations because of the initial cost and ongoing support requirement for the system.

"The biggest concern is the lack of system integration across our organisation and the huge loss in productive hours resulting from this."
Peak Body - Queensland

Even when existing solutions are available, many organisations are not aware of them. Many non-profits are still unaware of the DonorTec program.

Cost and licensing

Non-profit organisations don't have money to waste and often don't have money to spend on ICT at all. The structure of funding provision (lump sum) and timing (one-off or for fixed period) also doesn't usually match the new payment options now available for managed services (cloud computing services) delivered online for a monthly fee.

Organisations are often forced to wait to buy new technology, and upgrading equipment and software is something that only large organisations do to a planned schedule. Most others upgrade only when systems fail and they are forced to.

The result is often a mixed bag of hardware, software and operating systems, making it even more difficult to manage training, support and licences. There is also concern about the legality and currency of licences because of the inclusion of donated equipment.

The DonorTec program has had and continues to have a positive influence in helping non-profits upgrade software and is one of the most valuable strategies for building capability in the sector.

Cost, training and support are linked by many organisations. There is concern about the expense of purchasing software and then getting the most productive value from it, especially if the software is not intuitive and easy to use.

"Not able to keep up to date (no money)"
Disability Service - NSW

Non-profits are expressing a desire for the DonorTec program to include Adobe products and MYOB.

"Would love Adobe products through DonorTec"
Education & Training - NSW

"Wish MYOB was available through DonorTec"
Creative & Performing Arts - Vic

Training, support and advice

Training (or the lack of it) to get the most out of the investment in technology is an issue raised by many organisations. Most training is on the job and many organisations can't afford external training, especially for their volunteers and part time workforce. Most "pick things up as they go along".

"Expense of purchasing software and training staff how to use it effectively"
Seniors organisation – South Australia

"We need access to local, low cost and tailored training"
Industry association – Victoria

The main currents of the digital revolution – more communication, more collaboration and more integration, impact non-profits just as much as businesses and households.

Convergence between telecommunication and data is creating new opportunities for cost saving and improved communication though VoIP and unified communications. Low cost mobile devices offer new opportunities to manage service delivery more effectively. Cloud computing offers the potential for lower cost software services and new payment regimes. But VoIP, mobility and cloud computing all carry new issues and problems that need clarification and understanding.

Added to this, the pressure from other quarters continues to grow with changing expectations and increasing demands from clients, customers, government legislation, auditing and funding bodies.

Government is expecting "more for less" – more and better service delivery for less funding, whilst investing little or nothing to help the sector meet its obligations or help the sector better leverage the opportunities delivered by technology.

It is assumed that these things will take care of themselves through market supply and demand. From the consistency of the issues raised and comments made over the course of three national non-profit surveys over six years from 2006 to 2011, it is evident that this is not the case.

There are positive signs that the ongoing commitment by Connecting Up and others is having an effect. But more work and more investment is needed to ensure the non-profit sector has access to the customised and complete ICT toolkit it needs to do the professional job that is expected by government, the sector and the community it services. That job is only going to grow.

DonorTec

DonorTec provides donated software and hardware to eligible Australian non-profit groups with Income Tax Exempt Status (ITE). Products are currently available from Microsoft, Symantec, Cisco, Giftworks, Bytes of Learning, Flickr, Mailshell, SAP, Calxa and NetLeverage but the list is being added to all the time.

This is an exciting program to assist Australian non-profits build their ICT capacity. It has already assisted thousands of groups to make huge savings in their operations.

To use DonorTec

An organisation needs:

- To join DonorTec and register.

- To provide documentation of tax-exempt status.

- Work out exactly what products it needs and check availability on the partner pages, recognising that usually an organisation can only order once per year.

- Order the selected products online through the ordering system.

There is a small administration fee for processing and administering the program on an ongoing basis. Payment is by Paypal or by cheque.

For more information about the DonorTec program visit www.donortec.org

DonorTec solutions

Below are sections from three case studies that address the use of DonorTec by non-profit organisations. The full case studies can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

DonorTec – Brompton Bowden Community Centre

The Bowden Brompton Community Centre is a community centre based in Adelaide.

How did you first hear about Donortec?

I went to the Connecting Up conference three or four years ago. Doug Jacquier spoke about DonorTec and his intention to implement the program in Australia.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

First we had to register and prove that we were a Not-For-Profit organisation. They then sent us out a password so we could access their website and see what equipment we could order. I emailed my IT technician to show him what was available and he told us what to buy. I ordered everything online and paid with a credit card. The order took about eight weeks to arrive. Then the technician came in and installed it. The whole process was simple and straightforward.

How much did it cost you?

We ordered Small Business Server, sixteen licences for MS Office, a Cisco wireless router and two network switches. We saved more than $10,000 and it cost us about $1,500 in administration fees.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

I didn't immediately realise that once you order, you can't do it again for another year. So you need to be very clear what you want.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

Cost savings. And the fact that we have all the new equipment has increased the stability of our network. That's another benefit and saving that wasn't obvious at the time.

We can also offer our clients the latest equipment and software to train on. So they can use the same things they would when they move into the workforce. We would never have been able to afford that in a million years.

DonorTec – The McIntyre Centre

The McIntyre Centre is a disability service provider based in Queensland. It provides therapeutic and recreational horse riding to people with disabilities.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

It was simple. I signed up on the DonorTec site. At the time, we were putting in a new office and I needed some licences so I ordered them through DonorTec. Then we converted another building to give us more office space, so we needed a Cisco router. Once again, I went through DonorTec. I bought a couple of wireless routers to test them out. I was a bit concerned they might be affected by the power lines that run across the property, but they have worked fine without any interference.

Where did you go for advice?

I used to run my own IT business, so I am experienced with all the IT issues and requirements involved in the organisation.

How do you know who to trust?

DonorTec is the distributing agent for major international companies such as Microsoft and Cisco, so I didn't have any concerns.

How much did it cost you?

I bought two server licences plus Office Professional software for the Centre. All up, we saved about $40,000. We couldn't have done the development without the DonorTec program. We now have two servers, state of the art software and desktops for everyone. We couldn't have afforded it otherwise.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The savings are obvious. But one of the biggest benefits is the legality of the infrastructure.

DonorTec – Queensland Alliance

Queensland Alliance is the peak body for the mental health community service providers in Queensland.

How did you first hear about Donortec?

Our IT support company Datacare (now IT Integrity) recommended the DonorTec program. So I looked at the web site and found out what products were available, who was eligible and what the registration process was.

I then checked that we had the appropriate documentation to support an application. I discussed the process with Datacare, who helped us through the process. Then we registered with DonorTec and

put the order in. It was that simple. The software was free. All we had to pay was an administration fee.

We ended up saving about $20,000 through using the DonorTec program. Apart from the software and server licences, we also got a Cisco router with wireless capacity to support our expansion into new office space.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?
None. This was because we took the time to look at what products were available and made sure we got the right number of licences.

What advice would you give someone else?
Have a good think about your IT strategy so you are clear about what you are asking for.

DonorTec – Novita
Novita is a multiple service provider for children and young people with physical disabilities living in South Australia.

How did you first hear about Donortec?
We heard about DonorTec through a newsletter. One of our staff who received the newsletter drew my attention to it. It actually sounded too good to be true. I remember thinking "I can't believe this…what's the catch." I asked one of my staff to get more information and they got in touch with Josh at DonorTec.

The responsiveness of DonorTec has been brilliant. They have been very helpful in guiding us through the ordering process. We were provided with clear information on how to do the application. Then we sat down and worked out what items we needed over the next 12 months. We particularly appreciated the fact that we could spread our ordering requirements over our 5 locations.

The timing of leaning about DonorTec was particularly helpful, given that we had just become aware that we were under-licensed for MS Office. The DonorTec program allowed us to bring our licensing up-to-date very cost-effectively and in one hit.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
It has allowed us to start thinking about strategic issues we wouldn't have considered before. I realise now that we might finally be able to do these things.

Before using DonorTec, I concentrated predominantly on basic hardware. Now, I'm starting to explore new and emerging IT solutions, such as VDI and blade centres. DonorTec has allowed me to be more creative and strategic.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
How to use the DonorTec program. I've now become very familiar with the website and I have confidence in the support available from DonorTec.

I now read each issue of the DonorTec newsletter very carefully. I realise that the DonorTec program is constantly evolving and I want to be in the best position to take advantage of new offerings.

Telecommunications services

Telecommunication services provide a basic platform for communication and are indispensable to all non-profit categories.

Phone, Fax, Mobile and Internet are the most used telecommunication services. Organisations are better connected than ever and the telecommunications service choices reflect the operational requirements of each non-profit category. VoIP adoption continues to increase and there is a 6% rise in VoIP use from 16% to 22% compared with the 2008 survey.

Telecommunications use - organisations

Organisation	Phone	Fax	Mobile	Internet	Smart phone	VoIP	Integrated Comms	Total
Education & Employment	91%	88%	72%	67%	37%	30%	3%	187
Community Development	90%	86%	70%	72%	29%	20%	2%	183
Disability services	96%	91%	90%	84%	53%	24%	2%	158
Health & Treatment	97%	96%	85%	78%	55%	23%	2%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	89%	86%	76%	48%	21%	8%	0%	107
Youth services	96%	92%	89%	82%	46%	23%	1%	79
Creative arts & Media	95%	86%	84%	71%	43%	21%	3%	77
Child services	95%	94%	56%	83%	16%	8%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	98%	95%	79%	87%	52%	23%	3%	62
Business Organisations	87%	84%	87%	72%	52%	39%	8%	61
Religion	93%	90%	73%	68%	47%	29%	2%	59
Family services	93%	91%	91%	80%	46%	16%	4%	56
Environment	96%	91%	85%	67%	28%	28%	7%	46
Aged Services	100%	87%	91%	89%	36%	20%	7%	45
Housing & Shelter	91%	86%	95%	73%	39%	14%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	95%	82%	69%	64%	49%	21%	3%	39
Multiple services	97%	88%	91%	81%	69%	34%	9%	32
Museums & Libraries	88%	75%	41%	50%	9%	3%	3%	32
Emergency services	94%	83%	89%	61%	22%	11%	6%	18
Average	**93%**	**89%**	**79%**	**73%**	**40%**	**22%**	**3%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Telecommunications use - size

Size	Phone	Fax	Mobile	Internet	Smart phone	VoIP	Integrated Comms	Total
1-2	88%	85%	67%	51%	22%	16%	1%	519
3-4	93%	88%	78%	78%	37%	20%	0%	161
5-9	96%	92%	80%	84%	39%	20%	2%	241
10-19	98%	89%	85%	86%	43%	22%	4%	194
20-49	96%	92%	91%	89%	56%	26%	6%	179
50-99	97%	91%	92%	84%	68%	24%	1%	74
100-499	98%	93%	94%	87%	82%	40%	10%	103
500+	100%	93%	100%	93%	93%	71%	14%	14
Average	**93%**	**89%**	**79%**	**73%**	**40%**	**22%**	**3%**	**1,485**

PABX system

Thirty three percent of respondents use a PABX system with Commander and NEC having the highest percentage of users (6%).

PABX systems - organisations

Organisation	Commander	NEC	Alcatel	LG Nortel	Panasonic	Samsung	Hybrex	Ericsson	Total
Education & Employment	4%	8%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	1%	187
Community Development	5%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	0%	183
Disability services	11%	9%	3%	7%	2%	1%	3%	3%	158
Health & Treatment	8%	9%	5%	3%	4%	1%	3%	1%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	0%	0%	107
Youth services	3%	6%	8%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	79
Creative arts & Media	5%	0%	1%	6%	1%	1%	0%	0%	77
Child services	8%	6%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	16%	3%	0%	5%	5%	5%	2%	0%	62
Business Organisations	7%	10%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	61
Religion	10%	5%	5%	3%	0%	3%	0%	2%	59
Family services	2%	4%	2%	5%	5%	9%	2%	2%	56
Environment	7%	7%	4%	4%	2%	0%	0%	2%	46
Aged Services	4%	9%	7%	9%	4%	2%	2%	4%	45
Housing & Shelter	2%	5%	2%	5%	0%	2%	0%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	8%	13%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	5%	39
Multiple services	3%	19%	9%	19%	3%	6%	3%	13%	32
Museums & Libraries	6%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	32
Emergency services	17%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	6%	18
Average	**6%**	**6%**	**3%**	**3%**	**2%**	**2%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

PABX systems - size

Size	PABX?	Commander	NEC	Alcatel	LG Nortel	Panasonic	Samsung	Hybrex	Ericsson	Total
1-2	9%	3%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	519
3-4	31%	7%	4%	3%	4%	0%	2%	1%	1%	161
5-9	34%	7%	7%	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%	0%	241
10-19	44%	12%	8%	3%	5%	5%	2%	3%	2%	194
20-49	54%	11%	7%	4%	4%	6%	5%	2%	1%	179
50-99	70%	11%	16%	7%	7%	1%	4%	1%	5%	74
100-499	65%	3%	21%	11%	8%	1%	5%	1%	6%	103
500+	86%	7%	21%	14%	0%	7%	14%	7%	14%	14
Average	**33%**	**6%**	**6%**	**3%**	**3%**	**2%**	**2%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is the transmission of voice over a data network such as the internet. Sound waves (voice) are converted into data packets that are transmitted across a data network rather than through the telephone line, and reassembled and converted back into sound once they reach the destination.

A softphone is the software program that converts voice to data and back again. Calls can be made using the microphone and speakers attached to a computer, or through a specially adapted handset using SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) a standard protocol used by the majority of VoIP and internet based telephony providers.

Having voice and data integrated over the same network leads to further opportunities. It's not just about cheap calls anymore. A unified communications system allows text messages, emails, voice messages and faxes to be accessed and shared from multiple devices anywhere.

Advantages extend beyond simple cost savings, event though these may be significant. Incoming calls can be directed to a VoIP phone, regardless of your location. So you travel anywhere and still receive and make calls.

Disadvantages exist, but can be managed. The quality of the call is dependent on the quality, speed and reliability of the internet connection. And if your electricity supply is down, you can't make calls over the internet and will need to resort to a landline.

Calls using VoIP will add to your overall use of data and have an impact on your broadband plan, so you may have to modify your plan accordingly, giving yourself a higher limit. A 10-minute conversation is roughly equal to a 1MB download. But even with a modified plan, savings on call costs can leave you well ahead.

Solutions for all sizes

Big businesses have been using VoIP for some years with the principal supplier, Cisco providing high-end systems that manage hundreds of extensions. For individuals using VoIP, solutions are available from suppliers such as Skype, Yahoo, MSN Messenger and Engin.

To use VoIP

An organisation needs:

A client device - either a VoIP handset or a software phone (soft-phone) on a computer with a headset and a microphone

A broadband connection - with enough capacity to carry the number of calls that may be required simultaneously

A service provider – who can terminate the call onto the ordinary telephone system

And – if you are an organisation or business with staff, some switching capacity to handle extensions – a digital PABX.

Unified communications

Unified communications is connecting and integrating voice and data networks within an organisation to better manage cost, phone calls, email, fax, instant messaging, audio and

videoconferencing. Software is even available that can find the most cost effective route for a call automatically.

Staff can have one number that will reach them wherever they are in an organisation, whether travelling or at home. A call to the one number will automatically be transferred to a mobile or desktop phone wherever you may be. Important calls can be routed through at any time, whereas less important calls can be routed to voicemail, a receptionist or a colleague. From a customer point of view, you are always available on your business number, no matter where you might actually be.

Text messages, emails, voice messages and faxes can be accessed from a single mailbox through whichever device is the most appropriate – desktop, laptop, mobile phone, iPad or PDA.

Presence is now built into whatever communications technology is being used - video, audio or collaboration tool. It allows somebody to check on the status of one of their contacts – busy, on the phone or doesn't want to be disturbed. It lets them know when somebody is available and the best way to contact them – phone, email, IM or SMS. It can improve communications effectiveness and increase productivity.

Videoconferencing has been slow to mature. It was seen as too expensive, too hard to use and having problems with interoperability. Making a video call was difficult and even in most ICT vendor boardrooms the default choice for conferencing was audio. Finally with costs reducing and improvements in set up and usability, it has become easy to make a video call. At the low end, desktop videoconferencing is already familiar to many people using Skype, and this helps people understand the benefits of videoconferencing at the office.

VoIP – The Sydney Stereo Camera Club

The Sydney Stereo Camera Club is primarily a venue for sharing stereo photographic work. It also provides education in the subject through guest speakers and access to expert members and other related commercial suppliers.

What is your most recent IT project or development?
Using Skype Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The idea came from a number of members that were using Skype for their own purposes. We started using it in the club, because there were cost savings. We ended up choosing Skype by default…more and more people were using it to save money on phone calls and suggesting it to others. We got a critical mass and then others joined in. That's often the way things naturally evolve.

Skype was the only one available at the time and because of our international members it needed to be a universally available low cost or free VoIP system. Skype has many benefits. You can create a list of other users that you wish to talk to and see who has their computer on and is available. Skype also has the ability to upload and display pictures of callers.

When the quality is good…it's very good, but when it drops out, it's a problem. Most of the time…quality is good. It depends on the internet suppliers such as ISPs and telcos and how many people are using it. There's no quality of service (QOS) guarantee…you get what you pay for. And it's free.

Skype has evolved, and more people are using it. It has now evolved to be able to do videoconferencing. So by using a mixture of my laptop with a Skype account for travelling, a web cam and a microphone I can see and talk to anyone using the system.

How much did it cost you?

It's free. The hidden cost is in use of the broadband connection and the nature of the connection plan. On most plans you might use several hundred kilobits of data for a ten-minute chat.

Skype has built points of presence all over the world to allow connection to established telecommunications networks. These connect users to the local telephone service. So for a very low fee…I can make virtually any call to club members or anyone for a few cents over normal phone lines to the regular telephone. I could be anywhere in the world but nothing changes. Calls to mobiles are more expensive but still low by comparison.

What were the main risks you took?

Security is a risk that can be managed. Any computer software can be hacked and vendors are moving towards a more secure approach. The risk is that somebody will hack through your Skype phone into your computer. Spam is the main incentive for hackers to be interested in small users…using your computer as a "mailbox" to send spam on to others. To address this, we provide information on security on the club web site.

What advice would you give someone else?

It's a best efforts solution…not a business grade solution. If you don't care that you may have to resort to a normal phone from time to time…then it is well worthwhile. Some members use Skype video. We can hold up an object during a conference or discussion and demonstrate it to members.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

To give you an example of cost savings…when I was in Hong Kong I spent $2 worth of "Skype Out" calls to Australia that would have cost me hundreds of dollars otherwise. I was using the same service in Hong Kong that I use in Sydney via my laptop.

Skype also has voicemail services where you can leave messages for people. So for people with disabilities for instance, it could be a great way to communicate rather than email. Or people with hearing impairment, using video or text where they can't use voice. Slow "signing" is possible with the video service

VoIP – Over The Wire

Over The Wire is a telecommunications provider focused on providing simple and specialised voice services using the Internet Protocol primarily over private networks. The business also offers data storage and hosting to its customers.

Who are your clients and customers?

Over The Wire is a new breed of telecommunication service provider, which offers voice services – telephone calls - delivered in a non-traditional way. The digital revolution has blurred the line between voice and data services in a way that presents many new opportunities, especially in reducing call costs substantially.

In the past, the main telecommunication channel for everyone was the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), managed mainly by Telstra. The PSTN is the huge network of copper wires that connects homes, businesses, government and other organisations together. We're all familiar with it. The mobile phone network has added an additional communication channel to the copper wire network and for many people is now the main communications tool.

And the internet has added another dimension to communication through email and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and many people are familiar with Skype which provides a free and/or low cost service for phone calls across the web. It works, it's cheap…but it's not always reliable or at a standard that's acceptable to business.

How do they benefit from your product?

There are two key benefits. The most obvious is a considerable reduction in call costs for our customers. Most find that the savings each month, more than pay for the cost of our services. The other benefit is technical. An organisation that uses our services can treat all their offices as one site from a telephony perspective. They have one platform across the entire organisation. For example, an employee can connect into voice mail from any phone, in any office with their same password, wherever they may be.

We manage all the telecommunication needs of an organisation as a service – router, virtual PABX, handsets and the hosted service. We've standardised on SNOM handsets because they are an excellent product at a good price. However we can incorporate any brand of good quality handset into the system.

What changes are taking place in your category?

There is a huge trend towards Voice over Internet Protocol – VoIP, primarily driven by larger organisations looking to save money on call costs. This trend is now working its way downwards into organisations of all sizes.

There is another trend towards unified messaging, through the integration of telephone and computer. So people can receive voice mails through their phone, computer and Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). And there is a growing trend towards hosted voice services. Instead of having PABX boxes on site, people have a virtual PABX that manages their handsets in the same way but without the box.

How have you been successful?

We charge for the complete service on a monthly basis. Any problems, we replace handsets straight away. All upgrades to the virtual PABX system and new features are automatic and included in the price. When you buy a PABX system, if you want a new feature, you order and pay for it. With our service all new features are upgraded automatically.

An average customer may spend $1,000 a month for the services we provide, but we have seen that they are saving at least that in reduced call costs. So the service is effectively free, because businesses always make pretty much the same number of calls every month as part of standard business activity.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

Yes. People want price. A few buy on technology…but not many. Customers say, "You can replace what I have, cheaper and I'm confident with you as a supplier."

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

Price isn't an indicator of quality. Clients are looking for the opportunity to reduce phone costs. One of our clients is spending $10-$20,000 a month. We could halve their costs. There is a poor perception of VoIP. People associate it with poor quality. But all the technology in this area has finally become mature. It's voice delivered over private networks, which is very reliable. We know what the quality is. Nothing is left to chance.

Mobility

Mobility is about enabling workers to operate effectively from anywhere – office, "hot desk", home office, hotel, car, café or even sitting on a fence by the side of the road. To do this effectively, business devices of all kinds must be able to connect and talk to each other in real time, stably, securely and privately if desired.

Mobility "tools" are being used across the whole sector. Device selection and use is dictated by need. Individuals will often own a number of devices and use whichever device they need.

Mobility - organisations

Organisation	Smart phone	Supply smart phones	Tablet – iPad etc	Laptop	Total
Education & Employment	37%	38%	23%	88%	187
Community Development	29%	34%	14%	87%	183
Disability services	53%	64%	35%	94%	158
Health & Treatment	55%	57%	30%	88%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	21%	17%	8%	85%	107
Youth services	46%	65%	15%	86%	79
Creative arts & Media	43%	19%	13%	77%	77
Child services	16%	19%	14%	89%	63
Law & advocacy	52%	52%	19%	89%	62
Business Organisations	52%	48%	44%	89%	61
Religion	47%	29%	31%	80%	59
Family services	46%	63%	18%	96%	56
Environment	28%	37%	13%	74%	46
Aged Services	36%	62%	22%	87%	45
Housing & Shelter	39%	57%	14%	80%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	49%	41%	21%	85%	39
Multiple services	69%	81%	34%	91%	32
Museums & Libraries	9%	9%	3%	81%	32
Emergency services	22%	50%	11%	100%	18
Average	**40%**	**43%**	**21%**	**87%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Mobility – regions

Region	Smart phone	Supply smart phones	Tablet – iPad etc	Laptop	Total
New South Wales	37%	42%	19%	87%	472
Victoria	44%	46%	19%	90%	324
South Australia	42%	39%	21%	84%	234
Queensland	37%	46%	27%	86%	225
Western Australia	41%	40%	22%	86%	133
Tasmania	38%	58%	25%	93%	55
ACT	52%	41%	31%	79%	29
Northern Territory	27%	45%	18%	64%	11
Average	**40%**	**43%**	**21%**	**87%**	**1,483**

Mobility - size

Size	Smart phone	Supply smart phones	Tablet – iPad etc	Laptop	Total
1-2	22%	17%	10%	78%	519
3-4	37%	39%	13%	83%	161
5-9	39%	48%	24%	91%	241
10-19	43%	51%	20%	93%	194
20-49	56%	70%	32%	93%	179
50-99	68%	69%	45%	96%	74
100-499	82%	86%	45%	96%	103
500+	93%	100%	57%	100%	14
Average	**40%**	**43%**	**21%**	**87%**	**1,485**

Mobility extends beyond the people in an organisation to the assets the organisation owns. Vehicles, plant and equipment can all be monitored, tracked and managed, improving productivity, efficiency and reducing costs. GPS provides the location reference system that makes sense of the information coming from sensors and monitors on mobile devices and equipment.

Google Maps provides maps and images of roads, buildings and locations connected to a host of useful directory products and services. Communications can be integrated, automated and made more efficient through unifying communications across devices, integrating voice and data and allowing access to content across the organisation.

Mobility needs software developed to support a mobile workforce and software to support mobile devices used on the road.

There are a few issues in this. Mobile workers need the right applications. They need to be able to access the applications securely. They need to be able to access the applications reliably. So the more an organisation relies on mobile devices and mobile applications, the more that organisation has to ensure reliable storage, security, backup and disaster recovery.

Mobile device management – Airwatch
TAAConnect is a provider of telecommunications and IT services to businesses of all sizes in Australia and New Zealand.

What is happening in mobility?
There have been big changes in mobility with the adoption of tablets and smart phones. People are increasingly bringing their mobile devices into work in government departments, corporates and other large organisations and expecting to be able to connect the device into the IT network.

They want to be able to use the organisation's email software on their phone or tablet. Companies that have been used to managing Blackberries on the network are now being expected to manage and incorporate a wide range of devices running Symbian, Windows phone 7, Android and Apple iOS.

You need a management application that allows you to have visibility and control of the whole mobile fleet of devices, from a single application. That is the issue that CIOs all over the world are

facing at the moment. CIOs are not going to tell the CEO how to run the business. It has to be the other way around.

The IT department is there to serve the organisation and if the CEO and other managers want to incorporate these new devices into the business then the CIO has to make it happen. At the moment, rather than look for solutions, many CIOs are putting up barriers. But when organisations need to become more agile, the CIO has to find a solution.

How do you manage mobile devices?

We can provide a mobile device management application called Airwatch to organisations, or we can offer it as a hosted service, on a per-device monthly management fee.

Within the hosted service, we have two offerings – "do you want to support your devices yourself, or do you want us to do that as well?" We can manage everything from providing the devices and managing the account, through to the ongoing support for the device. For instance, if a user rings and says "My email isn't working," or "How do I use this application with my device?" we can take that whole burden off the IT department.

What are the main issues?

You should start with looking closely at what the devices are going to be used for and then decide if any particular brands are best for that purpose. What services are you currently delivering to your workforce and what services do you want to deliver? What is the best way to deliver the service and what is the best device to use? Ask the right questions and the solution becomes obvious.

Also, in your corporate network environment, your internet is filtered. If your workforce is outside of your premises using 3G devices how are you going to manage internet filtering? All these things can be managed, but you have to plan the architecture up front..

Next, how are you going to manage the delivery of the organisation business applications, and what value will they deliver? If the workforce is going to use the applications constantly, like using a CRM application, then you can probably justify the cost. But if it's just a case of accessing emails, then you probably couldn't. Plus you have the issue of training. When you deliver devices to non technically savvy people, you need to train them.

What else is involved?

Airwatch can manage all the devices across an organisation. So we manage all devices from introduction to decommissioning. If a device is lost, we can identify the latest known location and we can remotely wipe it of all company data and information.

How do you deliver company applications?

The Apple iOS is great at delivering content. To deliver company applications, we set up a private appstore, which gives the business the ability to deliver applications without having to use an iTunes account.

That means the business, or TAAConnect on its behalf, decides which applications are useful and organises the licensing for the applications to be delivered to staff. With all these issues to consider, you can see why IT departments put up the barriers. Many of these issues are not familiar territory, but if you plan it properly from the beginning it can be managed.

Every client we talk to, we now ask them what they are doing about mobile devices. Everyone from government departments, right down to small businesses is looking into mobility right now.

Blink Mobile case study

Rype is an IT services company, which consults, implements and supports IT products and services, mainly focusing on the Apple product platform.

What changes are taking place in your category?

We have seen a massive push for mobile device management from local government and enterprise markets. Recently Queensland Rail put out a survey to staff asking what issues staff would like to see addressed. There were two major responses, the first was for more money and the other was asking to bring their Apple devices and use them in the work environment.

There are two main areas of interest from enterprise clients - how to manage BYO (bring your own) devices and how to manage delivery and use of company owned devices. Mobile Iron will support either option.

How did you solve the council mobility problem?

The first two areas we looked at were food and trees. These were chosen as the hardest forms to build because of their complexity. The forms had to be smart. If we could do this for trees and food, we could easily do this for any other subject as well.

The system works both ways. The Blink form is populated from the council Pathway database at the beginning of each day, when the user turns the device on. The system tells the inspector which food outlets they are inspecting. The form contains questions that have to be filled in, then it rates the organisation on whether it passed or failed the inspection, and which problems were identified.

If there are any problems, the inspector can take a photograph to demonstrate clearly what the issue is. The device then generates a PDF file that is sent to Logan and stored in the document management system. For trees, the system provides information on nuisance trees, GPS coordinates and so on. The application can work on an iPhone, iPad or any platform.

As a result of what we have done, we have created a series of modules for councils. The middleware product that we have developed is also available for licence to anybody that wants to use it, not just Rype. The product works with Pathway and also Dataworks, both of which are used by the 400 councils across Australia, so we believe it has broad application.

We now know that for any legacy system, we can write the middleware between devices and internal system for data exchange. We have created a web service gateway. It's the same issue for any large organisation.

Computers and software

Computers and software applications offer organisations an information platform for service delivery. Technology provides the information storage, analysis and networking resource necessary for management, reporting, strategy and collaboration.

Business software packages such as Microsoft Office offer a suite of tools that address the basic business operational needs of most small organisations – word processing, financial management, database and communication.

Operating system

Most respondents use one or more versions of Windows as the computer operating system. Apple use has doubled since the last survey for two main reasons. The Intel chip allows use across Mac and Windows operating systems, and the adoption of iPads and iPhones by the market has introduced new users to the Apple platform. 60% of organisations use Windows as the server operating system. 2% use Linux.

Operating system - organisations

Organisation	Win 7	Win XP	Vista	MAC	Other	Total
Education & Employment	69%	60%	13%	20%	3%	187
Community Development	72%	54%	18%	10%	2%	183
Disability services	64%	53%	18%	11%	3%	158
Health & Treatment	58%	63%	13%	15%	2%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	60%	62%	18%	8%	1%	107
Youth services	56%	65%	13%	14%	0%	79
Creative arts & Media	39%	53%	13%	38%	1%	77
Child services	52%	65%	32%	2%	3%	63
Law & advocacy	60%	61%	11%	15%	0%	62
Business Organisations	61%	44%	13%	15%	2%	61
Religion	61%	61%	19%	37%	5%	59
Family services	70%	57%	14%	11%	0%	56
Environment	48%	57%	11%	20%	2%	46
Aged Services	58%	69%	7%	7%	2%	45
Housing & Shelter	61%	52%	16%	5%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	44%	51%	10%	18%	0%	39
Multiple services	88%	63%	13%	16%	6%	32
Museums & Libraries	50%	75%	19%	13%	0%	32
Emergency services	78%	50%	0%	6%	0%	18
Average	**61%**	**58%**	**15%**	**15%**	**2%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Hardware device usage

Most respondents own a variety of computing devices to suit different working conditions and different work occasions – home, office, travelling, meetings and service delivery. This new choice introduces workplace flexibility and access to information wherever a user might be.

Hardware device usage - organisations

Organisation	PC	Laptop	Tablet	PC used the most	Laptop most used	Tablet most used	Total
Education & Employment	89%	88%	23%	81%	55%	3%	187
Community Development	92%	87%	14%	85%	44%	4%	183
Disability services	91%	94%	35%	87%	46%	9%	158
Health & Treatment	96%	88%	30%	89%	36%	6%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	87%	85%	8%	74%	57%	0%	107
Youth services	95%	86%	15%	84%	48%	4%	79
Creative arts & Media	92%	77%	13%	86%	38%	0%	77
Child services	97%	89%	14%	86%	57%	2%	63
Law & advocacy	94%	89%	19%	84%	45%	6%	62
Business Organisations	92%	89%	44%	69%	64%	7%	61
Religion	92%	80%	31%	71%	64%	12%	59
Family services	93%	96%	18%	86%	41%	0%	56
Environment	85%	74%	13%	70%	52%	2%	46
Aged Services	96%	87%	22%	98%	20%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	93%	80%	14%	91%	34%	5%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	95%	85%	21%	85%	41%	5%	39
Multiple services	100%	91%	34%	91%	56%	6%	32
Museums & Libraries	94%	81%	3%	94%	41%	0%	32
Emergency services	89%	100%	11%	78%	50%	0%	18
Average	**92%**	**87%**	**21%**	**83%**	**47%**	**4%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Hardware device usage - size

Size	PC	Laptop	Tablet	PC used the most	Laptop most used	Tablet most used	Total
1-2	85%	78%	10%	75%	50%	2%	519
3-4	93%	83%	13%	87%	42%	4%	161
5-9	97%	91%	24%	85%	44%	7%	241
10-19	94%	93%	20%	88%	50%	5%	194
20-49	98%	93%	32%	91%	45%	5%	179
50-99	93%	98%	45%	91%	39%	7%	74
100-499	98%	96%	45%	90%	52%	4%	103
500+	100%	100%	57%	93%	43%	0%	14
Average	**92%**	**87%**	**21%**	**83%**	**47%**	**4%**	**1,485**

Digital camera use

Most respondents (74%) used digital still or video cameras for work purposes.

Cameras were used within organisations for recording events, training, property damage, assets and maintenance, record keeping, health & safety issues, complaint records, staff ID, conferences, website, grant applications, professional development, advertising and magazine promotion.

Cameras were used externally for recording client activities, client evaluation and assessment, therapy progress, creating learning materials, YouTube channel, field days, student projects, concerts, coaching, short films, presentations and seminars.

Digital camera use - organisations

Organisation	Still or video digital camera	Total
Education & Employment	65%	187
Community Development	78%	183
Disability services	81%	158
Health & Treatment	69%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	69%	107
Youth services	77%	79
Creative arts & Media	77%	77
Child services	81%	63
Law & advocacy	69%	62
Business Organisations	75%	61
Religion	59%	59
Family services	75%	56
Environment	74%	46
Aged Services	82%	45
Housing & Shelter	70%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	64%	39
Multiple services	88%	32
Museums & Libraries	81%	32
Emergency services	67%	18
Average	**74%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Email software

Most respondents (92%) use a Microsoft email client of some kind, with Microsoft Outlook being the most common (76%). Web-based email is used by 21% of respondents.

Email software - organisations

Organisation	MS Outlook	Web based	Outlook Express	Thunder bird	Mac Mail	Lotus Notes	Other	Total
Education & Employment	75%	28%	18%	4%	2%	2%	11%	187
Community Development	78%	27%	21%	1%	2%	2%	7%	183
Disability services	82%	13%	15%	1%	1%	1%	5%	158
Health & Treatment	85%	14%	10%	3%	2%	1%	5%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	66%	20%	24%	4%	0%	0%	8%	107
Youth services	87%	16%	13%	0%	4%	1%	3%	79
Creative arts & Media	57%	34%	16%	3%	6%	1%	21%	77
Child services	68%	8%	27%	3%	0%	0%	6%	63
Law & advocacy	79%	11%	10%	2%	2%	0%	10%	62
Business Organisations	85%	28%	11%	2%	5%	0%	7%	61
Religion	68%	29%	15%	3%	10%	3%	12%	59
Family services	89%	21%	5%	0%	0%	0%	7%	56
Environment	57%	20%	20%	4%	2%	0%	20%	46
Aged Services	87%	9%	16%	0%	0%	0%	13%	45
Housing & Shelter	73%	23%	16%	0%	2%	0%	5%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	67%	23%	3%	0%	0%	3%	15%	39
Multiple services	94%	22%	6%	0%	0%	0%	6%	32
Museums & Libraries	50%	22%	22%	3%	0%	0%	9%	32
Emergency services	80%	28%	11%	0%	0%	0%	17%	18
Average	**76%**	**21%**	**16%**	**2%**	**2%**	**1%**	**9%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Email Software issues to consider

The rise in use of web-based email is significant since the last survey in 2008 and services like Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo Mail etc have added flexibility to email communication whilst on the move that wasn't easily available before. But anything free comes at a price.

The price in this case is support should anything go wrong. Who are you going to call? What leverage do you have if there are problems with your free service? There have been a number of well publicised cases in 2011 of disappearing email accounts (hundreds of thousands) and accounts that have been high-jacked.

Most web-based email services are based in the USA and subject to the Patriot Act. This may not be an issue for the average individual in the non-profit sector, but could have implications for the board from a privacy and governance perspective. Your web-based emails are not private.

So don't rely 100% on free services for the communication needs of your organisation. Web-based email is a very valuable supplementary service, but be aware of the potential problems and issues, research them and use these services with due diligence and consideration.

Accounting software

Most respondents (83%) use an accounting package of some kind, with MYOB being the most common (56%). Larger organisations used a mixture or Technology One, Sybiz, ACCPAC, GreenTree, Sun Financials, Arrow and SAP.

Accounting software - organisations

Organisation	MYOB	Quick books	Other	Attache	MS Dynamics	Total
Education & Employment	50%	9%	18%	2%	1%	187
Community Development	62%	15%	5%	1%	0%	183
Disability services	47%	15%	23%	3%	4%	158
Health & Treatment	60%	14%	14%	4%	0%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	53%	9%	15%	0%	0%	107
Youth services	68%	11%	13%	1%	0%	79
Creative arts & Media	56%	6%	16%	0%	0%	77
Child services	68%	8%	11%	0%	2%	63
Law & advocacy	66%	18%	2%	0%	0%	62
Business Organisations	49%	18%	16%	0%	2%	61
Religion	42%	19%	10%	2%	0%	59
Family services	66%	11%	13%	2%	2%	56
Environment	65%	9%	13%	0%	0%	46
Aged Services	47%	11%	31%	4%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	73%	5%	2%	2%	2%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	49%	8%	8%	0%	8%	39
Multiple services	50%	19%	28%	6%	3%	32
Museums & Libraries	38%	6%	19%	0%	0%	32
Emergency services	44%	17%	17%	0%	0%	18
Average	**56%**	**12%**	**14%**	**2%**	**1%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Accounting software - size

Size	Accounting software	MYOB	Quick books	Other	Attache	MS Dynamics	Total
1-2	65%	45%	13%	8%	0%	0%	519
3-4	83%	64%	14%	7%	0%	0%	161
5-9	94%	74%	12%	7%	0%	0%	241
10-19	93%	73%	8%	9%	2%	2%	194
20-49	97%	66%	10%	21%	2%	0%	179
50-99	96%	41%	15%	31%	11%	1%	74
100-499	97%	20%	12%	51%	7%	9%	103
500+	100%	7%	0%	71%	7%	14%	14
Average	**83%**	**56%**	**12%**	**14%**	**2%**	**1%**	**1,485**

Accounting Software issues

On the whole respondents are happy with the most popular accounting software packages – MYOB and Quickbooks, rating them as good. But some accounting packages don't address the specific needs of non-profits especially when reporting to government funding bodies.

"MYOB cannot cope with Divisional Reporting." Disability Service – Victoria

> *"Quickbooks: End of year wages Payment Summary does not calculate salary sacrifice payment (let alone the grossed-up amount) and therefore, payment summaries have to be hand written."*
>
> Housing Service - NSW

"We need a program that will deliver all the reporting required by government funding bodies - hours of service, number of staff, costing for service, cost of unit price and so on."

Disability Service – Queensland

"MYOB is not geared to NFP that operate on grants and are spending DOWN their funds each year and have funding performance indicators that require you to do so." Community Housing – ACT

Accounting software reporting solutions

Here is a section from a case study that address some accounting software reporting issues mentioned. The full case studies can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Calxa case study

Calxa is a software product that simplifies budget and cashflow forecasting for non-profits and small businesses. Calxa makes it easier to manage finances with simple tools for creating animated, professional and intuitive financial reports, graphs and charts.

ACT for Kids is a non-profit organisation that provides free services to treat and prevent child abuse. The organisation was started in 1988 and employs 180 staff working from six major centres in Queensland and five safe houses.

What prompted you to look at the Calxa solution?

We were frustrated with MYOB reporting capabilities. We have upwards of thirty different budgets at any one time. Because of the nature of the grants we receive from government, they all need reporting on separately. Government has significantly simplified reporting over the last two years, but we still have to manage each budget separately.

Being able to report by program is important to us, and to our ability to manage each program effectively. MYOB can't do that. It can't capture budget information by program. You can capture a budget for the life of a job, but we need to report month by month. With Calxa, we can prepare a budget for each individual program, one for each head office department and one for fundraising. The fundraising department can budget for each campaign with a separate job code. It gives us immense flexibility and up to date knowledge of our budget status that we didn't have before.

Calxa is a powerful reporting tool, but you can use it to create budgets as well. Reports can be distributed to stakeholders in all commonly used formats quickly and easily. With other products, I had to scan reports for distribution.

How did you decide which program to use?
The reporting restrictions of MYOB were a major problem for us. Calxa is far more useful and sophisticated. There is a whole suite of reporting modules in Calxa that can be used.

I can report for a region, by program, by program type, by manager, by month or whatever I want. There is no way I could do this in Excel. I would need three more staff to manage it. The other key thing is that when you create a budget from thirty different budgets, you have to consolidate them into an overall budget.

If you are building a budget like this using Excel, so much can go wrong and it's easy to make an error with a formula. So you never have the confidence that something hasn't been overwritten accidentally. With Calxa, consolidation is straightforward and you can see that nothing has been left out or misplaced. Creating a consolidated budget used to take forever. Now it is much quicker. The time saving is considerable.

How much does it cost?
Cost for five users is $1,495 for the first year and $995 for every year afterwards. Or monthly payments can be organised on request.

What advice would you give to somebody else?
Using a product like this increases productivity enormously. It allows our managers to look after their own budgets. If we didn't allow managers to be directly involved in the creation of budgets and management of spending, we would not be as effective an organisation as we are. You can't expect managers to take full responsibility without giving them the proper tools to manage the job.

I couldn't manage the budgets from this office without Calxa. Without the product, I would have to double my immediate staff. Any questions that arise, I can answer them quickly and easily. If I am doing a report and I notice a variation in salaries, I can quickly create a report to look at this issue to understand why. You can't do this in MYOB. I can even check the accuracy of the allocation of data in MYOB by doing a budget review with Calxa. That gives me immense confidence and assurance.

What are the business benefits?
The main benefits are effective financial management, reporting capability, speedier and more accurate budget preparation, increased productivity and increased reliability. The financial department is far more responsive in its ability to respond to the board, management and government.

Are any of these business benefits quantifiable?
Time taken to prepare a budget has dropped by 75%.

What is the most important thing you have learned in the last year?
I learned that if I could allow the people responsible for managing budgets the ability to create their own budgets, and then produce their own reports it would diminish their reliance on me.

This would be very useful because most of our work at the moment is in Queensland, but our goal is to move into other states. Our plan is to move into one new state each year. So we are in the process of getting our systems ready for this move and making sure they are scalable.

Staff management software issues

Organisations are actively looking for software that integrates staff management issues like rostering, payroll, reporting and awards.

"There is no one system that links hours worked (rosters) with payroll and invoicing, so reducing the potential for not invoicing for hours worked/paid, and would also reduce the time spent manually calculating invoices"

Disability Service – Tasmania

Staff management software solutions

Here is a section from a case study that addresses rostering and staff management software issues mentioned. The full case study can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Staff management software – Time Target

Time Target is a software company, which produces software for staff management. The company was started in 2002 and employs thirty people working from offices across Australia.

Who are your clients and customers?

Time Target is particularly useful in the community services sector for industries such as Aged care, Health care, Disability services, Child care and industry associations, where there is a requirement to manage staff and volunteers efficiently, often across multiple locations.

What prompted you to create the Time Target solution?

There are three key issues in staff management. Time sheets have to be accurate. Rosters have to able to meet the real needs of an organisation and staff payments have to be accountable and accurately reflect work done. We saw a need in the marketplace for a solution to manage staff from end to end, from the time they walk into the work environment to how they are paid at the end of the week.

Time and attendance data has always been collected, but what was missing from the solution was rostering, award integration, staff qualifications, staff availability and the means to bring the total solution together. That is what Time Target does.

What were the barriers you faced?

Industry perceptions of what a time and attendance system could do. A lot of organisations had an existing attendance system in place and couldn't see what the larger opportunity might be. As an example, a large social service organisation in New Zealand with a number of residential aged care facilities was using a paper-based system. The nurse managers used to spend a huge amount of time before payday entering data from time sheets and there were always mistakes.

When they put the Time Target system in place all that disappeared and they noticed many additional benefits they hadn't expected from the system. They even found it was a good communication tool for night staff to leave messages. Everybody uses the system including the CEO, so it keeps people in touch with the actual time they work.

Time Target has really simplified record keeping for them and allowed the service to easily and quickly manage and complete the surveys they have to do for government and funding bodies. They have no complaints and their staff really like using the system.

Client management software

The definition of client management software varies depending on the focus of the services an organisation delivers. For a public serving organisation delivering health, education or community services, the software helps manage clients receiving these services. For example, Aged Care facilities use client management software to manage the older people in their care, managing everything from health and medication, to assets, special meals, entertainment and mobility.

Twenty six percent of respondents use client management software, with use spread across a wide range of products.

Client management software - organisations

Organisation	Client Management	MS CRM	Care Manager	ACT	Total
Education & Employment	24%	5%	0%	0%	187
Community Development	15%	1%	2%	0%	183
Disability services	34%	3%	2%	2%	158
Health & Treatment	31%	2%	1%	0%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	7%	1%	0%	1%	107
Youth services	23%	0%	0%	1%	79
Creative arts & Media	21%	0%	0%	0%	77
Child services	25%	2%	0%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	26%	2%	0%	0%	62
Business Organisations	39%	8%	0%	5%	61
Religion	17%	2%	0%	0%	59
Family services	29%	7%	0%	0%	56
Environment	15%	2%	0%	2%	46
Aged Services	62%	2%	4%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	43%	0%	0%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	26%	5%	0%	3%	39
Multiple services	66%	3%	3%	0%	32
Museums & Libraries	3%	0%	0%	0%	32
Emergency services	6%	0%	0%	0%	18
Average	**26%**	**2%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Client management software issues

Client management software is still evolving to meet the needs of different categories within the not-for-profit sector.

> "*It's a problem getting our child care software program to accommodate our specific needs*"   Child Care Services – NSW

"*We need Client Management/Rostering/Payroll/Accounting Software for the Health & Disability funded sector*"   Disability Services – Queensland

Client management software solutions

Here are two sections from case studies that address some client management software issues mentioned. The full case studies can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Client management software – Sequal Association

Sequal is a disability support service that offers people with multiple disabilities the opportunity of experiencing recreational and vocational activities of all kinds. Based in Brisbane, Sequal has ten fulltime staff and ten volunteers, who support forty clients with multiple disabilities.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) is currently implementing a quality system across the services that it funds. By 2008, if we aren't accredited, we will lose our funding.

There is a set of ten standards that we have to meet and we will be assessed by an external body. This will inevitably increase the demands on our administration. That will mean more time on paperwork and less time for service delivery. This was one of the key drivers for us looking for the best administrative client management system. The more efficient we can be in handling administration, the less impact the administration will have on the core activity of helping our clients.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

E-Care is a client management system that allows us to record all our client information – details such as likes and dislikes, medical needs, the staff that support them and the plans that cover the different types of support that we provide. We can also enter diary notes on any significant things that happen on a day-to-day basis.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

I didn't write one. I knew exactly what I wanted. I felt it was necessary to have a client management system as part of the quality control system we are required to implement. We needed a good system that anyone could access and was also easy to use. We have a wide range of computer skills in the office and it had to be viable for everybody.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

I wanted an integrated client management tool that was user friendly, plus safe, secure and confidential. E-Care fulfils the requirements of the DSQ.

Are any of these benefits quantifiable?

All our client information is now in one place, rather than a mixture of paper-based and computer-based, or all in different computer based files. It's easy to access. It saves the time of staff. And in the long run it will help with providing services to clients. So clients will get the most value from our time.

Risk management software – Alphington Aged Care

Alphington Aged Care is a modern, purpose built, aged care facility offering low care hostel services between independent living and a nursing home. The facility has 45 beds, employs 12 full time staff supported by volunteers, and is located in a suburb of Melbourne, Victoria.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

It is the implementation of the "i.onmy care" software. It covers accreditation, compliance, risk management, event reporting and employee issues.

We have a need to manage continuous improvement in the way we run our facility. This is essentially the process whereby you have an idea for improvement and take the idea to fruition and follow up on it. Government is enthusiastic about continuous improvement and it is something that has to be managed properly. Ideas are fed from regular meetings that cover issues such as OH&S, medication, resident lifestyle and HR.

Any ideas or issues that arise from these meetings are addressed and have to be followed up on. So you need a system to document, track and follow up events and issues of many kinds. This can become very complex. On top of these meetings, we run an internal audit every month and government does an external audit at least once a year to determine your capacity to deliver services.

Meetings to evaluate and discuss issues plus the ongoing audits, feed into the continuous improvement process. At any one time you might have a hundred separate issues being managed. This is difficult. You can create a spreadsheet, but ideally you need a system that prompts you and demands action. So we went looking for software that would do this.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

There are plenty of vendors willing to sell you clinical software for careplans and medication, but not a lot that covers all the issues that we have to address. So I kept finding software that focused mainly on clinical issues with a bit of continuous improvement added on.

The other major driver was incident management. Every time there is an incident of any kind – a fall, skin abrasion, absconding or infection - it has to be reported. We found that compiling that data for our monthly audit meetings was laborious. We wanted a system that was efficient and simple to use. Any incident should feed into continuous improvement as well.

How did you decide which technology to use?

The thing that was attractive about "i.on my care" was its ability to track communication between myself and people delegated to take action. The software was more up to date, innovative and responsive to my needs. The one we rejected was designed for our industry but was too rigid. The "i.on my care" software was more flexible and more comprehensive – even covering HR.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The main benefit is accountability. It demonstrates our capability as an organisation. It is evidence that we are adhering to and achieving the standards that we have to work to. The HR function allows us to manage staff development and reward. And the system helps with productivity, ensuring staff complete tasks. It is very specific about what has to be done.

The external government auditor was very impressed with the reports generated by the system. We were able to show a list of Open actions and Closed actions. It was undeniable proof that we were on top of all the issues in this area.

Membership & CRM software

Member serving non-profit organisations service the benefit of their members, in the areas of sport and recreation and common interest. Other member based organisations include peak bodies, religious organisations, political parties, lobby groups and unions, professional and business associations.

Customer relationship or membership management software helps manage communication, sharing of information and resources, membership payments and renewals, and network relationships of all kinds.

Eleven percent of organisations use membership/customer relationship management software. Most organisations rely on Outlook and Outlook Express or another email program for maintaining relationships with members or customers. Larger organisations have a CRM package or membership or customer database created with Access, Excel or other database software.

Membership software - organisations

Organisation	Membership software	Outlook	IMIS	ACT	Civi CRM	Coresoft	Total
Education & Employment	9%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	187
Community Development	6%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	183
Disability services	9%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	158
Health & Treatment	16%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	10%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	107
Youth services	10%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%	79
Creative arts & Media	19%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	77
Child services	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	10%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	62
Business Organisations	31%	2%	7%	3%	0%	3%	61
Religion	17%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	59
Family services	7%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	56
Environment	11%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	46
Aged Services	4%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	28%	3%	3%	5%	0%	0%	39
Multiple services	9%	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%	32
Museums & Libraries	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	32
Emergency services	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18
Average	**11%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1%**	**0.3%**	**0.1%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Membership & CRM software issues

There are an increasing number of comments expressing the need for CRM software customised and tailored to the specific needs of not-for-profits.

> *"There is a lack of CRM software geared to the needs of Australian small to medium nonprofits."*   Service Club - Tasmania

Membership management software solutions

Here is a section from a case study that addresses some of the membership management software issues mentioned. The full case study can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Membership management software – Aspedia

Aspedia is a leading digital marketing agency with a strong software development capability focusing on Membership and Not for Profit Organisations, Industry Associations, Training Providers, Professional Services and Business Consultants.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Information of all kinds is easier to get than it used to be, so anyone is now an expert on everything. That has diminished the role of the association as the key information holder for an industry sector. So what is the "new" value proposition needed by associations when their members can access information so easily? We belief they need to be able to deliver a more personalised solution tailoring the information delivery to each individual member which requires a new generation of smart technology – the Aspedia solution.

What about social media?

Social networking is also having a big impact but most associations don't understood fully how they can capitalise on the opportunity it offers them. Charities are exploiting social media, but not necessarily including it in an overall strategy.

Industry associations often don't fully understand what technology can deliver these days and many have lost touch with how much solutions have dropped in price with the newer "cloud" based systems. The price point for best of breed software solutions is dropping constantly while the features are improving at the same time.

For associations a lot of their income has traditionally come from providing HR, IR and other professional services. Thus, they need to be able to track and manage billable hours so they can maximise revenue streams plus use this data to demonstrate the true value of the membership service provided. Choosing the correct solution can't all be left to the IT manager or an external consultant.

Associations have to understand they need one integrated solution covering all their membership management requirements – not lots of separate applications. This should include their website, member portal, member management database, recruitment and renewal marketing, invoicing and debtor management all provided by the one solution.

What prompted you to focus on associations and education?

Initially we were approached by one association that wanted a website. Once we had built a solution for them we began to understand more about what their specific needs and challenges were. We then built a membership management system that integrated with their website, then a marketing

management system and so on. The association management system can track and measure how much information they see, how many newsletters they get, how many events they attend, how much training they have done and so on.

What advice would you give others?
Every association has similar issues but it all comes down to scale. Each association needs to match planned activity to their resources and capability. For example, if they are small, they don't need to do a newsletter every month, they could send one every three months.

What does it cost?
Today our base association membership management system retails for just $18,000 plus GST, which we are constantly told is remarkable value for money. We offer a 21st century solution for industry associations with full functionality covering all aspects of association activity. The real value to many association members is the training they receive. So that is the other major thrust of what Aspedia offers - training through our learning management system Webducate.

Fundraising system

Not all non-profit organisations raise funds. Of those that do, only a small percentage of respondents (4%) use software specifically designed for the purpose. Social media is now being used extensively for this purpose (5%) to replace or complement other methods and approaches. Organisations also use raffles, radiothons, email, mail outs, collection plates and one-on-one approaches to trusts and foundations.

Fundraising system- organisations

Organisation	Fund raising system	Social Media	Black baud	Don Man	ThankQ	Tele market	Open Alms	Total
Education & Employment	9%	5%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	187
Community Development	13%	7%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	183
Disability services	25%	7%	4%	4%	2%	1%	0%	158
Health & Treatment	23%	7%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	107
Youth services	25%	10%	1%	3%	1%	4%	0%	79
Creative arts & Media	25%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	77
Child services	10%	3%	3%	0%	2%	0%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	62
Business Organisations	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	61
Religion	14%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	3%	59
Family services	13%	4%	2%	2%	0%	2%	0%	56
Environment	24%	4%	0%	0%	9%	0%	2%	46
Aged Services	9%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	5%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	33%	8%	5%	3%	0%	0%	0%	39
Multiple services	16%	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	32
Museums & Libraries	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	32
Emergency services	17%	6%	0%	0%	6%	6%	0%	18
Average	**15%**	**5%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1%**	**0.3%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Fundraising software solutions

Here is a section from a case study that addresses some fundraising software issues mentioned. The full case study can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Fundraising system – ThankQ

ThankQ Solutions is the leader in Australia for Asia Pacific fundraising software specifically designed for charities and non-profit organisations.

How have you been successful?

We have taken a structured approach to growing our donor base. We have segmented our market between business-to-business marketing, business to consumer and targeting high net-worth individuals. Then by implementing technologies that allow us to measure and track response to our marketing, we are evolving a more productive and effective strategy for fundraising.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

I wanted to improve the communication and management of the relationship with key contributors. And in doing so, improve the financial return. As the business grows, it's becoming more important to understand giving patterns, average donations, the number of enquiries, leads, conversion of leads, renewal patterns. We need to know this so we can improve our marketing - which leads to enquiries, leads and donors.

We need to improve our prospecting – the number of events we do, tours and conversions. And the quality of our proposals – how much did we generate?

By developing our knowledge across these areas we can then track the value of each process and decide where to put the most effort. We now have a full twelve months of using ThankQ in place and for Year 1 we have seen 300% growth. ThankQ allows us to track what works and what doesn't.

We will also move towards using benchmarking. Then we can look at targeting donors by frequency and amount, to maximise potential income.

We can tailor our effort and improve our conversions. We can also improve our communication in terms of accuracy of message…if someone is mad about elephants…we can invite them to elephant events. It also allows us to respect the privacy considerations of individuals.

Right now, we have more leads than we have the ability to convert. So we need to move into prospecting and conversion, and pull back on marketing. But without the ThankQ management system, we wouldn't have been so aware of where to put our efforts.

Database software

Seventy eight percent of respondents use database software. Excel and Microsoft Access are the most popular database applications. Some organisations use two or three different applications.

Database software - organisations

Organisation	Database software	Excel	Access	SQL	File maker	Other	Total
Education & Employment	80%	47%	28%	17%	6%	13%	187
Community Development	77%	52%	33%	8%	2%	5%	183
Disability services	82%	44%	39%	22%	3%	9%	158
Health & Treatment	84%	42%	47%	18%	4%	13%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	72%	47%	27%	2%	1%	10%	107
Youth services	86%	51%	37%	13%	9%	10%	79
Creative arts & Media	81%	36%	21%	12%	14%	10%	77
Child services	59%	35%	22%	10%	2%	6%	63
Law & advocacy	79%	47%	31%	5%	8%	10%	62
Business Organisations	74%	43%	28%	13%	3%	13%	61
Religion	71%	31%	19%	7%	3%	20%	59
Family services	80%	41%	41%	20%	0%	9%	56
Environment	78%	46%	33%	9%	7%	15%	46
Aged Services	87%	49%	44%	24%	2%	13%	45
Housing & Shelter	64%	41%	39%	5%	0%	5%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	77%	33%	31%	8%	5%	28%	39
Multiple services	84%	41%	63%	38%	0%	9%	32
Museums & Libraries	94%	63%	22%	6%	13%	19%	32
Emergency services	78%	56%	28%	17%	17%	6%	18
Average	**78%**	**45%**	**33%**	**13%**	**5%**	**11%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Database software - size

Size	Database software	Excel	Access	SQL	File maker	Other	Total
1-2	71%	50%	24%	3%	3%	7%	519
3-4	74%	43%	24%	4%	6%	14%	161
5-9	78%	41%	36%	3%	7%	11%	241
10-19	79%	34%	36%	14%	4%	16%	194
20-49	88%	47%	41%	21%	6%	15%	179
50-99	88%	41%	49%	38%	4%	15%	74
100-499	92%	50%	60%	55%	4%	9%	103
500+	100%	0%	29%	93%	7%	7%	14
Average	**78%**	**45%**	**33%**	**13%**	**5%**	**11%**	**1,485**

Database software issues

Database issues divided into two broad areas. Off the shelf systems such as Access, Excel and Filemaker Pro suited many smaller organisations though some had difficulties getting the most out of the software with unskilled or untrained staff.

Trying to use off the shelf systems beyond their limitations was another issue, with some organisations needing to move to a better system but not having the resource (IT personnel or money) to do so.

> *"Filemaker Pro - it is next to impossible to get training in this software so our staff are unable to use it effectively."*   Legal Services - NSW

"Software is not easily adapted for use in our office environment - we have no IT position within our organisation so it makes it difficult particularly with Access."   Disability Services – Tasmania

What is cloud computing?

Managed services are services managed by an IT service across an internet or private network connection. Because many services are delivered and managed across the internet, it has become common for these services to be described as cloud computing services.

Traditionally, computing services have been delivered through desktop computers, laptops or mobile devices using proprietary software. Cloud computing or software as a service is simply a new ICT sourcing and delivery model. It allows computing resources such as storage, servers, software applications and other services to be delivered quickly, conveniently and on demand for a fee.

These new services have evolved largely as a result of reliable broadband networks, reliable server infrastructure, virtualisation and open source software, which has reduced the cost of software for data centres.

Most of us have experienced some kind of service delivered across the internet. Software for operating systems is updated automatically across an internet connection for most computer users these days. Software applications of all kinds are patched and updated automatically. Security software is updated automatically and so on. In most cases we don't even think about what is happening. We just allow the update, acknowledge the terms and get on with business.

Many businesses and organisations allow their local trusted IT services company to access their network to support, update and fix problems. Increasingly businesses and other organisations use online free and low cost services to supplement their existing computer network running whichever suite of applications is appropriate.

So moving more business activities and applications to managed services or cloud is an evolution not a revolution. The issue is how many services? What are the risks? How do I ensure that I stay in control of business destiny?

Managed services can be provided privately to an organisation, can be managed by the organisation itself or by an external ICT vendor. Services can be offered to anybody and everybody and are owned by the organisation delivering the service, for example, from Yahoo or Google.

Services fall into three broad categories – Software as a Service, Platform as a Service and Infrastructure as a Service.

Most people are now familiar with email services such as Gmail, which are usually free or low cost depending on the service provided. Salesforce offers a low cost CRM service and Apple provides a host of low cost and free applications available on its iPad and iPhone devices. Vendors also offer reliable storage and disaster recovery services.

Don't get lost in the "cloud".

The risks associated with cloud computing or managed services are not new. Decisions on risks have to be made after understanding the issues clearly. Only then should a business put control of destiny into the hands of a vendor or ICT services company. The main issues are as follows:

Software integration
The three key trends of the digital revolution are more connection, more collaboration and more integration. Every business and organisation is considering integrating software applications to improve strategic management and control.

Integrating cloud software successfully into a business may be costly and complex. In many cases it may be better to isolate the cloud applications from the core business applications. In small businesses and organisations this may not be an issue, when the business can be conducted successfully using only MS Office or similar general office software where the suits of products already works together.

Business as usual
Any internet disconnection will interrupt cloud services. Because data and information can be stored on servers anywhere, it may also prove difficult or even impossible to retrieve data in the event of a disaster.

So consideration should be focused on services being delivered from a known location, with appropriate guarantees on service delivery, backup, data retrieval and security. If you lost all your data, could your business continue as usual?

Data location
Where is your data? Does it matter if you don't know the answer? Does it matter if your data is stored with other data on the same server? If your data is stored overseas, would that matter to your customers, your board of directors or your suppliers? You should know the answers to these questions, discuss them with your accountant and lawyer and be comfortable with the answers.

Payment
One of the advantages of a pay as you go model is that fees are paid out of operating expenditure rather than capital expenditure. This can be an advantage for some organisations. But for others, such as smaller not for profits, where ICT costs are covered by annual government funding, monthly ongoing fees may not fit easily into the funding and reporting demands of the organisation.

Legal
Data and information stored and shared within a nation's boundaries falls under the country's legal and regulatory framework. If data is stored elsewhere, this could creates problems. The US government Patriot Act allows the US agencies to view any and all data stored on servers in the USA, or on the servers of US companies overseas.

This may not be a problem for a small business, but could have privacy ramifications for not for profits and larger Australian businesses. There is also the issue of data retrieval in the event of a systems disaster under a foreign legislative framework.

Performance
Many people skim software agreements and agree terms without much consideration especially, when the cost and risk are small. The more important the software application is to the business continuity, the more important it is to have guarantees and service level agreements in place.

Agreements should cover security, reliability, data recovery, backup, performance levels, application modification, development and integration, monitoring and reporting, archiving and regulatory regime.

Privacy
Any data stored outside of your business premises is accessible to third parties, no matter what the level of service guarantees. Recent examples of secret documents being stolen from within US government agencies by employees highlight the risks. No environment is fully secure. Risks should be accessed sensibly. Vendors should be measured against the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988.

Security
With managed services data security is managed by the vendor not by the organisation receiving the service. So check as far as possible what security measures are in place.

Vendor lock-in
Open standards and interoperability reduce the risk of vendor lock-in. But many applications are now being delivered from proprietary platforms and devices. This may not be an issue, but once again, the more important an application is to business continuity, the more consideration should be given to the risks.

Managed properly there is little risk of losing information or any problem affecting business continuity. But it would be unwise to assume that everything will always be reliable and available. Backup and security are even more important for mobile workers, especially when your whole business is you.

Losing all your data would be an issue for any organisation, no matter what size it is. So it would probably be wiser to use freely available cloud applications when it wouldn't matter if the application is not available from time to time. Problems can occur with any application running on your server or personal computer, so you need to manage backup, storage and archiving to limit any problems that may occur.

For big organisations, it's easier. The CIO can discuss and negotiate with existing IT suppliers, and control the journey towards managed services.

For a medium sized organisation, the decision should be made after discussion with an existing ICT services company or systems integrator. If they offer to help manage the risks on your behalf as part of their service, then you will both benefit from the result.

They will gain more security from assured cash flow and budgetary planning. You will gain more security from having control of your business destiny.

For a smaller organisation the decision to use cloud services from Apple, Yahoo or Google could be driven by cost and simplicity. Even then, you still need to consider backup and disaster recovery and what to do if the service is cut for any reason.

Data storage and back up
External Hard Drives (62%) are the most popular storage choice, followed by USB memory sticks (51%). Storage systems largely reflect the size of an organisation.

Data storage system - organisations

Organisation	External HD	USB data stick	CD/ DVD	Network Attached Storage	Tape	Storage Area Network	None	Total
Education & Employment	67%	56%	35%	26%	14%	10%	1%	187
Community Development	68%	55%	31%	21%	5%	6%	2%	183
Disability services	59%	44%	24%	28%	24%	11%	3%	158
Health & Treatment	62%	40%	24%	27%	15%	9%	4%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	59%	58%	32%	8%	7%	2%	7%	107
Youth services	59%	42%	27%	22%	14%	8%	1%	79
Creative arts & Media	62%	52%	36%	34%	16%	9%	3%	77
Child services	73%	67%	35%	6%	8%	8%	2%	63
Law & advocacy	50%	48%	23%	26%	21%	5%	2%	62
Business Organisations	52%	48%	23%	38%	11%	8%	5%	61
Religion	71%	49%	29%	17%	7%	8%	7%	59
Family services	59%	48%	34%	25%	13%	7%	2%	56
Environment	74%	57%	39%	15%	15%	2%	7%	46
Aged Services	49%	31%	9%	29%	36%	22%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	55%	55%	27%	18%	16%	0%	2%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	46%	44%	28%	26%	18%	10%	5%	39
Multiple services	63%	66%	34%	41%	38%	19%	0%	32
Museums & Libraries	63%	63%	56%	9%	9%	3%	3%	32
Emergency services	44%	67%	33%	22%	6%	6%	17%	18
Average	**62%**	**51%**	**30%**	**23%**	**14%**	**8%**	**3%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Data storage system - size

Size	External HD	USB data stick	CD/ DVD	Network Attached Storage	Tape	Storage Area Network	None	Total
1-2	62%	62%	35%	14%	2%	2%	6%	519
3-4	62%	48%	27%	20%	9%	9%	2%	161
5-9	67%	46%	29%	24%	12%	5%	1%	241
10-19	66%	49%	27%	22%	20%	11%	2%	194
20-49	64%	43%	23%	35%	22%	6%	1%	179
50-99	53%	42%	26%	34%	36%	18%	0%	74
100-499	43%	37%	29%	47%	44%	27%	2%	103
500+	29%	43%	14%	29%	71%	64%	0%	14
Average	**62%**	**51%**	**30%**	**23%**	**14%**	**8%**	**3%**	**1,485**

Data storage and back up

Data storage, back up and retrieval can become increasingly difficult to manage as data accumulates over time. The issue can impact organisations of any size.

Disaster management is increasingly important for businesses and organisations. Issues can be wide ranging and diverse including severe weather events such as floods and cyclones, civil and social disruptions, employee sabotage and terrorist attacks.

Simple manual errors and mistakes can crash a system and even a short-term, local electricity blackout can affect the ability of an organisation to operate effectively. So all organisations have to consider disaster recovery plans.

Data should be protected, backed up and transferred regularly offsite to one or more secure locations. Data can be backed up to a variety of devices and systems. For small organisations and sole operators the simplest back up device is a memory stick. These are cheap and easy to use, especially for home offices.

Magnetic tape storage on cassette is reliable, affordable and portable, and can be easily stored off site. Data can be backed up to another hard drive, a detachable SCSI drive or an external hard drive purchased for this purpose.

The most important thing is that backup is a standardised, regular aspect of business operation whether managed manually or automated.

Archiving is the process of saving all data and applications regularly for backup, reference and for statutory, corporate, industry and other legal and compliance obligations.

Systems integration

Integrating software products and services to provide a single operational platform offering a single view of data has many strategic advantages, allowing managers to take full control of their resources and make reliable informed decisions.

Many organisations in the survey raised issues of integration. Here is a case study that illustrates the advantages of integrating and connecting up not just the operational internal systems, but the external eco-system as well. The full case study can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Integrated management system – Star Gardens

Star Gardens is a residential aged care facility located in Beaudesert, Queensland. Star Gardens employs more than a hundred staff and has been in operation for fifty years in Australia.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Customers are more demanding than they used to be. This includes both residents and their families who want to be more involved and take a greater interest in day-to-day activities, events and future plans. The sophistication of all stakeholders in aged care is increasing – GPs, pharmacists and materials suppliers and this offers an opportunity to move towards more connection and automation through the use of technology.

The aged care sector is less profitable, primarily due to under funding from Federal Government. Probably 50% of the sector would be making a loss. There are very tight margins in the sector. The Productivity Commission has released a report warning of the looming crisis and we are hopeful that the Government will heed the report recommendations and reform the industry.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

I looked into IT use in Aged Care, looking for innovators. I networked and visited Aged Care facilities across Australia. I looked at the care systems and what the software applications were behind the care system. The first thing I looked at was the Vocera voice communicator system, which allows staff to contact each other for assistance anywhere in the facility.

I next looked at clinical systems. Once again I visited facilities and looked at their clinical systems to see how they worked in situ. During that period we built additional residential space and added more beds. We also had new staff join us and other staff leave.

I knew that I had to view any new clinical system and the Vocera system as an overall integrated and connected system that had longevity and would give us the productivity and improved service delivery we were looking for long term.

Any decision had to involve all the key stakeholders, so when I visited the Aged Care facilities to look at the IT they were using, I took the board with me so they could see it for themselves. I started taking my Care Manager along with me as well. I wanted the whole management team convinced before moving.

How did you decide which technology to use?

I didn't know exactly which systems would be the best, but I knew that it all had to happen over the next three years. So I discussed it with my Care Manager. We needed to make the right choice to put the system in. We went to look at places using the systems I thought would be most useful. The first key decision was the clinical care program. There were fifteen or so systems available but probably only three or four to seriously consider.

We wanted to look at the system operating in a similar sized Aged Care facility. After looking carefully we decided on iCare. I then went to visit their headquarters and met their people. They had a good team and a high level of commitment to ongoing development.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

Before we put the iCare system in place I looked at the rest of the overall system I would need. I discussed this requirement with IT Integrity, our IT consultant and systems integrator. I wanted the system to be live with staff connected by tablet computers, so I needed wireless throughout the facility. Because we needed wireless for the tablets and Vocera, I had to look at our overall communication system.

We began with the documentation and management system for iCare. This contains the resident details and allows staff to keep care notes up to date as well as recording any incidents. We then added the medication module, which manages medication information and links to the local dispensing pharmacy.

The system is accessible through tablets, so staff can walk around with a trolley and check medication as they go. The care manager has access to the system and can keep an overall eye on everything as it happens. The system is transparent and reduces any chance of mistakes.

What advice would you give someone else?

Be open to opportunity. When we looked at the Cisco infrastructure for the wireless system, I heard about a product called Simavita. This is an electronic incontinence management system. It uses microchips in the incontinence pads that let staff know wirelessly that attention is required. The system monitors and assesses any incontinence episodes providing an indication of the level of care required.

I wanted to know whether we could link the Simavita system into our overall system as well. At the moment Simavita sends information to the mobile phone network. I want to link it directly to iCare so that it will put information into the system automatically.

One benefit leads to another. As a result of integrating everything, we needed to have a better integrated financial system. I wanted a roster system as well. So we put in Corporate Information Management, which is an Aged Care financial system with HR and rostering. We are also moving to palm readers for staff management scanning. What I am looking for is to get rid of paper. That will streamline the system.

The final bit of technology was from the Alfred Hospital. They have developed some software called ChiSL that uses smart cards to allow staff to securely logon from any computer and it returns them to the window of the last open session. So you can be working on something, get a call to another part of the facility and continue working from any other desktop. Our telephone system also needs upgrading. This will allow us to get rid of the speakers and do everything through the personal communication system.

What were the barriers to the project?

There was a lot of change in a relatively short time period. We needed to manage the change properly. We needed to get all staff used to using computers and not being frightened of the technology. We didn't only have to bring our staff along with the project, we also had to bring the pharmacy and local GPs along as well. iCare and the medication module talk online to the local

pharmacy. I had to get them on board. We also have Medical Director in the facility to connect to the local GPs. It also talks to iCare.

We put an iCare icon on the doctors desktop system, so they can look at our residents from their surgeries. We would like to get the hospital on board but that will have to wait until they are ready. So as you can see, we have linked the whole local caring ecosystem into the one connected iCare network, plus the Vocera staff communications network as well.

That meant that all our IT infrastructure had to be upgraded with new PCs, Windows 7 operating system, three new servers, plus a new database serer and terminal server. Vocera also interfaces with the PABX system, so phone calls can go direct to staff from any extension. In due course, we will put a Vocera icon onto smart phones so that we can use iPhones to link into the system as well. We can then provide the same connectivity to the local GPs as well.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The business benefits are wide ranging. We don't have any infrastructure duplication. So information goes into the system once. Reports come out how we want them. Information is available throughout the whole site and it is correct.

We save time with resident care and there is a new level of confidence in the information and residents details. Staff can find the information they need easily. Staff can find the people they need easily. So residents see a more confident staff.

We have made some productivity gains. I have made some changes to the night shift as a result of being able to analyse what is required clearly. We have also improved communication dramatically because of the great communication system.

Internet connection, use and security

Connectivity is one of the primary benefits of the Internet for businesses and organisations worldwide, with the email application proving to be the key driver and catalyst for connection.

Internet connection

All organisations completing the survey had access to the internet in order to complete the online survey. 99% of organisations are connected to the internet at the office.

Most organisations are connected to the Internet by broadband (96%) with ADSL being the most widely used connection (68%).

Internet connection - organisations

Organisation	ADSL	Wireless	Fibre	Cable	ISDN	Satellite	Modem	Other BB	Total
Education & Employment	63%	14%	10%	4%	1%	0%	1%	2%	187
Community Development	70%	14%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	183
Disability services	73%	11%	6%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	158
Health & Treatment	73%	12%	4%	0%	4%	0%	1%	1%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	65%	18%	1%	3%	0%	2%	5%	3%	107
Youth services	68%	14%	4%	1%	3%	3%	1%	0%	79
Creative arts & Media	64%	13%	5%	5%	5%	3%	0%	1%	77
Child services	70%	8%	5%	2%	3%	0%	3%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	79%	10%	5%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	62
Business Organisations	70%	8%	5%	7%	0%	3%	0%	2%	61
Religion	69%	12%	5%	3%	3%	0%	2%	0%	59
Family services	71%	5%	4%	4%	5%	2%	2%	4%	56
Environment	70%	17%	0%	2%	2%	2%	0%	2%	46
Aged Services	76%	4%	7%	0%	7%	0%	2%	2%	45
Housing & Shelter	66%	11%	5%	11%	2%	0%	2%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	49%	23%	10%	3%	5%	0%	0%	5%	39
Multiple services	63%	0%	22%	6%	6%	0%	0%	3%	32
Museums & Libraries	50%	28%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	9%	32
Emergency services	61%	17%	6%	11%	0%	0%	6%	0%	18
Average	**68%**	**13%**	**5%**	**3%**	**3%**	**1%**	**1%**	**2%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Internet connection – regions

Region	ADSL	Wireless	Fibre	Cable	ISDN	Satellite	Modem	Other BB	Total
New South Wales	69%	11%	5%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	472
Victoria	69%	14%	4%	5%	2%	0%	0%	2%	324
South Australia	64%	12%	6%	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	234
Queensland	67%	17%	4%	2%	5%	1%	1%	0%	225
Western Australia	74%	7%	8%	2%	2%	1%	2%	0%	133
Tasmania	67%	15%	4%	0%	5%	0%	2%	2%	55
ACT	66%	14%	10%	3%	0%	2%	0%	0%	29
Northern Territory	73%	0%	9%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	11
Average	**68%**	**13%**	**5%**	**3%**	**3%**	**1%**	**1%**	**2%**	**1,483**

Internet connection - size

Size	ADSL	Wireless	Fibre	Cable	ISDN	Satellite	Modem	Other BB	Total
1-2	63%	18%	2%	4%	0%	2%	3%	2%	519
3-4	68%	17%	1%	2%	5%	1%	1%	2%	161
5-9	72%	12%	4%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	241
10-19	76%	10%	3%	2%	4%	0%	0%	2%	194
20-49	75%	6%	6%	1%	4%	1%	2%	1%	179
50-99	74%	3%	11%	3%	4%	0%	0%	1%	74
100-499	55%	6%	25%	1%	5%	0%	0%	5%	103
500+	36%	0%	43%	0%	7%	0%	0%	7%	14
Average	**68%**	**13%**	**5%**	**3%**	**3%**	**1%**	**1%**	**2%**	**1,485**

Internet use

Email (100%) and research (77%) are the two primary reasons specified for using the Internet. Use and trust of the internet continues to grow. Organisations use online banking, buy and order goods and services. More collaborative use of the internet is now available through social media, and many organisations are using Facebook, Linked in, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube to extend their reach for customer and client contact as well as for advocacy, recruiting and fundraising.

Main internet use - organisations

Organisation	Email	Research	Bank	Buy	Order	Face Book	Recruit	Advocacy	Total
Education & Employment	100%	73%	67%	57%	55%	35%	30%	18%	187
Community Development	100%	78%	70%	52%	55%	40%	32%	26%	183
Disability services	100%	77%	79%	63%	65%	40%	53%	26%	158
Health & Treatment	100%	72%	77%	59%	60%	41%	53%	40%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	100%	75%	55%	39%	46%	41%	12%	17%	107
Youth services	100%	81%	80%	52%	54%	53%	44%	25%	79
Creative arts & Media	100%	79%	70%	60%	53%	69%	39%	35%	77
Child services	100%	65%	70%	63%	62%	22%	37%	21%	63
Law & advocacy	100%	89%	79%	63%	53%	48%	47%	66%	62
Business Organisations	100%	80%	87%	64%	57%	67%	43%	43%	61
Religion	100%	81%	80%	66%	56%	58%	8%	15%	59
Family services	100%	79%	84%	59%	52%	39%	52%	38%	56
Environment	100%	83%	72%	52%	43%	50%	30%	37%	46
Aged Services	100%	82%	78%	67%	78%	13%	49%	9%	45
Housing & Shelter	100%	77%	80%	59%	57%	23%	39%	32%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	100%	77%	82%	33%	51%	49%	36%	44%	39
Multiple services	100%	84%	84%	72%	69%	44%	56%	56%	32
Museums & Libraries	100%	75%	38%	31%	44%	19%	13%	6%	32
Emergency services	100%	83%	61%	50%	50%	17%	44%	17%	18
Average	**100%**	**77%**	**73%**	**56%**	**56%**	**42%**	**38%**	**29%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Main internet use - size

Size	Email	Research	Bank	Buy	Order	Face Book	Recruit	Advocacy	Total
1-2	100%	75%	60%	46%	42%	39%	16%	22%	519
3-4	100%	81%	72%	55%	60%	45%	34%	27%	161
5-9	100%	78%	84%	64%	64%	49%	40%	39%	241
10-19	100%	80%	83%	62%	65%	46%	55%	34%	194
20-49	100%	77%	84%	65%	67%	37%	50%	27%	179
50-99	100%	76%	77%	62%	64%	42%	61%	28%	74
100-499	100%	82%	76%	59%	65%	38%	69%	32%	103
500+	100%	79%	64%	64%	64%	36%	71%	57%	14
Average	**100%**	**77%**	**73%**	**56%**	**56%**	**42%**	**38%**	**29%**	**1,485**

Other internet use - organisations

Other uses of the internet range from Videoconferencing (23%), YouTube (14%) and Blogs (13%) to Pod-casting (6%).

Organisation	Linked in	Video con	Fund raise	VoIP	Tweet	You tube	Blogs	Chat	Pod cast	Total
Education & Employment	29%	32%	14%	27%	15%	12%	14%	13%	7%	187
Community Development	26%	24%	15%	16%	14%	8%	13%	13%	3%	183
Disability services	35%	31%	32%	20%	17%	14%	8%	9%	3%	158
Health & Treatment	33%	24%	33%	19%	21%	20%	18%	15%	7%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	13%	7%	12%	10%	10%	12%	7%	10%	3%	107
Youth services	29%	18%	32%	18%	16%	20%	8%	11%	3%	79
Creative arts & Media	31%	18%	31%	21%	39%	31%	26%	17%	17%	77
Child services	13%	13%	24%	5%	6%	3%	3%	6%	3%	63
Law & advocacy	19%	26%	13%	18%	35%	16%	11%	6%	5%	62
Business Organisations	51%	38%	7%	28%	39%	15%	23%	21%	10%	61
Religion	24%	20%	12%	27%	15%	20%	25%	20%	24%	59
Family services	25%	16%	16%	16%	13%	14%	7%	9%	0%	56
Environment	26%	13%	24%	15%	26%	15%	13%	9%	2%	46
Aged Services	24%	18%	4%	7%	7%	4%	2%	0%	2%	45
Housing & Shelter	25%	16%	18%	14%	9%	7%	5%	5%	2%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	41%	38%	31%	28%	31%	13%	26%	10%	3%	39
Multiple services	31%	41%	41%	28%	22%	16%	16%	13%	6%	32
Museums & Libraries	0%	6%	9%	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%	3%	32
Emergency services	11%	28%	28%	6%	17%	11%	6%	0%	0%	18
Average	**27%**	**23%**	**21%**	**19%**	**18%**	**14%**	**13%**	**11%**	**6%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Other internet use - size

Organisation	Linked in	Video con	Fund raise	VoIP	Tweet	You tube	Blogs	Chat	Pod cast	Total
1-2	19%	14%	17%	17%	11%	9%	9%	12%	3%	519
3-4	35%	19%	25%	16%	21%	15%	14%	14%	6%	161
5-9	27%	26%	16%	19%	22%	13%	15%	11%	7%	241
10-19	31%	27%	22%	18%	24%	14%	14%	9%	8%	194
20-49	32%	32%	24%	18%	21%	18%	16%	10%	8%	179
50-99	24%	30%	22%	16%	22%	24%	9%	12%	7%	74
100-499	39%	40%	33%	28%	25%	20%	15%	10%	6%	103
500+	50%	43%	36%	29%	7%	14%	14%	7%	0%	14
Average	**27%**	**23%**	**21%**	**19%**	**18%**	**14%**	**13%**	**11%**	**6%**	**1,485**

Social media

Social media is impacting the non-profit sector and providing new channels for communication, contact and fundraising.

Facebook is the top site for visitors worldwide. It dominates other web brands with users spending more than half their web-time on Facebook keeping in touch with family and friends. However, consideration has to be given to how different web-tools are used and what the value to the user is.

The value of a tool is defined by how it makes an action or work easier. ICT software tools of all kinds have been developed to make processes and activities faster, more accurate, more effective and more productive. For a business or non-profit organisation these are the factors that should be considered when evaluating social media.

Though Facebook dominates web-time, its primary use is connecting with family and friends. Where this capability interconnects with the key activities of a non-profit organisation – fundraising, news updates, membership communication and so on, the medium has obvious value. But the value must be considered and measured in the same way any marketing or communication program is measured and evaluated - looking at ROI and measuring the results of programs carefully.

In day-to-day work, Google still dominates internet search and is the main online tool used to find information quickly. For information dissemination, Blogger, Twitter and Wordpress dominate the web, with Twitter being used for short news updates and Blogger and Wordpress providing the primary weblog publishing platforms for millions of individuals and organisations.

Linkedin has developed a more professional business linkage position and is used for extending business and professional networks and for recruitment. So look at the social media toolkit closely and evaluate it based on your organisational needs, not because of "social media hype".

From survey results, here is an overview of which social media tools are being used by different non-profit organisations and why.

Facebook	
Youth Services	Best way to connect and communicate
	We monitor a page where young people connect with each other
	Used to post information about events and to seek donations
Education	Contact tutors, members and students
Childcare services	Promotion
Community development	Interaction with youth
	Information about events
	Connect with supporters
	Free marketing
	Attract new clients
Disability services	Simple feedback and interaction
Health services	Provide information on health
	Find volunteers
	Connect people with specific disease for support
Environment	Best way to contact young people
	Reach a new demographic rather than traditional

Religion	Community builder
	Contact with congregation
	The young use is, so it expands our reach
Philanthropy	Awareness of our work and vision
Family services	Young parent program uses FB and texting
	Contact with people we can't normally reach
Creative Arts	Run competitions

Linkedin	
Philanthropy	Staff connections
	Recruiting
Professional services	Business engagement
	Common interest groups
	Recruiting
Law & advocacy	Link to other workers compensation professionals

Twitter	
Emergency services	Information updates
	Immediate information to media and public
Health services	Monitor stakeholders
	Promote initiatives
Professional services	Connect people to ezines and news
Education	Communicate with stakeholders
	Point people to our website
Creative Arts & Media	Contact with fans
	Promote news and opportunities between monthly ezines
Aged Care	Follow debates on the sector
Law & advocacy	Link to other non-profits
	Share news

You Tube	
Law & advocacy	Video awareness
	Raising awareness of issues
Education	Educational videos
	Sharing content across sector
Creative Arts & Media	Examples of performances
Health	Videos showing successful treatments
Sports Club	600,000 views on our YouTube channel
	Contact with fans

Flickr	
Law & advocacy	Photo management
Environment	Weed identification pictures

My Space	
Family services	Bands and performances
Creative Arts & Media	Bands and performances

Concerns about social media

Many non-profits raised concerns about social media. Concerns were about resources, relevance, policy and strategy, time and demand.

Social media concerns	
Aged care	"Blocked"
	"Resistance by members"
	"Don't encourage staff to play with social media"
Disability	"No staff resources"
	"Concerned about resources"
Clubs	"Need a policy"
	"Haven't see a need yet with members"
	"Older people – RSL & Country Women – no need"
Community development	"No time"
	"Questionable outcomes"
Child care	"Still developing policy"
Emergency services	"Not allowed"
	"Developing policy"
Housing & shelter	"Blocked"
	"Developing policy"
Multiple services	"Too busy"
	"Time wasting"
	"Developing policy"
Family services	"Investigating policy"
	"We have concerns"

Social media use

Here are sections from two case studies that address social media issues. The full case studies can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Social media – Flood Aid

It started with a tweet. Flood Aid was a website created in response to the Brisbane floods to connect people in need with people that could help. It was an unusual and swift response to a dire need. Flood Aid was not a charity, nor a business, or a non-profit or an organisation. Flood Aid was an international group of likeminded people responding to a disaster, following a vision and combining skills to create a social network to help.

What prompted your to create www.floodaid.com.au?
The heavy rains and floods in early 2011 affected 75% of Queensland, including major towns and the capital city of Brisbane. We thought we could do something to help.

So, by appealing for help using social media, in twelve hours we had over 500 responses from across the globe, which we narrowed down to a team of thirty people spanning nine cities across five continents, all with varying skills.

Less than three days later, we launched www.floodaid.com.au. Social media has become a powerful tool to rally people to a cause, saving lives and connecting communities.

How does it all work?

It is simple. People register their details on the site, telling people what they need. People who can help, register their offer and state how they can help. The site allows offers of need and help to be matched up. The other key element is to let everybody know that the site exists through their networks using Facebook and Twitter. People spread the word far quicker through their networks than traditional media ever could.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

No, we just did it. It started with a tweet.

How much did it cost you?

People contributed their time and effort for nothing. We managed 10,000 volunteer man-hours in the first week.

The Flood Aid program became full-time for six or seven people for two weeks. After that everyone went back to their day jobs and monitored the site in the evenings and weekends for another month. After three months it finally died down.

What are the benefits you are hoping for?

The benefits were obvious. We matched hundreds of people in need with people that could help. The situation was so chaotic, that we couldn't do metrics, other than through the site, in terms of measuring the number of requests and responses through the matchmaking system.

We also made contact with other groups, such as Baked Relief. This was a group of mums who had baked cakes and other goodies that were distributed to volunteers and people affected by the floods.

The woman who started Baked Relief tweeted a picture of a cake to her friends and said, "I am taking this to the Mud Army…you could do the same." Baked Relief became massive. It was more a movement than a website. They also took flyers from us and distributed them to people with the food.

Social media – Mummy's Wish

Mummy's Wish is a charity established to offer practical support and information to mothers with cancer. The organisation was established in 2007 and has two part time managers and up to twenty volunteers.

What prompted your to start using social media?

We started originally with our website www.mummyswish.org.au. The website contains information about support, news and events, sponsors, contacts and other services.

How did you decide which technology to use?

At the beginning of 2009 we started a Facebook group. I had been involved in Facebook from the beginning for my family and friends, so I knew how to work with Facebook.

We probably had about 200 people in the Facebook group at the beginning, a mixture of relatives, friends and people we had met through the charity. We started publishing information on events and what we were doing and generally keeping people informed. The group was mainly focused on fundraising.

It is easy for us to decide what to do because we are responsible for all the decisions. We don't have to refer every decision to the board. We then started a Twitter account to promote Mummy's Wish. It was time to use social media proactively.

So I started by following people in Brisbane and in the Charity industry, looking at who was tweeting certain words such as charity, fundraising, donations and so on. You can even look at who is tweeting these words near Brisbane.

Our charity focuses on Brisbane and southeast Queensland, so it was important for us to localise this enquiry. I found people who were active in the industry near Brisbane and started following them. We also followed traditional media people as well.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
We started and grew using our website, Facebook and Twitter. We needed to be on Twitter and we needed to publish several tweets each day to keep our audience informed.

You have to get the balance right. Too many tweets and you are suddenly sending spam. We got a few polite emails and tweets telling us that what we were doing was considered spam, so we modified our practice to get the balance right.

How do you measure what you do with social media?
Facebook and Twitter are the main media we use. We have 3,010 followers on Facebook and 2,790 on Twitter. Measure your followers regularly and track how the number fluctuates and understand why. I check the numbers every day.

The main reason for us using social media is to promote information and to raise funds. So we tell stories about the people we help to encourage people to donate.

Twitter increased followers for the first 18 months then it settled down. We are now focused on deciding who we want to follow. We are conscious of where each message goes. You have to put the time in to get the best results. I spend two hours every day on social media.

We are working with another organisation – Brisbane Kids – on an online auction using Facebook. We have been able to source all the products and services for this event through our online audience. Our use of Facebook and Twitter is Brisbane focused and about 10% of our referrals come through these two channels.

Google analytics lets us measure visitors to the website, with data on who came from Twitter or Facebook. In the past twelve months we have had 8,684 visits to the website, with 594 from Facebook and 206 from Twitter. At least a third of my tweets are retweeted. And you need to know what people are saying about you to manage your online reputation.

I follow Mummy's Wish and occasionally we may be mentioned in a conversation about something completely out of our normal conversational environment that we need to respond to or influence in some way.

Social media staff

Most organisations using social media in a serious way have one or more part time staff managing their strategies. 30% of organisations use part time staff and volunteers to manage social media.

Five percent of organisations have full time staff allocated to social media. Larger organisations are most able to afford full time staff for this purpose, especially in the membership based Business and Professional associations and Philanthropy and Volunteering.

Social media staff – organisations

Organisation	Part time	Full time	Total
Education & Employment	28%	4%	187
Community Development	30%	4%	183
Disability services	27%	8%	158
Health & Treatment	31%	7%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	30%	4%	107
Youth services	39%	4%	79
Creative arts & Media	39%	3%	77
Child services	14%	3%	63
Law & advocacy	37%	5%	62
Business Organisations	31%	10%	61
Religion	25%	3%	59
Family services	27%	5%	56
Environment	50%	2%	46
Aged Services	22%	4%	45
Housing & Shelter	9%	5%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	33%	10%	39
Multiple services	34%	6%	32
Museums & Libraries	34%	0%	32
Emergency services	17%	6%	18
Average	**30%**	**5%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Social media staff - size

Organisation	Part time	Full time	Total
1-2	25%	1%	519
3-4	27%	2%	161
5-9	41%	4%	241
10-19	33%	9%	194
20-49	27%	7%	179
50-99	34%	15%	74
100-499	26%	15%	103
500+	21%	14%	14
Average	**30%**	**5%**	**1,485**

Internet security

Anti virus software is the most popular security application. Firewalls and spam filters are next. Few respondents have no measures in place (19).

Security measures - organisations

Organisation	Anti virus	Software firewall	Spam filter	Hardware firewall	Email gate	Content filter	Intrusion detect	Total
Education & Employment	81%	68%	67%	51%	46%	34%	28%	187
Community Development	81%	67%	62%	52%	37%	29%	22%	183
Disability services	80%	71%	75%	58%	53%	39%	29%	158
Health & Treatment	79%	65%	68%	48%	47%	27%	27%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	84%	73%	56%	37%	35%	23%	18%	107
Youth services	77%	72%	65%	38%	42%	34%	20%	79
Creative arts & Media	70%	69%	71%	36%	44%	34%	25%	77
Child services	76%	62%	44%	41%	17%	21%	16%	63
Law & advocacy	74%	66%	63%	45%	52%	29%	29%	62
Business Organisations	77%	79%	75%	52%	54%	36%	26%	61
Religion	78%	63%	56%	42%	36%	25%	17%	59
Family services	80%	71%	64%	52%	48%	27%	21%	56
Environment	80%	61%	63%	43%	28%	11%	15%	46
Aged Services	80%	76%	73%	58%	62%	49%	27%	45
Housing & Shelter	70%	59%	61%	50%	30%	23%	25%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	74%	64%	62%	44%	46%	28%	18%	39
Multiple services	84%	75%	81%	81%	72%	56%	47%	32
Museums & Libraries	72%	47%	56%	31%	28%	16%	3%	32
Emergency services	83%	83%	61%	39%	56%	17%	33%	18
Average	**79%**	**68%**	**65%**	**48%**	**43%**	**30%**	**24%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Security issues

Most organisations had some form of security in place, with virus protection used by most organisations along with software and hardware firewalls. Spam was a continuing frustration for many organisations.

We get a lot of spam...a consultant said the cost of an effective spam filter would be too much"   Youth Services - NSW

"Telephone system needs upgrading. Spam and viruses."
                Community Development - NSW

Technology adoption rating

Organisations were asked how they rated their technology adoption with answers ranging from "leading edge" to "in trouble". 24% rate themselves early adopter or fast follower for technology adoption. 25% rated themselves as Lagging Behind or In Trouble.

These are similar percentages to the 2008 survey and coupled with the high percentage of issues raised by the sector (20% - twice the percentage of issues raised in other sectors) indicates an ongoing uncertainty with the best use of ICT to improve productivity and effectiveness.

Technology adoption- organisations

Organisation	Leading edge	Fast follower	Average	Lags behind	In trouble	Total
Education & Employment	7%	25%	50%	18%	1%	187
Community Development	4%	19%	52%	22%	3%	183
Disability services	6%	22%	54%	17%	1%	158
Health & Treatment	7%	21%	47%	24%	1%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	0%	12%	50%	34%	4%	107
Youth services	5%	11%	52%	25%	6%	79
Creative arts & Media	5%	22%	53%	18%	1%	77
Child services	0%	10%	57%	32%	2%	63
Law & advocacy	6%	19%	45%	27%	2%	62
Business Organisations	13%	31%	36%	18%	2%	61
Religion	2%	19%	53%	24%	3%	59
Family services	2%	21%	54%	21%	2%	56
Environment	2%	22%	46%	28%	2%	46
Aged Services	9%	13%	47%	31%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	2%	14%	57%	27%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	5%	8%	67%	18%	3%	39
Multiple services	13%	41%	34%	13%	0%	32
Museums & Libraries	0%	9%	47%	38%	6%	32
Emergency services	6%	17%	44%	33%	0%	18
Average	**5%**	**19%**	**50%**	**23%**	**2%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Technology adoption - size

Organisation	Leading edge	Fast follower	Average	Lags behind	In trouble	Total
1-2	3%	15%	50%	28%	4%	519
3-4	6%	14%	57%	21%	2%	161
5-9	7%	20%	46%	26%	2%	241
10-19	4%	21%	52%	24%	1%	194
20-49	6%	22%	56%	16%	1%	179
50-99	7%	26%	55%	12%	0%	74
100-499	9%	34%	42%	16%	0%	103
500+	0%	36%	29%	36%	0%	14
Average	**5%**	**19%**	**50%**	**23%**	**2%**	**1,485**

Websites

Most respondents (83%) have a website. 23% use their website for collecting information with surveys and 28% use the website for selling goods or services. Websites are a valuable promotional tool for presenting information to existing and potential clients and customers. Many sites are simple online brochures with basic information and contact details.

Website use - organisations

Organisation	Web site	Forms, surveys	Online sales	Intranet	Extranet	Total
Education & Employment	87%	25%	33%	35%	13%	187
Community Development	80%	20%	24%	21%	10%	183
Disability services	87%	23%	28%	39%	7%	158
Health & Treatment	91%	26%	36%	37%	12%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	77%	21%	31%	13%	7%	107
Youth services	86%	28%	27%	35%	1%	79
Creative arts & Media	88%	34%	42%	22%	9%	77
Child services	56%	14%	21%	16%	10%	63
Law & advocacy	87%	32%	16%	31%	6%	62
Business Organisations	97%	44%	43%	38%	20%	61
Religion	83%	14%	15%	19%	8%	59
Family services	80%	18%	23%	45%	11%	56
Environment	89%	17%	41%	22%	4%	46
Aged Services	78%	7%	22%	38%	4%	45
Housing & Shelter	61%	20%	5%	20%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	87%	31%	28%	33%	13%	39
Multiple services	94%	22%	31%	59%	22%	32
Museums & Libraries	81%	13%	22%	22%	9%	32
Emergency services	61%	22%	22%	22%	17%	18
Average	**83%**	**23%**	**28%**	**30%**	**9%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Some non-profits use web based sites as collaboration tools. Thirty percent of respondents have an Intranet (an internal website for staff). Usually larger organisations have an Intranet for internal resource sharing, but some small organisations with offices in a number of locations find this useful also. Nine percent of respondents have an Extranet (a website with private access for suppliers, other organisations or clients).

Publishing and managing websites has become a lot easier with the worldwide proliferation of open source web and content management tools such as Joomla, Drupal and Wordpress. Each system has its supporters and its strengths. But the major benefit to the non-profit sector is that the price of website development has dropped enormously whilst the functionality of websites has increased.

All non-profit organisations should be able to find a web developer that can provide them with a site that allows them to manage their content themselves, so they can easily create new pages, menu items and create a form to collect data. Costs will range from under $3,000 up to $50,000 depending on scope and functionality.

Websites and collaboration

Here are two sections of case studies that look at the use of web-based solutions to connect members of an organisation. Both case studies can be found in the Case Studies section of this report.

Collaboration and sharing - The Place Leaders

The Place Leaders association is a network of public sector redevelopment agencies with nine members, seven of which are Australian, one from New Zealand and one from Singapore.

How do they benefit from your service?

Access to redevelopment information and related resources is the key benefit of membership. We manage the member network through the Ovosuite Portal for information sharing and we have biannual workshops that allow members to get together and discuss issues face to face.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

When the association was formed there were five Australian members, all in different parts of Australia. We needed some mechanism to connect them and share information.

One of my colleagues, a consultant, was doing some work with Golden Orb from Brisbane. She was using their product, the Board Portal that connects members of a board of directors to allow them to access information online and share it easily.

We wanted a web site with a private and a secure area…an intranet that could be accessed by members allowing varying levels of access and management for different parts of the site.

The structure of the Board Portal helped with the scheduling of meetings, accessing meeting papers, distributing workshop presentations and papers, as well as sharing the intellectual property of the members.

As we started accumulating more information, we needed a search tool to help people find it. My wish list included a search tool on the portal and an interactive online forum for members.

The need for the online forum was identified as people continually emailed me with requests for information from other members and I realised that a member forum would allow them to do this for themselves without the need for me to act as go-between.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

I will be happy when all information relating to the redevelopment of destination places is available on the portal. The Ovosuite will be the primary research tool for members of the association.

The key is that our members share information on the portal. It's a tool that supports the purpose of our association and its reason for existence. It's got to be easy to add a link or add a document. Now with the new Ovosuite Portal, it should be a lot easier, resulting in an increase in usage.

Connecting clients and managing events – ResultsNet Australia

ResultsNet Australia is a marketing consultancy based in Queensland. It's an entrepreneurial business development organisation with a social cause. ResultsNet is the Australian branch of the worldwide XL Results Foundation that aims to help eliminate poverty on the planet.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

It's our fully integrated event management web portal. Years ago I met someone from GBST. He came to one of our events and told me about Sauce Software – an open source web based system that can be customised to suit most business web requirements.

Basically they had connected a lot of open source business modules so that each module updated data in all other parts of the overall system. They had written software to connect all the separate modules and make them work together as a powerful interactive web system. So customers could choose what they wanted.

Most small businesses think "I need a web site for my business." They then visit a web developer, who generally has either a design or IT nerd background. The first step is usually a simple online brochure. The small business owner then thinks, "I want to make changes." So they go back to the web developer and wait for six weeks until it's completed. That's frustrating and costly.

So the idea that Sauce were offering an interactive web system for a low price that could include whatever functionality anyone needed was remarkable. People could turn functions on and off whenever they wanted.

Did you write a project plan?

Most businesses might want a site that allowed customers to see what they do, find products, select them, put them in a shopping cart, process the payment online and so on. In our consulting business…event management is the key.

I wanted to automate the whole relationship with clients and new customers. So if somebody booked for a seminar, I needed the system to spit out a label with their name on it, book the table, book travel and even check whether somebody actually came to the event and so on.

How much did it cost?

Because I helped with the development of a new set of modules, they provided me with the site at nominal cost. But their costs range from $1,000 up to $10,000 depending on what a business wants. It comes down to what modules they need to support their business activities. Plus, there's a monthly hosting, upgrade, maintenance and security fee of $150.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

If you regard our business as providing the connection between life members…the site does that.

To the broader community it presents the programs, projects, seminars, workshops and so on. The site does that. Orders come in. The money goes into the bank. It's automatic. The business relationships for event management are all automated and it frees me up to be creative.

My guesstimate would be that if we didn't have the site, there would have to be another three or four people running the administration that the site handles. The business administration is totally handled by the site and my PA.

Help and advice

Technical support and access to advice is influenced by the size and location of an organisation, with larger organisations having better access to support and able to pay for necessary help. Many smaller organisations rely on volunteers, family members and friends, or their local IT services company. Larger organisations manage IT support internally, supplemented by support from specialist systems integrators, major vendors and suppliers.

"We had local support but they went out of business. It's happened a few times now.   Community Services – Queensland

"Hard to get support and maintenance on critical applications."
Multiple Services – South Australia

Local technical support

Three quarters of respondents (75%) say they can get local support and rate the quality of support as good. Service, sports and social clubs have the biggest problem with finding support, along with child care and child services.

Local technical support – organisations

Organisation	Technical support	Total
Education & Employment	77%	187
Community Development	75%	183
Disability services	80%	158
Health & Treatment	80%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	62%	107
Youth services	77%	79
Creative arts & Media	73%	77
Child services	62%	63
Law & advocacy	69%	62
Business Organisations	69%	61
Religion	68%	59
Family services	77%	56
Environment	67%	46
Aged Services	84%	45
Housing & Shelter	86%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	69%	39
Multiple services	91%	32
Museums & Libraries	75%	32
Emergency services	72%	18
Average	**75%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Local technical support – regions

Region	Technical support	Total
New South Wales	73%	472
Victoria	78%	324
South Australia	71%	234
Queensland	76%	225
Western Australia	74%	133
Tasmania	80%	55
ACT	76%	29
Northern Territory	64%	11
Average	**75%**	**1,483**

Local technical support – size

Size	Technical support	Total
1-2	64%	519
3-4	76%	161
5-9	78%	241
10-19	79%	194
20-49	85%	179
50-99	81%	74
100-499	84%	103
500+	79%	14
Average	**75%**	**1,485**

Trusted IT advice – outside your organisation

Trusted advice on information and communication technology (ICT) comes from three main sources, a) friends, family and colleagues, b) IT suppliers, services and consultants and c) for larger organisations with IT staff, advice comes from systems integrators, the internet and IT staff networks.

Even the smallest non-profit organisation should try to ensure that somebody from the IT industry sits on their board or advisory group as an specialist advisor.

Nearly a third of organisations surveyed use their local software/hardware supplier or the Internet for advice. Smaller organisations are most likely to have nobody they trust to help, or rely on friends and family for advice.

Larger organisations are more likely to use suppliers and consultants, or be confident enough to find help online or in the IT press.

Trusted IT advice - organisations

Organisation	IT Service	Consultant	Internet	Friend	Family	NFP contact	IT Media	Total
Education & Employment	19%	21%	16%	9%	6%	1%	3%	187
Community Development	24%	18%	15%	10%	7%	3%	2%	183
Disability services	28%	23%	11%	3%	6%	6%	0%	158
Health & Treatment	22%	28%	8%	8%	7%	4%	0%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	21%	11%	14%	16%	7%	5%	1%	107
Youth services	22%	27%	14%	8%	8%	3%	3%	79
Creative arts & Media	18%	14%	14%	9%	4%	10%	1%	77
Child services	14%	16%	8%	14%	17%	0%	0%	63
Law & advocacy	33%	18%	16%	3%	3%	2%	0%	62
Business Organisations	15%	21%	23%	10%	5%	7%	0%	61
Religion	8%	19%	7%	25%	10%	3%	0%	59
Family services	29%	16%	16%	4%	11%	5%	0%	56
Environment	22%	15%	11%	7%	9%	0%	4%	46
Aged Services	29%	22%	4%	7%	4%	2%	0%	45
Housing & Shelter	16%	25%	7%	5%	7%	9%	0%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	15%	26%	10%	15%	10%	0%	5%	39
Multiple services	38%	34%	9%	0%	0%	6%	3%	32
Museums & Libraries	25%	3%	13%	9%	13%	3%	3%	32
Emergency services	17%	11%	17%	11%	6%	6%	0%	18
Average	**22%**	**20%**	**13%**	**9%**	**7%**	**4%**	**1%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Trusted IT advice – regions

Region	IT Service	Consultant	Internet	Friend	Family	NFP contact	IT Media	Total
New South Wales	21%	21%	12%	8%	6%	5%	1%	472
Victoria	25%	17%	13%	10%	8%	4%	1%	324
South Australia	21%	18%	12%	12%	10%	3%	3%	234
Queensland	22%	21%	12%	6%	8%	3%	2%	225
Western Australia	21%	26%	14%	8%	7%	2%	0%	133
Tasmania	24%	22%	15%	9%	2%	5%	0%	55
ACT	17%	17%	24%	7%	3%	7%	3%	29
Northern Territory	18%	9%	27%	9%	0%	0%	0%	11
Average	**22%**	**20%**	**13%**	**9%**	**7%**	**4%**	**1%**	**1,483**

Trusted IT advice - size

Size	IT Service	Consultant	Internet	Friend	Family	NFP contact	IT Media	Total
1-2	14%	11%	14%	14%	11%	4%	1%	519
3-4	22%	22%	9%	11%	6%	4%	0%	161
5-9	26%	20%	14%	7%	7%	2%	1%	241
10-19	22%	26%	12%	5%	8%	5%	3%	194
20-49	36%	30%	10%	3%	1%	2%	1%	179
50-99	26%	20%	11%	8%	7%	4%	1%	74
100-499	26%	32%	14%	1%	1%	5%	2%	103
500+	21%	36%	14%	0%	0%	7%	0%	14
Average	**22%**	**20%**	**13%**	**9%**	**7%**	**4%**	**1%**	**1,485**

Useful websites for non-profit organisations

Many non-profits have a direct or indirect relationship with either state or federal government, and will access and use government websites and portals for information, contacts, resources and reporting at some time.

Of the non-government organisations focused on the non-profit sector, Connecting Up and Our Community are used most often and are largely complementary with the information and resources they offer. Connecting Up is focused on IT issues and Our Community is focused on non-profit best practice and governance.

Useful websites - organisations

Organisation	State Gov Sites	Federal Gov Sites	Connecting Up	Our Community	Not For Profit Network	Info Xchange	Total
Education & Employment	55%	58%	34%	23%	14%	11%	187
Community Development	58%	57%	35%	50%	27%	23%	183
Disability services	67%	69%	55%	40%	24%	27%	158
Health & Treatment	58%	55%	48%	39%	23%	28%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	58%	49%	33%	26%	16%	5%	107
Youth services	53%	52%	41%	38%	29%	30%	79
Creative arts & Media	49%	47%	31%	30%	12%	6%	77
Child services	56%	54%	35%	17%	10%	10%	63
Law & advocacy	55%	58%	47%	32%	27%	23%	62
Business Organisations	70%	61%	36%	31%	23%	8%	61
Religion	27%	27%	20%	8%	12%	0%	59
Family services	75%	63%	46%	43%	27%	21%	56
Environment	59%	48%	26%	37%	15%	2%	46
Aged Services	64%	76%	42%	29%	20%	20%	45
Housing & Shelter	61%	55%	50%	45%	30%	25%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	46%	46%	44%	38%	23%	10%	39
Multiple services	69%	72%	41%	22%	25%	22%	32
Museums & Libraries	75%	59%	31%	25%	16%	3%	32
Emergency services	72%	39%	39%	11%	11%	6%	18
Average	**58%**	**56%**	**39%**	**33%**	**21%**	**17%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Useful websites – regions

Region	State Gov Sites	Federal Gov Sites	Connecting Up	Our Community	Not For Profit Network	Info Xchange	Total
New South Wales	57%	58%	38%	26%	18%	14%	472
Victoria	60%	54%	40%	51%	22%	37%	324
South Australia	58%	53%	41%	20%	15%	6%	234
Queensland	54%	53%	42%	40%	24%	11%	225
Western Australia	64%	60%	40%	31%	29%	8%	133
Tasmania	65%	58%	27%	33%	27%	15%	55
ACT	55%	76%	45%	24%	24%	3%	29
Northern Territory	64%	64%	18%	55%	36%	36%	11
Average	**58%**	**56%**	**39%**	**33%**	**21%**	**17%**	**1,483**

Useful websites - size

Size	State Gov Sites	Federal Gov Sites	Connecting Up	Our Community	Not For Profit Network	Info Xchange	Total
1-2	54%	49%	34%	33%	17%	12%	519
3-4	54%	49%	32%	40%	22%	22%	161
5-9	64%	60%	41%	40%	17%	20%	241
10-19	59%	62%	47%	37%	24%	18%	194
20-49	63%	65%	41%	28%	28%	16%	179
50-99	59%	59%	59%	27%	36%	23%	74
100-499	62%	62%	42%	19%	24%	20%	103
500+	71%	71%	29%	0%	21%	21%	14
Average	**58%**	**56%**	**39%**	**33%**	**21%**	**17%**	**1,485**

Advice on new technology and best practice

Most organisations get advice on new technology and best practice from other non-profits or through email newsletters and newspaper articles. The source of information is rated as important (industry association or other non-profit) and practicality of information (workshop or seminar) is also important.

Practical experience is also highly rated (hands-on and specialist seminars) in the next question, "How would you prefer advice and information".

The Department of Broadband, Communication & Digital Economy (DBCDE) was the least used source of advice and rated least valuable, which is the same result as the last two surveys.

How do you get advice and information?

Existing advice	Sources %	Rating
Informal discussions with other not for profit organisations	74%	6.1
Newspaper articles	69%	4.7
Email newsletter	68%	5.5
From industry association – ACOSS etc	65%	5.7
Workshops or seminars	64%	5.7
NFP Providers – Connecting Up, Our Community etc	62%	5.1
State Government website	57%	4.5
Other Federal Government websites	55%	4.4
Trade magazines	54%	4.4
Trade shows & events	48%	4.3
Department of Broadband, Communication & Digital Economy	42%	3.0
Average	**60%**	**4.7**

How would you prefer advice and information?

Most organisations would prefer the opportunity to experience new technology – hands on, via a regular email newsletter and/or through specialist workshops and seminars. The ability to consult with other organisations in the sector is also important.

Prefer advice

Preferred source	Preferred Sources %	Rating
Opportunity to experience new technology – hands on	71%	7.2
Regular email newsletter	70%	6.5
Specialist workshops or seminars	68%	6.7
Closer relations with Not For Profit cluster	67%	6.5
Telephone a specialist advisory service for help	63%	5.9
Via a government website	59%	5.0
Industry related magazines eg Association Management	54%	5.1
Average	**67%**	**6.3**

Turnover, future aims, IT objectives and IT spend

75% of organisations answered the turnover question.

Turnover - organisations

Organisation	Under $50k	$50-$99k	$100-$299k	$300 -$499k	$500-$999K	$1-5 Million	$5 -10 Million	$11 Million +	Total
Education & Employment	18%	9%	9%	6%	7%	16%	3%	4%	187
Community Development	15%	10%	21%	13%	5%	8%	1%	2%	183
Disability services	7%	4%	6%	7%	11%	27%	10%	11%	158
Health & Treatment	10%	2%	11%	7%	11%	23%	6%	7%	137
Sports and Social Clubs	34%	12%	13%	8%	3%	8%	1%	0%	107
Youth services	3%	6%	15%	10%	14%	24%	5%	1%	79
Creative arts & Media	18%	3%	23%	13%	10%	10%	4%	3%	77
Child services	8%	2%	10%	14%	13%	14%	2%	3%	63
Law & advocacy	8%	0%	10%	8%	23%	16%	2%	0%	62
Business Organisations	11%	10%	16%	5%	15%	20%	3%	0%	61
Religion	12%	12%	15%	8%	8%	8%	2%	5%	59
Family services	11%	0%	18%	0%	16%	18%	5%	7%	56
Environment	26%	2%	9%	4%	20%	17%	0%	2%	46
Aged Services	2%	7%	4%	4%	13%	18%	16%	13%	45
Housing & Shelter	9%	5%	7%	9%	9%	23%	2%	2%	44
Philanthropy & volunteers	18%	3%	5%	8%	5%	15%	3%	10%	39
Multiple services	0%	3%	0%	3%	9%	22%	9%	34%	32
Museums & Libraries	41%	16%	9%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	32
Emergency services	26%	0%	6%	11%	0%	0%	6%	6%	18
Average	**14%**	**6%**	**12%**	**8%**	**10%**	**16%**	**4%**	**5%**	**1,485**

* shaded area indicates small sample

Future aims

Fifty seven percent of respondents intended to expand and grow. Forty three percent intended to maintain steady income and business as usual.

Future IT objectives

Seventy four percent of respondents noted their main objective was to get more out of their existing system, rating this objective 7.2 out of ten. The next main objective was to protect and recover critical data and applications and this was rated most important at 8.1 out of ten. These are the same top two objectives as the last survey in 2008.

Disaster recovery and security are in three of the top four positions and rate most important of all objectives, 7.7, 7.9 and 8.1 out of ten.

Mobility (58%) and Cloud (52%) are well down the list of IT objectives with just over half putting them on their "to consider" list and rating them below average in importance.

Apart from security, organisations recognise the need to become more productive, and "right info at right time" and "integrate and analyse data" are rated above average in importance.

IT objectives

Objectives	Objectives %	Rating
Get more out of existing IT system	74%	7.2
Protect and recover most critical data and applications	73%	8.1
Ensure system integrity against viruses or malicious code	73%	7.9
Detect potential threats to your system	73%	7.7
Introduce new business applications into existing system	70%	6.7
The right information at the right time to improve productivity	69%	7.6
Integrate and analyse data for better business decisions	69%	7.3
Manage costs through better use of IT	66%	6.7
Deliver services to customers even in event of disaster	61%	6.9
Have a single view of customer to better meet their needs (CRM)	60%	6.7
Ensure data can be shared by mobile workforce	58%	6.4
Introduce Software as a Service (cloud applications)	52%	5.2
Create system that scales up or down on business demand	49%	5.2
Integrate voice and data across the organisation	44%	5.3
Average	**65%**	**6.8**

IT budget - organisation

Seventy percent of organisations responded to the question with a specified amount. The remainder stated "as required" or did not respond to the question. The table below shows the responses to the question.

IT Budget	Under $1k	$1k-$4k	$5k-$9k	$10 - $19k	$20-$49K	$50-$99k	$100K +	Total
Education & Employment	2%	34%	14%	19%	14%	6%	11%	131
Community Development	4%	42%	20%	20%	7%	3%	3%	134
Disability services	3%	19%	18%	16%	18%	12%	15%	113
Health & Treatment	2%	35%	15%	11%	17%	6%	15%	95
Sports and Social Clubs	8%	60%	15%	8%	8%	1%	0%	75
Youth services	4%	37%	11%	20%	17%	7%	4%	54
Creative arts & Media	0%	53%	14%	14%	11%	5%	4%	57
Child services	5%	62%	15%	3%	8%	0%	8%	39
Law & advocacy	3%	23%	25%	18%	23%	5%	5%	40
Business Organisations	5%	37%	19%	14%	16%	7%	2%	43
Religion	3%	54%	14%	17%	3%	3%	6%	35
Family services	0%	29%	33%	10%	7%	7%	14%	42
Environment	9%	46%	11%	17%	11%	3%	3%	35
Aged Services	3%	21%	15%	18%	21%	12%	12%	34
Housing & Shelter	0%	28%	21%	31%	14%	7%	0%	29
Philanthropy & volunteers	0%	37%	5%	21%	16%	0%	21%	19
Multiple services	0%	14%	9%	9%	18%	18%	32%	22
Museums & Libraries	9%	64%	23%	0%	5%	0%	0%	22
Emergency services	23%	46%	8%	8%	8%	0%	8%	13
Average	**3%**	**38%**	**17%**	**15%**	**13%**	**6%**	**8%**	**1,032**

IT budget - size

IT Budget	Under $1k	$1k-$4k	$5k-$9k	$10 - $19k	$20-$49K	$50-$99k	$100K +	Total
1-2	10%	68%	13%	7%	2%	1%	0%	333
3-4	0%	54%	25%	17%	4%	0%	0%	113
5-9	1%	36%	26%	22%	13%	2%	1%	178
10-19	1%	20%	24%	28%	14%	8%	6%	145
20-49	1%	9%	12%	23%	35%	13%	8%	127
50-99	0%	0%	7%	13%	27%	16%	38%	45
100-499	0%	1%	2%	2%	22%	23%	49%	83
500+	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	88%	8
Average	**3%**	**38%**	**17%**	**15%**	**13%**	**6%**	**8%**	**1,032**

Training budget – organisation

Forty four percent of organisations responded with a specified amount. Fifty six percent stated "as required" or did not respond to the question. The table below shows the responses to the question. More than half of respondents spend $4,000 or less on training.

Training budget	Under $1k	$1k-$4k	$5k-$9k	$10 -$19k	$20-$49K	$50-$99k	$100K +	Total
Education & Employment	3%	52%	30%	9%	5%	1%	0%	91
Community Development	13%	56%	20%	8%	1%	1%	1%	91
Disability services	8%	41%	24%	18%	5%	3%	1%	78
Health & Treatment	10%	51%	21%	11%	3%	3%	2%	63
Sports and Social Clubs	18%	62%	18%	3%	0%	0%	0%	34
Youth services	10%	45%	25%	15%	5%	0%	0%	40
Creative arts & Media	7%	63%	20%	3%	7%	0%	0%	30
Child services	12%	60%	16%	8%	4%	0%	0%	25
Law & advocacy	8%	58%	12%	15%	8%	0%	0%	26
Business Organisations	6%	67%	18%	3%	6%	0%	0%	33
Religion	12%	53%	18%	12%	0%	6%	0%	17
Family services	21%	38%	21%	3%	14%	3%	0%	29
Environment	10%	70%	10%	5%	5%	0%	0%	20
Aged Services	4%	54%	29%	4%	4%	4%	0%	24
Housing & Shelter	12%	53%	24%	12%	0%	0%	0%	17
Philanthropy & volunteers	0%	64%	0%	27%	9%	0%	0%	11
Multiple services	0%	36%	14%	21%	21%	7%	0%	14
Museums & Libraries	11%	78%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9
Emergency services	17%	50%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	6
Average	**9%**	**53%**	**21%**	**10%**	**5%**	**2%**	**0.4%**	**658**

Training budget – size

Training budget	Under $1k	$1k-$4k	$5k-$9k	$10 -$19k	$20-$49K	$50-$99k	$100K +	Total
1-2	21%	67%	10%	2%	0%	0%	0%	162
3-4	11%	65%	20%	5%	0%	0%	0%	66
5-9	9%	65%	20%	6%	1%	0%	0%	127
10-19	7%	51%	23%	11%	7%	0%	0%	96
20-49	2%	47%	29%	13%	8%	1%	1%	103
50-99	0%	23%	23%	40%	0%	13%	0%	30
100-499	0%	10%	33%	21%	21%	3%	3%	67
500+	0%	0%	29%	14%	14%	43%	0%	7
Average	**9%**	**53%**	**21%**	**10%**	**5%**	**2%**	**0.4%**	**658**

Case studies

This section provides information on many leading ICT products and services for the non-profit sector. Case studies are powerful ways to explain the value of a product or service to an organisation. DBi has produced more than 500 case studies explaining the benefits of ICT adoption, export, sustainability, health and safety and other issues.

The case studies are created from in-depth interviews covering business background, business environment, and the journey from original idea through the process of identifying and selecting a solution, implementation, mistakes, risks, culture change, business benefits and future plans.

Contact details are included for all products and services mentioned in the case studies.

Skype case study

The Sydney Stereo Camera Club has members around Australia and internationally. The organisation was established in 1965 and has 85 members. The club is run by a committee of eight members and has no fulltime administrational staff.

What changes are taking place in your category?

There is currently a strong and sudden movement from film to digital photography. There are many technical issues raised as a result of this change. It's not as simple as it is for standard two-dimensional photography. To show most stereo photography, you have to project it and there are lots of issues involved in projecting 3-D.

This year we are introducing our first digital competition. To coordinate this successfully there is a need for members all around Australia to be able to talk to each other easily.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

Using Skype Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The idea came from a number of members that were using Skype for their own purposes.

We started using it in the club, because there were cost savings. We ended up choosing Skype by default…more and more people were using it to save money on phone calls and suggesting it to others. We got a critical mass and then others joined in. That's often the way things naturally evolve.

Skype was the only one available at the time and because of our international members it needed to be a universally available low cost or free VoIP system. Skype has many benefits. You can create a list of other users that you wish to talk to and see who has their computer on and is available. Skype also has the ability to upload and display pictures of callers.

When the quality is good…it's very good, but when it drops out, it's a problem. Most of the time…quality is good. It depends on the internet suppliers such as ISPs and telcos and how many people are using it. There's no quality of service (QOS) guarantee…you get what you pay for. And it's free.

Skype has evolved, and more people are using it. It has now evolved to be able to do videoconferencing. So by using a mixture of my laptop with a Skype account for travelling, a web cam and a microphone I can see and talk to anyone using the system.

How much did it cost you?

It's free. The hidden cost is in use of the broadband connection and the nature of the connection plan. On most plans you might use several hundred kilobits of data for a ten-minute chat.

Skype has built points of presence all over the world to allow connection to established telecommunications networks. These connect users to the local telephone service. So for a very low fee…I can make virtually any call to club members or anyone for a few cents over normal phone lines to the regular telephone. I could be anywhere in the world but nothing changes. Calls to mobiles are more expensive but still low by comparison.

What were the main risks you took?

Security is a risk that can be managed. Any computer software can be hacked and vendors are moving towards a more secure approach.

The risk is that somebody will hack through your Skype phone into your computer. Spam is the main incentive for hackers to be interested in small users…using your computer as a "mailbox" to send spam on to others. To address this, we provide information on security on the club web site.

What advice would you give someone else?

It's a best efforts solution…not a business grade solution. If you don't care that you may have to resort to a normal phone from time to time…then it is well worthwhile. Some members use Skype video. We can hold up an object during a conference or discussion and demonstrate it to members.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

To give you an example of cost savings…when I was in Hong Kong I spent $2 worth of "Skype Out" calls to Australia that would have cost me hundreds of dollars otherwise. I was using the same service in Hong Kong that I use in Sydney via my laptop.

Skype also has voicemail services where you can leave messages for people. So for people with disabilities for instance, it could be a great way to communicate rather than email. Or people with hearing impairment, using video or text where they can't use voice. Slow "signing" is possible with the video service

Business grade VoIP – Over The Wire

Over The Wire was established in 2005 to provide Hosted Telephony and VoIP solutions to businesses. Over The Wire now offers a fully integrated suite of telecommunication products.

Over The Wire is a leading provider of Wide Area Networks (WANs) capable of carrying data, voice and Internet traffic across the one network. The background in voice networks makes Over The Wire specialists in building, designing and maintaining data networks capable of carrying latency sensitive traffic.

Over The Wire provides a total, integrated solution for all communication needs. This simplifies support and billing by providing one point of contact for all services and ensures that the individual components of a communications solution fit together perfectly.

Over The Wire case study

Over The Wire is a telecommunications provider focused on providing simple and specialised voice services using the Internet Protocol primarily over private networks. The business also offers data storage and hosting to its customers. The business started in 2005, employs sixteen people and is based at Stones Corner in Brisbane.

Who are your clients and customers?

Over The Wire is a new breed of telecommunication service provider, which offers voice services – telephone calls - delivered in a non-traditional way. The digital revolution has blurred the line between voice and data services in a way that presents many new opportunities, especially in reducing call costs substantially.

In the past, the main telecommunication channel for everyone was the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), managed mainly by Telstra. The PSTN is the huge network of copper wires that connects homes, businesses, government and other organisations together. We're all familiar with it. The mobile phone network has added an additional communication channel to the copper wire network and for many people is now the main communications tool.

And the internet has added another dimension to communication through email and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and many people are familiar with Skype which provides a free and/or low cost service for phone calls across the web. It works, it's cheap…but it's not always reliable or at a standard that's acceptable to business.

What people may not be familiar with is the huge investment that telecommunications and infrastructure companies have been making in laying high volume fibre optic cables across Australia over the past ten years. Every time a trench was excavated next to a road or railway line, fibre optic cable was dropped in.

This now means that VoIP services can be delivered reliably and to an extremely high standard via a host of new and traditional wholesale telecommunications and data network providers. The new market offers extra choice, loads of capacity and therefore considerable potential savings on call costs.

Over The Wire is taking advantage of this new environment to deliver complex voice services to organisations of all kinds at a low price not available from the traditional network providers.

Are you trying to attract new customers?

Yes. Typically our customers are mid-sized organisations with between 20 and 100 handsets. And many of our customers are based in multiple locations across the country.

How do they benefit from your product?

There are two key benefits. The most obvious is a considerable reduction in call costs for our customers. Most find that the savings each month, more than pay for the cost of our services.

The other benefit is technical. An organisation that uses our services can treat all their offices as one site from a telephony perspective. They have one platform across the entire organisation. For example, an employee can connect into voice mail from any phone, in any office with their same password, wherever they may be.

Who are your competitors?

Traditional PABX vendors. Most of them are only interested in selling the hardware – the PABX systems and handsets.

We manage all the telecommunication needs of an organisation as a service – router, virtual PABX, handsets and the hosted service. We've standardised on SNOM handsets because they are an excellent product at a good price. However we can incorporate any brand of good quality handset into the system.

What changes are taking place in your category?

There is a huge trend towards Voice over Internet Protocol – VoIP, primarily driven by larger organisations looking to save money on call costs. This trend is now working its way downwards into organisations of all sizes.

There is another trend towards unified messaging, through the integration of telephone and computer. So people can receive voice mails through their phone, computer and Personal Digital Assistant (PDA).

And there is a growing trend towards hosted voice services. Instead of having PABX boxes on site, people have a virtual PABX that manages their handsets in the same way but without the box.

We have noticed a trend away from owning equipment. Financial Officers want to operationalise their expenses rather than capitalise them.

When a box (PABX) has a problem, it can take days to fix it. When a virtual PABX has a problem it can be fixed quickly. It's a software service and with the maturity of virtual PABX software, any problems are easy to address and update.

There are lot more IP based systems and handsets available these days. Traditionally, you bought an NEC or Panasonic PABX system and NEC or Panasonic handsets. But the hardware wouldn't always work interoperably across the different brands.

Nowadays you can choose any handset you want. There are agreed international standards and most systems are designed to interoperate.

How have you been successful?

Providing a quality full service at a decent price. We are one of the first providers to do this. If you went to NEC and you had six offices they would sell you six PABX systems and leave you to work out the network connections. We do it all.

PABX systems can cost between $20,000 - $50,000 for a fully featured system. Though a PABX may last from three to seven years, any changes to the system then create additional costs for new handsets, equipment and cabling.

We charge for the complete service on a monthly basis. Any problems, we replace handsets straight away. All upgrades to the virtual PABX system and new features are automatic and included in the price.

When you buy a PABX system, if you want a new feature, you order and pay for it. With our service all new features are upgraded automatically.

An average customer may spend $1,000 a month for the services we provide, but we have seen that they are saving at least that in reduced call costs. So the service is effectively free, because businesses always make pretty much the same number of calls every month as part of standard business activity.

What is your most recent ICT project?

We needed a reliable wholesale provider to connect us to the PSTN. We were having some technical problems with our previous call termination provider so we needed to find a better option.

As part of the service we provide to our customers, our ability to offer low cost calls is dependent on us being able to buy wholesale rates for telecommunication services. NETSIP provides us with the VoIP to PSTN gateway.

Every call that goes over the trunk networks is costed and charged where the call is terminated. The more calls we can manage for our customers the more value we offer to the wholesalers and the better rates we can get.

We analysed the calls that our customers made and found that an average call lasts two minutes. So we were able to estimate the overall volume of calls, define the wholesale rate and offer our customers a standard low cost per fixed line call, no matter whether it was local or STD.

Our previous supplier was unable to deliver the high technical quality we needed to ensure commercial grade connections for our business customers.

Did you write a project plan before starting?

We looked at a lot of options. In this country there are probably around twenty suppliers of this service. NETSIP was the most responsive to our needs.

There was a migration plan agreed by our clients. The transition to the new service happened over a month from initial testing and then migrating client by client took some time. We couldn't afford to have any problems.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes. NETSIP has given us a dependable, high quality solution to our problem.

How much did it cost you?
We are paying commercial rates to NETSIP. Price is on a par with other wholesalers. But the network infrastructure is newer and better, and provides a more reliable and consistent quality of service.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?
Not doing it sooner. It was beginning to impact our clients, though most problems were shielded from them. We invested a lot of time and effort in pushing the previous provider to improve services.

What were the main risks that you took?
The risks are 24 x 7. Any change to a voice service has to be made with care. Customers will forgive many things but loss of voice connection isn't one of them.

What advice would you give someone else?
Really understand how your provider's networks are constructed. Understand what the provider says they offer and how they go about delivering it. There can be a big difference between sales pitch and reality. Not all VoIP providers are equal. You can't tell until something goes wrong.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
Having a supplier that will grow with us as we grow. We needed to be able to ensure that extra load doesn't create issues with quality. And now we can.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
Yes. People want price. A few buy on technology…but not many. Customers say, "You can replace what I have, cheaper and I'm confident with you as a supplier."

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
Not all providers are equal. Price isn't an indicator of quality. Clients are looking for the opportunity to reduce phone costs. One of our clients is spending $10-$20,000 a month. NETSIP could halve their costs.

There is a poor perception of VoIP. People associate it with poor quality. But all the technology in this area has finally become mature. You don't have to put the voice over the standard open internet.

NETSIP isn't voice over the internet. It's voice delivered over private networks, which is very reliable. We know what the quality is. Nothing is left to chance. Anybody with a PABX is a potential customer. They can save a lot of money.

Managing mobile devices - Airwatch

Airwatch is a leader in wireless and mobility solutions. The Airwatch technology allows organisations to secure, monitor and support a fleet of mobile devices. The solutions are multi platform, simple to deploy, use and scale across any sized organisation.

Airwatch allows an organisation to manage mobile devices regardless of operating system, carrier, network or location. It covers Apple iOS, Android, Blackberry, Symbian and Windows devices.

Airwatch case study

TAAConnect can provide a mobile device management application called Airwatch to organisations, or we can offer it as a hosted service, on a per-device monthly management fee.

Who are your clients and customers?

We have a number of larger clients that have offices, shops, factories or other sites in multiple locations across Australia. For them we supply the complete mix of cabling, equipment, software solutions, telephony and support.

Out of the 20,000 IT services businesses in Australia, we are one of probably about 3,000 with voice experience. Because we can understand and implement solutions across all areas of a voice and data network, our services are in high demand.

What is happening in mobility?

There have been big changes in mobility with the adoption of tablets and smart phones. People are increasingly bringing their mobile devices into work in government departments, corporates and other large organisations and expecting to be able to connect the device into the IT network.

They want to be able to use the organisation's email software on their phone or tablet. Companies that have been used to managing Blackberries on the network are now being expected to manage and incorporate a wide range of devices running Symbian, Windows phone 7, Android and Apple iOS.

When you look at Apple, it's a platform for delivering content, built around the iTunes account. So for the IT department in organisations, the questions arise, "How do we deliver our applications?" and "How do we manage them?"

On top of that issue, how does the organisation manage all the devices that are now part of the new working environment?

You need a management application that allows you to have visibility and control of the whole mobile fleet of devices, from a single application. That is the issue that CIOs all over the world are facing at the moment. CIOs are not going to tell the CEO how to run the business. It has to be the other way around.

The IT department is there to serve the organisation and if the CEO and other managers want to incorporate these new devices into the business then the CIO has to make it happen.

At the moment, rather than look for solutions, many CIOs are putting up barriers. But when organisations need to become more agile, the CIO has to find a solution.

How do you manage mobile devices?

This is where companies like TAAConnect can help. It's not hard to find solutions, but you have to be willing to look.

We can provide a mobile device management application called Airwatch to organisations, or we can offer it as a hosted service, on a per-device monthly management fee.

Within the hosted service, we have two offerings – "do you want to support your devices yourself, or do you want us to do that as well?" We can manage everything from providing the devices and managing the account, through to the ongoing support for the device.

For instance, if a user rings and says "My email isn't working," or "How do I use this application with my device?" we can take that whole burden off the IT department.

What are the main issues?

You should start with looking closely at what the devices are going to be used for and then decide if any particular brands are best for that purpose.

What services are you currently delivering to your workforce and what services do you want to deliver? What is the best way to deliver the service and what is the best device to use? Ask the right questions and the solution becomes obvious.

Also, in your corporate network environment, your internet is filtered. If your workforce is outside of your premises using 3G devices how are you going to manage internet filtering? All these things can be managed, but you have to plan the architecture up front..

Then you have to consider the total cost of ownership, not just the initial cost of purchase. That means including the cost of the devices, support, licensing for the applications, accessories and the ongoing data costs.

Accessories could include car battery charger, leather case and screen protector, which can add $250 to the cost. Data costs will include personal usage. How are you going to manage that?

TAAConnect can manage data costs from a BYO personal perspective as well as business use, but this has to be planned for up front. We manage business accounts and personal accounts for our clients, as well as helping them choose which plan is best.

Next, how are you going to manage the delivery of the organisation business applications, and what value will they deliver?

If the workforce is going to use the applications constantly, like using a CRM application, then you can probably justify the cost. But if it's just a case of accessing emails, then you probably couldn't.

Plus you have the issue of training. When you deliver devices to non technically savvy people, you need to train them.

In one company, we are moving people from paper-based timesheets to an application on their device. We had to train them to use the application and the device.

In that case, we also built an online portal to train a widely dispersed workforce in how to effectively use the devices that were provided.

The portal included videos, Qs & As and tests, and the users received a certificate at the end of the training. All these costs have to be considered in the project. It's not just a one off $1,000 purchase.

What else is involved?

The decisions and management of devices will also involve other departments such as HR to address the usage policy, privacy and training. There is also the issue of asset management.

Airwatch can manage all the devices across an organisation. So we manage all devices from introduction to decommissioning. If a device is lost, we can identify the latest known location and we can remotely wipe it of all company data and information.

We have two options. We can wipe it to factory default and clean it of all company and private information, or we can just remove the corporate access and company information, and leave the personal user data and information.

So in the event of a member of staff leaving with their own personal BYO device, we just remove the business information and access to the company network.

How do you deliver company applications?

The Apple iOS is great at delivering content. To deliver company applications, we set up a private appstore, which gives the business the ability to deliver applications without having to use an iTunes account.

That means the business, or TAAConnect on its behalf, decides which applications are useful and organises the licensing for the applications to be delivered to staff.

With all these issues to consider, you can see why IT departments put up the barriers. Many of these issues are not familiar territory, but if you plan it properly from the beginning it can be managed.

How much interest is there in mobility?

Every client we talk to, we now ask them what they are doing about mobile devices.

Everyone from government departments, right down to small businesses is looking into mobility right now.

Mobile workforce solutions – GBM software

GBM Software is a software company, which produces software for mobile workforce solutions.

Originally focused on the mining industry, consulting services soon extended into the environmental management, land administration, local government, defence and telecommunications sectors.

GBM software has developed a range of commercial software products focused on mobile workforce solutions to maximise the value of geographically distributed assets of all kinds, as well as continuing to carry out custom development for individual customers.

GBM Software case study

GBM Software is a software company, which produces software for mobile workforce solutions. The company was started in 1991 and employs twelve people working from the head office in Brisbane.

How would you describe the business you are in?

We have created software that manages the location, inspection (and data capture) and maintenance cycle of geographically distributed assets.

This area of management is distinct from traditional asset management systems, which are driven mainly from an accounting life-value and depreciation perspective.

We focus on how individual assets such as guide posts, drains, trees etc, are located, mapped and integrated into a task management system, with a history and project management framework to allow effective management and control.

Most asset management systems aren't interested in individual trees or fence posts. From a financial value perspective they are bundled into high-level categories. But from a legal and task management point of view, these individual items are important.

If somebody has an accident and runs into a tree or pole, it is important to know the status of that object, to know whether it was painted, or had reflectors attached, or whether it was recently pruned or lopped and when. This level of data capture, management and interrogation is being recognised as increasingly valuable by utilities, councils, mining companies and similar organisations.

GBM Software is focused at the work management level of asset systems. We can maintain an inspection history and a maintenance history for a wide range of items.

For example, our software can manage individual trees. In a traditional asset management system there might be a single category "trees". Our software will have an overall view of one million individual trees and their location, inspection history, work history and whether the tree has been removed and when.

There is a big difference between how the accountant views trees and how the maintenance department views trees.

Who are your clients and customers?

Our clients are worldwide. We provide software to organisations in Australia, UK, North America and Canada, and the EU.

As countries become more sophisticated in their adoption and use of IT for spatial management and mobility, they begin to look for solutions to manage assets across geographical regions and locations. That is when our solutions become relevant.

In Australia, our clients are in local government, state government, oil and gas industry, land management and environment and agriculture.

Historically, our customers have been in the GIS department, but there has been an evolution in thinking and we now connect mobile information into databases of all kinds to create business services. We are integrating field force staff into the corporate business. We believe that GBM Software is the best mobile asset management system in the world.

We are talking to clients about solutions for emergency management, weeds and pests, road corridor defects, tree management, graffiti incident management and general land management.

The development for us has been moving from a technology product to building a whole information structure around how to manage the data. We are now in the solution space. Our challenge it to get both our traditional and new customers to recognise that we are now in the solution space and not just in IT.

We are currently in the process of moving to deliver the GBM solutions through "cloud" infrastructure as a managed service.

How do they benefit from your services?
We can deliver mobile workforce productivity, with increased efficiency and dispatch. Workers have map-based information at their fingertips.

Our products have been developed recognising that when workers are in the field, they are not always connected, so the software continues to work effectively until connection is achieved again. It is the "sometimes connected" model for mobile computing.

Local government is always looking for ways to maximise the effectiveness of operational field staff. GBM Software can help them manage planned maintenance, with schedules delivered to devices in the field, supported by overall history so that tasks are up to date and relevant, with map references and details for each task.

As soon as the task is completed, the details are sent back to head office and captured in the database, which is updated. So the whole operation is continually tracked and captured in real time.

The system is auditable at all stages. One of the principle drivers for councils is measuring levels of service. The software can produce KPI reports for management at any time.

The software can generate a location plan to inspect assets. When a defect is identified, there is a system to deal with it. So liability is automatically managed as part of the process. This allows managers to easily demonstrate due diligence because the appropriate reports and history are built into the system.

What changes are taking place in your category?
When we first started business in 1991, there were some early adopters. Recently we are seeing a consensus across the whole world that mobility has finally matured.

If you consider GPS years ago, it was all about capturing data, not about what to do with it. Now everybody is recognising the data allows you to do something useful. It becomes part of an overall management system.

With phone based GPS, Google Maps and other locational services available today, there is a much greater awareness of spatial connectivity. Now customers are putting up their hands and saying we are ready for this.

It has been limited by the lack of readiness in the market, rather than the ability to deliver the solution.

For a long time we were just selling GIS to the GIS department. Smart phones have been a driver of demand for more connected devices. The Generation "Y" people expect everything will work on every device. We now operate in a connected world.

For a long time we were waiting for a camera, phone and GPS device, something we could show moving maps on. Now everyone is doing it. Those devices were seen as expensive. Now they are a reasonable price. So a lot has changed.

We are now dealing with professional devices not consumer devices. We have 3G widely available. So we are now able to get bandwidth that we never dreamed of.

How have you been successful?
It has been our solution approach. We have a strong technological background built on years of fieldwork. We understand the business outcomes. Our geological history in maps, data capture and management has been fundamental to our success, because we understand spatial and mobility business issues from the ground up. So we appreciate the issues of the field worker and the manager in head office.

Over the years, we have managed to attract and hold onto some very good technical people. We have programmers with skills across a wide range of IT environments and platforms.

What prompted you to create the GBM software solution?
It has grown from working with our customers. Originally we gave our clients the tools to go out and capture data. Then we saw there was a need for us to help them do something useful with the data they collected.

That resulted in us taking a solutions approach in the development of the GBM solution based on what we could see customers were looking for.

There were two approaches to data management in the early days, "Don't let anyone change anything" from head office, and field workers wanting to "Gather and change anything I like."

It's only now that we can satisfy both interests. We are seeing a convergence of the needs of centralised management and the needs of the field worker. Connecting the two successfully is the key. Now we are finally getting customers who demand what we can deliver.

We knew that it wasn't just a case of collecting data. The data must be organised, mapped and manageable to deliver the value.

Databases have evolved as well. It has been an evolution of the technology and an evolution of the acceptance of technology that has allowed this to work.

We have also selected customers who would understand what we are doing. We are now on the cusp of something much bigger than before. We are selling the value of the solution rather than the value of the devices.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
We initially started business as consultants. Fifteen years ago we began building GIS tools. Next we added mobility. Then we finally added the backend solution to deliver the value through the GBM Software.

Where did you go for advice?
We have always had the skills in house. Though we also have a very good professional network built up over the years. We occasionally bring in specialist people now and again as we need them.

How much does it cost?
We charge licence fees and implementation fees for solutions. We are not a bespoke software developer. There are thousands of people using GBM software, where they can build their own forms. We have dozens of different desktops configurations.

We are now moving towards a workforce management database with a web interface and device interfaces that can be delivered as a "cloud" managed service. Our business model is to offer licences and also cloud services for a monthly fee.

We are already offering a weed management program on the cloud. We have Bio-Security Queensland using this for their land protection officers throughout the state. The vision is for this to become a statewide database of weeds and pests. We will then do this for emergency management.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?
We developed a number of products early on that were clever technologies. But they were too far ahead of the market.

What advice would you give to somebody else?
Choose your customers carefully. The major customers we have are those we can develop and grow with. Try not to be too dependent on one or a small number of clients. Have a really thorough understanding of the market you service.

What were the barriers you faced?
The availability of cash for research and development, but that is a universal issue for software developers.

What are the business benefits?
The solutions have a clearly demonstrable short-term return on investment, which can be quantified and evaluated.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
We have a broad customer base using our off the shelf software. All of our major customers are long-term relationships. We get a lot of positive comments and referrals.

We got a lot of good feedback on our graffiti solution. We were able to build up a history of different tags and locations, so the judgements in the courts were in line with the severity of the offence.

What is the most important thing you have learned in the last year?
Awareness that we have to embrace the cloud as a delivery mechanism. We will deliver our GBM software as a managed service solution.

What are you planning to do next?
It is evolutionary. We will continue to revise and refine the solution. We are developing our database to make it easily extensible. The front-end development is focused on managed delivery across all and any devices. The next thing is to focus on marketing our solutions to new customers in utilities and mining as well.

Rapid mobile "app" development - Blink

Blink Mobile is a rapid forms development software product that allows users to swiftly connect mobile devices to their networks to improve productivity and performance. The Blink Mobility platform can deliver application and mobile services in days that would normally take months to create and deploy.

Rype is a Blink Mobile partner that uses the Blink fast development platform to create solutions for a wide range of business and government customers and clients.

Blink Mobile case study

Rype is an IT services company, which consults, implements and supports IT products and services, mainly focusing on the Apple product platform. The company was started in 2009 and employs ten people working from the office in Logan.

How would you describe the business you are in?

We are an Apple-centric business. Apple is our chosen platform, because it has fewer problems. It works. We consult and provide services to businesses and other organisations to help them seamlessly incorporate Apple products into their existing computer networks with no pain.

You should be able to choose which platform you want to work with, because it suits your needs. At the enterprise level, the CIO tells you what to do and what to use. So our main business focus is to integrate Apple functionality into the enterprise space.

Universities all over the world have been doing this for years, with no problems, so it should be something other large enterprises look at seriously. At the personal level, Apple is being adopted fast worldwide. We are now seeing this happen at the enterprise level.

Who are your clients and customers?

Clients range across small business, design and advertising companies, non-profits and larger organisations such as councils and corporates. When we started the company, I thought that our main customers would be designers and advertising businesses. We have now identified local and state government as an opportunity for growth.

How do they benefit from your services?

We started in the home market and have moved into the enterprise market, because we have the expertise to handle the issues they have. They want to enjoy the same productivity benefits others gain from using the Apple platform, but they want a high level of service that is beyond smaller IT services companies.

We proved what we could do with clients like Logan City. The CIO had an open mind and wanted to know more. People were joining the council and asking why they couldn't use their iPhone or bring in their Apple laptop. The IT department couldn't support the platform in council and was worried about security. So the CIO looked for an organisation that would help them manage Apples in council.

What changes are taking place in your category?

We have seen a massive push for mobile device management from local government and enterprise markets. Recently Queensland Rail put out a survey to staff asking what issues staff would like to see addressed. There were two major responses, the first was for more money and the other was asking to bring their Apple devices and use them in the work environment.

Management decided they had to do something about this issue. So we were contacted through the Apple Store to meet with QR. We had looked at various solutions to mobile device management. The reason we chose Mobile Iron was because of its future road map. The company had a clear vision for where mobile devices were going and the product integrates with all other mobile operating systems. It is an enterprise grade solution.

They are bringing out an integrated monitoring, auditing and reporting module, which is ideal for enterprise clients. It allows you to look at timeframes for use and set up different parameters for different groups of users.

There are two main areas of interest from enterprise clients - how to manage BYO (bring your own) devices and how to manage delivery and use of company owned devices. Mobile Iron will support either option.

At Logan, the council was planning for everybody to have an iPad. But the CIO decided to encourage everybody to bring their own device to work. For specific task management like food service, trees, health, potholes and line marking, the council would provide devices specifically configured to manage the tasks.

Rype could configure the off the shelf product to specific tasks, creating forms to capture the necessary data. We then created secure middleware to ensure the data could be delivered seamlessly to existing council systems. Councils use a number of task management software products that are common to most councils. So by solving the secure data delivery issues for Logan, we were solving them for many other councils at the same time.

Toowoomba council heard about what we were doing with Logan and they wanted us to supply devices, device management, in-field data capture and data delivery. The forms we had developed for Logan were applicable to all councils. We then got calls from Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Wyong, Mackay and Gold Coast.

How have you been successful?
We deliver on the solution. In Logan, we came up with a recommendation and we delivered what we said we would. In fact, we exceeded the CIO's expectation.

The problem all the councils had was the need to capture data in the field in a structured, simple and straightforward fashion. This issue is common to all councils and it is about ROI and productivity. This was a major way of saving money. If you could solve a problem for one council you've solved it for all of them. So we can offer devices, training, support and device management as a package. It's a turnkey solution. The most important aspect is the development.

How did you solve the common council problem?
We use the Blink mobile platform. Blink is the "Software as a Service" rapid mobile application development platform. It lets you develop and rapidly connect to any legacy system. Rype has now developed its own "middleware", creating a secure web service gateway for managing data between device and council internal IT systems.

Most councils use a product called Pathway, which is a database of council information. It contains information on all businesses within the council area and their compliance with regulations and other issues. Our web service gateway allows the Blink platform to communicate securely with the internal IT infrastructure of Logan or any other council.

The first two areas we looked at were food and trees. These were chosen as the hardest forms to build because of their complexity. The forms had to be smart. If we could do this for trees and food, we could easily do this for any other subject as well.

The system works both ways. The Blink form is populated from the council Pathway database at the beginning of each day, when the user turns the device on. The system tells the inspector which food outlets they are inspecting. The form contains questions that have to be filled in, then it rates the organisation on whether it passed or failed the inspection, and which problems were identified.

If there are any problems, the inspector can take a photograph to demonstrate clearly what the issue is. The device then generates a PDF file that is sent to Logan and stored in the document management system. For trees, the system provides information on nuisance trees, GPS coordinates and so on. The application can work on an iPhone, iPad or any platform.

As a result of what we have done, we have created a series of modules for councils. The middleware product that we have developed is also available for licence to anybody that wants to use it, not just Rype. The product works with Pathway and also Dataworks, both of which are used by the 400 councils across Australia, so we believe it has broad application.

We now know that for any legacy system, we can write the middleware between devices and internal system for data exchange. We have created a web service gateway. It's the same issue for any large organisation.

Any other issues?

The other major issue is connectivity – wireless communication. This is important for cost reasons and because of black spots. The 3G network is somewhat limited, so it needs enhancing with localised Wi-Fi hotspots. The CIO of Logan council wants to have Wi-Fi for anybody to use.

Wi-Fi hotspots are placed wherever there are areas of high activity, like airports, libraries, universities, councils, shopping centres, café environments, exhibitions and conference centres.

We are working with council to decide where the best place is to locate the Wi-Fi antennas. The arrays we have selected can deliver more coverage, bandwidth and connect more users.

For example, the Australian Army can go into the field, put up a wireless array that will cover a one-kilometre radius. If you put up ten of those they will all mesh together, so you can cover a big area with connectivity everywhere. As you move from array to array your device is automatically handed on to the next array with no dropout.

Big customers would prefer Wi-Fi in-house, because of the cost benefits. Without wireless, all the staff will use the 3G network which is expensive. When you put in a Wi-Fi solution, the device will choose automatically which service to use, and the cost to users is then covered locally by the Wi-Fi hosting customer as part of their overall data plan. Using the 3G network could be twice as expensive as a local Wi-Fi network.

There is no one solution that is perfect for everyone. Different vendors have approached the same problem in different ways. Their solutions all have strengths that must be considered when matching them to the customer requirement.

In a hospital, the CIO may prefer the staff to use VoIP because it is cheaper, but VoIP is demanding because if the signal drops out you lose the call. That's where Meru comes into its own. It will manage VoIP seamlessly. That is one of its strengths.

Some clients just want an efficient network without VoIP. So it is different solutions for different needs. The more redundancy the more expensive it will be. You have to start by understanding what the client wants and expects. There are big cost differences and capabilities with different solutions.

We are doing a test with Logan council, where we are comparing two different vendors for functionality, ease of use, ease of install and cost. We will test them each over a month and then compare. Once we have completed the test, we can apply it to any other council or corporate.

In the state library we used the Blink platform to help them manage the Hall of Fame. The momentum we are getting with councils is growing. We are also getting a lot of enquiries with small to medium sized businesses.

What are the business benefits?

We needed to find a device management tool for small and medium sized customers (SME) that was affordable but still did the job. Absolute is an ideal device management tool for 1-20 users in a small to medium business. It is just for Apple products.

But when your staff carry around business intellectual property and documents you need a tool to manage security over the long term. Typically for our SME customers we will automate their workflow and provide the devices as well.

A wholesale car company wanted us to provide them with devices to assess cars, anywhere and everywhere they needed to travel. We took their paper forms and turned them into a form that runs on the iPad. It takes us an hour at $80 to develop forms. We can do one in an hour. So that is affordable for a small business.

Results from the Logan project covering food premises inspections and nuisance trees already show cost savings of around $150,000 per annum. Over five years, this will deliver cost savings for the council of half a million dollars.

The project is also showing evidence of increases in staff morale and is even spawning creative and innovative thinking in the department. Staff now feel empowered to look at new ways of doing things better.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

Most definitely.

What are you planning to do next?

We will continue on the path we are on, developing the council and enterprise market. The momentum we have at the moment is taking us into all areas of business and other parts of Australia.

Unified Communications - Cisco

Cisco is the worldwide leader in networking for the internet. In today's global marketplace, the pressure is increasing from customers to provide easy to use, online applications as a better way to conduct business. Cisco networking solutions connect people, computing devices and computer networks, allowing people to access or transfer information without regard to differences in time, place or type of computer system.

Cisco has a full suite of IP communications solutions to let organisations extend communications services to staff in all workspaces, whether they are in the office, travelling or working from home or any other location.

Cisco case study

FB Rice & Co is a patent and trade mark attorneys practice with offices in Sydney and Melbourne. The firm has a total staff of over 80, with 14 Partners and 11 Senior Associates and Associates. The firm has attorneys with expertise across Biotechnology, Chemistry, Engineering, Medical, IT, Trade Marks and US Practice.

Who are your clients and customers?
They range from individual inventors and small businesses to large corporates and international corporations.

How do they benefit from your service?
We protect people's intellectual property. Because we are a highly focused firm, we can attract attorneys with the best and widest experience. This expertise is concentrated in different groups within the firm focused on key technologies.

What changes are taking place in your category?
People are more aware of the need to protect intellectual property today. So our business has grown in response to that demand.

As we have grown we have adopted technology that supports our business activities. This means we have stayed at the forefront of productive and effective ICT use. We operate at the leading edge in this area adopting technologies when they are mature, not the bleeding edge.

This has a flow on effect in making the firm an attractive and supportive environment for talented and highly qualified people, who recognise the benefits of an integrated support system. Put simply, the sophisticated ICT environment attracts highly skilled people.

How have you been successful?
Customer focus. We were recently voted by BRW in the 2007 Client Choice Awards as one of the top two trade mark and patent attorney firms in terms of customer focus and understanding their business needs.

Do you have a Web site?
Yes. Our website provides an overview of our specialist practice, our key personnel and the patent and trade mark filing procedure requirements in both Australia and New Zealand. We update our site regularly with industry news and relevant changes in patent and trade mark legislation. We lead customers to the website via a fortnightly e-newsletter.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

We are currently implementing Document Management. Before that it was the relocation of both offices and the concurrent implementation of our integrated data and voice network.

Two years ago we moved from Balmain to the CBD. This gave us the chance to take a fresh look at what was available on the market. Because the lease was for ten years, I looked at new switching telephony.

We had looked at Voice over Internet Protocol before, but I didn't think it was mature at the time. Around that time I went to a conference that helped me to understand why converged networks have a place in businesses of our size.

It wasn't that we necessarily wanted to implement everything from day one, but we wanted the platform to do things later. If I didn't take the opportunity to converge data and voice then, it may not have happened until the next telephony update.

I looked at a number of products in the marketplace. But I also wanted to partner with somebody who would offer support as well as hardware.

I wanted to go into VoIP, I wanted a leading product and I wanted one vendor. If you have one vendor they "own" any problems that may occur. They can't point at somebody else and say "it's their fault not ours".

Did you write a project plan before you started?

Yes. Then we looked at two vendors with similar features, costs and support…compared them and Cisco came out number one.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

Implementation was outsourced. But from day one I moved from a PABX system to a fully integrated VoIP solution.

Where did you go for advice?

I talked to several systems integrators. And while we are a small firm of ninety people, we have an IT team of seven…all with a wide range of knowledge and experience. So most things we are on top of. We only use external resources when we need to.

How much did it cost you?

The cost for the VoIP telephony worked out about the same as that for a traditional PABX system. The cost of the infrastructure would have been the same regardless as the old switching equipment was overdue for replacement.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None. I probably would have liked to have more knowledge before we started but we didn't make any mistakes.

What were the main risks that you took?

If the phone on the desk doesn't work…it would have been a problem. In a law firm communication is essential and a desktop phone is a key business tool. Everyone assumes that you pick up a phone and it works.

But this move was about business productivity. The ability to integrate our email communication through Outlook and our phones was powerful. When I email my IT guy in Melbourne, I can see where he is by the symbol on the phone.

What advice would you give someone else?
Do it. We have no regrets. If you don't go to VoIP, you won't get all the business benefits that go with it.

And I'm 100% behind Cisco because they delivered on their promise. Support has been remarkable. In the early days, some of our phones weren't working as we wanted them to, and they jumped in and sorted it out.

What were the barriers within your business to your project?
None. I had to advise the partners that it was the right way to go.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
Many of the most important benefits are non-tangible. For instance…the way we appear as a company to clients, or our ability to attract and retain good people.

Or the flexibility to work wherever and whenever we want to. We have retained a senior associate who would have been lost to us without the system.

One of the more tangible benefits of soft phones is that the client doesn't need to know where you are. You can be called on your direct number and answer the phone from anywhere in the world. Some of our staff are connected wirelessly to the network and wear headsets to handle calls anywhere in the office.

Productivity is enhanced through knowing where people are or when they are returning to the office…or by getting email or phone messages and storing them against a client file. Even dialing a client by clicking on their contact name. Once you have been using it for a few years, you take many of the features for granted. All this means we are able to use the technology to service our clients better.

Are any of the benefits quantifiable?
The senior associate I mentioned spends a lot of time in New Zealand, yet still manages clients here in Sydney. In fact the size of her practice has grown, partly as a result of increased mobility, connectivity and flexibility.

It's not about the money…it's about productivity, flexibility and satisfying our clients needs better. And good people want to work in a place where they know the technology will support them.

Interestingly, we found the Cisco VoIP phones were better for audio conferencing than the audio equipment designed specifically for the purpose.

We can even control the audio-visual system from any phone. It's not about what is possible with the technology…it's about what isn't possible?

Plus the reception console is far easier to use. It's drag and drop. So if we get a new temp in, they can learn the system in about ten minutes. We don't have to specify that they must know our particular brand of PABX system.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

They love it. There are many benefits that make their lives easier. It's not about technology for technology's sake.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

It's all doing what it is supposed to be doing. I've learned just how business critical phones are. Cisco continues to support me. They bring new things to me all the time.

The new version of CallManager version 5 runs on SIP, which will deliver a whole lot of features straight out of the box. And they are constantly improving their security model.

What are you planning to do next?

Videoconferencing is the next plan. Because we have two offices, it's important for connecting Melbourne and Sydney, plus our attorney in New Zealand. It will be handy for clients to come into the office to talk.

Apart from the audio visual on the phone solution, we also need to improve the AV system in the boardroom. All these plans are about productivity and making people's lives easier and better.

Virtual desktop – VMware view

VMware is the global leader in virtualisation and cloud infrastructure, delivering solutions that maximises IT investment by reducing complexity and enabling more flexible service delivery.

VMware View modernizes desktops and applications by moving them into the cloud and delivering them as a managed service. Processes are automated and efficient, security is increased and the total cost of desktop ownership is reduced by 50%. Users get a consistent and high performance desktop from any connected device whether in the office or on the move.

VMware case study

Cooper Grace Ward is a leading Brisbane based law firm with local, national and international clients. Over 30 years Cooper Grace Ward has established a first class reputation as a commercially focused firm with the experience, resources and people to achieve excellent outcomes for their clients. The firm was established in 1980 and employs 230 team members.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Apple devices are changing the game for everybody. People have moved to using an iPhone or iPad for personal and business reasons. The explosion of social media has impacted us as well. We are exploring all these issues. It's more about attracting new talent and looking to the future.

We have to be more inclusive than before. We are seeing people engaged in technology in a way that we haven't before and we want to leverage off that interest.

Mobility is becoming more important as well. We have flexible arrangements with our staff. They need support whenever and wherever they need it. Our experience is that allows them to be more productive.

Cloud computing is being spoken about frequently, especially in the media. In some industries such as government, law, finance and accounting the "public cloud" will only have a minimal impact. However, "private cloud" or managed services within an organisation for some aspects of service delivery arising out of server virtualisation will become increasingly important.

What is your most recent IT project?

About two years ago we moved to a virtualised server environment using VMware. This project was completed successfully and apart from the cost and storage efficiencies, gave us the opportunity to look at a different way to manage our whole network environment in the future.

This year we planned to review our requirements for the desktop PCs throughout the firm. Many of them were six years old. So it was time to replace some or all of them and also renew our software across the whole staff network. We discussed the options with Corpnet, our IT services partner. They had managed the server virtualisation project for us and understood our business needs.

Corpnet had been looking into the potential of desktop virtualisation based on the VMware product that was used for the server virtualisation. They were deciding what else they could do with the product and how they were going to sell the idea to their customers.

VMware View moves desktop operating systems and software from the PC to the server so that applications can be delivered as a managed service to any device in the network, including to remote staff. There was a lot of buzz around the virtual desktop in the press and in the industry, and we wanted to know, "Is it real?"

We could see that it would be the way of the future. It is an efficient way of automating delivery of services in an organisation. Security is improved and potentially the cost of desktop ownership can be reduced considerably as well as being a lot easier to manage for the IT team. So we were open to the idea when we discussed it with Corpnet.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

We developed a project plan with Corpnet that identified milestones at a high level. We had to be open to that project plan being a "moving feast" as we are dealing with new technology and unexpected obstacles. All of the technology projects in the firm are part of a long-term plan that connects to the business goals.

For those team members who access our network remotely, the existing Citrix solution just wasn't up to the job. We have an ever increasing number of staff working on a flexible and part time basis and that means managing their work needs whether they are in the office, at home or travelling on business.

They all need to be able to access the network reliably and easily. The experience of the network has to be the same, no matter what device you use or where you are using it. For example, one of our staff moved to Cairns and we wanted to retain her skills, so it made sense to move in this direction.

Another factor is sustainability. This is important to the firm and virtualisation reduces the overall number of hardware devices, electricity use and carbon pollution. There is a view in Cooper Grace Ward that we should be a leader in sustainability, so we have to be able to back that vision and strategy up, in what we are doing with IT as well as other activities within the firm.

Apart from the ageing PCs, the software was also an issue. If we were going to move to Windows 7 on each PC, we didn't have the hardware. And the IT team was spending an increasing amount of time fixing problems with the ageing PCs. In discussion with Corpnet, one of the attractive things about the VMware View platform was the ease of management.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

We went through the issues one at a time with Corpnet. They ran an analysis on our current PCs and their workloads to see whether they were fit for Windows 7. As we expected, most were not capable of running Windows7, however, we found that 97% were fit for the virtual desktop environment. So we could repurpose our existing PCS to run View, but not to run Windows 7.

If we did that, not only would it represent a considerable cost saving, it would allow us to stagger the PC upgrade over a longer period of time as machines failed. So we could make a decision about whether to spend money on PCs or spend it on the back-end environment.

Corpnet created a plan covering all aspects of the project from repurposing the hardware, "thin applications", training and user acceptance, and surveys with staff covering "before" and "after" installation.

We established the pilot group in December 2010. We wanted everybody rolled over by Xmas, but issues of software availability and dictation slowed us down. In the pilot, we changed to Office 2010, Windows 7, upgraded the document management software, and upgraded every other piece of software to ensure that it all integrated and ran together seamlessly.

We got a lot of feedback from the team. Dictation was the biggest issue that came up. Other unexpected issues arose because we were doing a project at the leading edge. We had to wait for

some software upgrades to be available that would allow us to address the integration issues. But overall, the View platform was fantastic.

The pilot group gave feedback in January 2011 and we are now in the process of finishing the roll out for the whole firm. We did have to replace the dictation units with new portable units. Feedback on this upgrade has been very positive.

How did you know who to trust?

Trust is built over time based on experience, communication and deliverables. We were very comfortable with Corpnet and what they delivered. We wanted a partner for our ongoing development and they have a wealth of experience in their technicians and developers. I have a great deal of trust in them. They don't try to sell us anything we don't need. They have become a partner and an extension to our business.

How much did it cost you?

I did a comparison putting the cost of upgrading the PCs and software against the View platform. In the first year we would save $20,000, second year a smaller saving, with the main saving being the reduction in management time for IT. Over a ten-year period there are substantial capital savings from virtualising all of our desktops. The whole process has been a significant learning experience for all of us.

The harder to quantify return on investment will come from placing our firm in a position where we can rapidly adopt new software. Both from the perspective of easily rolling out new products and the fact that we are now 100% up to date with the latest versions of Microsoft's desktop offering.

What were the main risks you took?

The risks were that we would purchase all the servers to host the desktops and couldn't use them if the project fell over mid-way through.

I suppose the other big risk is the SAN. It needs to be really robust, because so much now depends on it. But we have a direct line to Corpnet should anything go wrong.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The new system has given us great freedom. Working from home is easy. Moving around within the office is simple and straightforward. Wherever you are, you have the same experience of the software you want to use. That gives us a great deal of flexibility. When people start to bring their own devices to work (BYO) we can manage that. We can put the virtual environment onto nearly any device or platform.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

It is a big change for the staff in terms of environment. The major change for our staff was moving from Office 2003 to Office 2010.

We are now doing "walk-arounds" and helping people with their issues directly. That is working well. People who work from home are really happy. With Citrix, you never had the same experience as you did when working in the office. With VIEW it is seamless and we often hear that working at home is exactly the same as working in the office, both in terms of look and feel and responsiveness.

IT & Telephony Services - TAAConnect

TAAconnect has been servicing Australian businesses with telephony and IT solutions for almost two decades. The company is based on the knowledge that the key to implementing successful solutions was to truly understand client's business. Today this is more important than ever.

TAAConnect helps businesses to be the best they can be through telephony, IT, audio and video-conferencing, networking, software, point of sale, messaging, mobile and broadband solutions.

TAAConnect case study

TAAconnect is a provider of telecommunications and IT services to businesses of all sizes in Australia and New Zealand. TAAconnect started in 1992, has thirty employees and a select range of sub-contractors. Head office is at Bowen Hills in Brisbane.

How would you describe your business?

When I was asked what we did ten years ago, I said we sell phones. Today, I say we sell phones and IT. With the convergence of voice and data using Internet Protocol over the internet and other networks, our business has changed forever.

We still sell phones, but we sell everything else that makes a business IT and telecommunications network as well. That means first understanding what a business needs and providing the right equipment, cabling, installation and support to do the job.

Most people come to us looking for a way to save money. With our help, they can save money on call costs, equipment and infrastructure.

Thirty years ago, everybody paid $30 a month per handset for a Commander type system. Then the business would add a handset and a new line to the existing system, which had a long life. So we had an ongoing relationship with the customer.

IT equipment and software was always sold as a one off capital expense and was managed by separate departments. With IT, it was "my server has died…I need a new one and they would shop around for the best price".

So there was a different relationship. With telephony, we had long-term lease agreements and long-term business relationships. That provided us with the opportunity to sell more. As things changed with convergence of IT and voice, we were well placed to add new services to our established customer relationships.

Who are your clients and customers?

We have a number of larger clients that have offices, shops, factories or other sites in multiple locations across Australia. For them we supply the complete mix of cabling, equipment, software solutions, telephony and support.

We regularly sub-contract to the larger IT solutions companies such as Fujitsu and NEC. Apart from the obvious revenue stream, it gives us experience in multi-faceted projects and increases our technical knowledge. The benefits of that experience then flow through to our smaller clients. By operating across all areas of industry and geography, we maintain a high skill level.

Out of the 20,000 IT services businesses in Australia, we are one of probably about 3,000 with voice experience. Because we can understand and implement solutions across all areas of a voice and data network, our services are in high demand.

Every solution starts from understanding the business. Once we understand what the business is trying to do today and into the future we can define a solution. Clients often ask us for ideas about how they can improve their business.

Are you trying to attract new customers?

Our main focus is current customers, growing business by sharing learnings and experience with our existing clients. Good outcomes for existing customers inevitably leads to new customers though, which is great.

What changes are taking place in your business category?

The time of talk is past. The reality of IT and telecommunication convergence is here. Equipment is being developed with new functionality and people are using it. IT managers now have to have a strategy that incorporates iPhones and iPads. People are now using these as business tools.

What has changed is that so many of the applications are now useful. Simple things like integrating Outlook with a mobile phone. Once you integrate the call capability with the desktop…it works across the organisation. The end user defines it not the IT manager. The hard part is making sure there is ongoing customer training after the purchase.

Customers don't believe industry hype any more. You've got to present a proven track record of supplier and manufacturer. Customers will self educate…they will use Google. They will have a certain level of misinformation when they come to see you. You have to be prepared to deal with an informed customer.

From the supply side, people like us have stopped being single vendor supply companies. The days of supporting a single brand are over. We supply NEC, Mitel, IBM, VMware. We can make the right business decision based on customer need, price and our capability to support the resulting solution, no matter what brands are involved.

The other big issue is affordable and reliable SIP trunking in Australia. There is no agreed industry standard for SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) as yet. This is the signaling protocol widely used for controlling voice and video communication over Internet Protocol. Until it becomes a standardised protocol, the major manufacturers and telcos are holding back.

For end users though, Voice over Internet Protocol makes very little difference. It's just a way to make a call.

In the building or mining industry, if you opened up a new site in the old days, you'd put in a donger, a couple of phone lines, computers and the workers would have their own mobiles.

Today, one telecommunications pipe goes in, and all data and voice issues are covered. You can set up a site with full services instantly. With Softphones, you can see if staff are on the phones, out at appointments and so on. That degree of functionality is powerful. Until you apply it and realise it directly, you don't really understand what it means.

How have you been successful?

Over the last twenty years, we have held onto our key staff. We have very low staff turnover. We take our time to do the job right. We have developed a huge bank of experience.

We don't jump onto every new brand that comes along. We talk to customers, do our research thoroughly. But when we do commit to a product, we commit wholeheartedly, understanding the product completely so customer and vendor get the full benefit.

We offer 24 x 7 support and we've been doing that since we began the business. But in the IT space that is unheard of. We can send our people anywhere and use local resources to support clients anywhere in Australia and beyond.

Explain what you do for clients?

Our capability is to bring everything together – IT, mobility and telecommunications.

In the mining industry, every site will have multiple handsets used by lots of people. It's a tough environment and equipment gets broken. We make sure that equipment and support is tailored to the industry we are working with. So for mining, we plan what each site needs and make sure that handsets, SIM cards, cabling and so on, is available where it needs to be 24 x 7, so if there is any breakage, breakdown or problem, it can be fixed straight away.

Existing technology doesn't always need to be replaced with something new. On mining and building sites 2-way radio works great. It's safe and reliable. If you understand the business and its needs, then it's right to stick with what works.

For a major retailer, we were able to install the network across 38 stores in four weeks. Very few companies could do that effectively. We knew what the solution was for each store – Cat 6 cabling, data cabinets, IP handsets on each desktop, computers, router for internet and telephony, PA system, interface between PA system and phone system and the Point of Sale system. The key to the implementation was in understanding the business thoroughly.

We also had to work in conjunction with the shopfitters and other trades and services. To do something like that successfully, you have to plan properly so you can implement each location in two days.

You need trust in your team, good communications with the client and clarity of the desired outcome so you can change things if required to meet the outcome successfully and on time. The core business operations of the client cannot be compromised.

Small customers typically come to us for help in saving on telephony costs, mobility or internet costs. As small businesses grow they need the right support and many don't know what to do. When we speak to them about their business, the technology is always the last thing to consider. We listen to what they want first and then help them understand what the options are to achieve what they need. Then we decide on the technology to do that.

With small businesses especially, if something goes wrong they want to speak to the right person to fix it. Clients come to us to fix the problem, whatever it is. If something breaks down, they know it is under warranty, but they want us to handle that side of it as well. When we provide them with the IT and phone system, it is expected that we will manage and support it as well. So we provide a complete service and that's what makes it work for us as well.

What about costs?

For all customers we first look at their current telecommunications bills. Providers like Telstra and Optus have a wide range of options and plans, that change regularly, so you first have to look at the plans and check that somebody is getting the best deal that's available at that time.

In the IT area, what is the cost of the equipment? People often have a wide range of equipment, different ages, issues, some of it leased, some bought and paid for. So it's important to review the total infrastructure to make sure it's right.

With IP Telephony, there are two issues. One is to take advantage of what is available today to save money on call costs and increase productivity in other ways, and the other is to plan for the future so that savings and productivity benefits are ensured.

What are the main risks?

In the old days, your telephony system and your IT system were separate. Today they are the same. So you have to look at both to make sure it is going to work.

Voice is different from normal network traffic. So you have to view the whole thing as a network. You have to consider whether the network is able to support what you want. You can't assume anything in terms of network availability. You have to look at everything. You can't quote sight unseen. You can spend a fortune on equipment, but if your cabling is bad, it's all bad.

You need to be able to help everybody involved understand the issues – the business, the telecommunications provider and the tech companies. There will be problems with integration. You have to make sure there is a fallback position to ensure success. When problems happen with small companies…we fix it. With companies that have an IT manager, it can be a problem is they don't understand voice as well as data.

What are the business benefits?

The benefits can be as simple as integration between Outlook and phone, automated web conferencing and calendar. We offer a single help desk for all things. With the right technology you can have a single phone number that gives access to all staff regardless of where they are.

Sometimes you can deliver a cost saving that is so good, it is hard for people to believe and it can come from anywhere…VoIP, new servers, cabling and so on. There are genuine savings to be made in productivity and speed.

One company had a web-based employee management system. It was very slow. When we migrated the system across from the old server to a new IBM server with VMware, the web based employee system suddenly worked really well. Software doesn't run slow…the server runs slow.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

I've learned that IT and voice isn't so different. The skill set is still about getting the customer and the technology provider to communicate so they understand each other. Our skill set is in explaining things clearly to both parties. With the merger of voice and data the level of support has to be right. If people can't get you they think you have gone out of business.

What are you planning to do next?

Our goal is to focus on moving voice customers to a broader product mix. We want to associate ourselves with other companies that are also operating in this space successfully and keep learning. The challenge will be to introduce new staff.

Association Management System - Aspedia

Aspedia is a digital agency dedicated to providing the website design services and internet marketing strategies for its clients, developing online solutions that focus on superior usability, industry leading technology, and proven business strategies, to support an organisation through its lifecycle.

Aspedia case study

Aspedia is a leading digital marketing agency with a strong software development capability and an accredited research and development facility. The business started in 2004, employs 17 people and is based in Stones Corner, Brisbane.

Who are your clients and customers?

We focus on specific vertical industries where we have developed an in-depth knowledge and built significant experience. These include Membership and Not for Profit Organisations, Industry Associations, Training Providers, Professional Services and Business Consultants.

Currently, we have fifteen projects under way including six Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), two Industry Associations, one Not for Profit and the rest are for a variety of business clients.

How do customers benefit from your services?

Aspedia provides a very consultative approach to our client engagements with every project starting in the same way.

We take our customers through a detailed "needs analysis" process, where we ask them a number of questions such as "What are your problems?" "What are you trying to achieve?" "How do you add value to your own client relationships?" "What is your most profitable product or service?" How do you imagine we can help you?" and many more.

This allows us to create a clear set of objectives and goals that we both agree on and armed with this understanding Aspedia then creates an online strategy specific to the business needs identified. Once we know what their goals are we can help.

We then apply our online marketing and software technology services in the most effective way. To get the best results we request our clients participate fully in the process of discovery and the ongoing project delivery.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes. It's at www.aspedia.net or www.associationassist.com.au.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Today businesses need more than just a brochure website – they need a web solution with integrated ebusiness and ecommerce processes to streamline customer engagement, service delivery and ongoing support. Business process automation leads to reduced costs and increased revenue streams for our clients.

An example could be as simple as a new enquiry placed on your website. You may want the data automatically added to your membership database or CRM, a thank you email sent and a task for team follow-up scheduled.

If the opportunity size is above a specified value then you might even send an SMS message to your sales manager or executive director to ensure appropriate resources are allocated to the opportunity. With the right system in place this entire process can be achieved seamlessly.

Today IT and Online Marketing skills are critical to the success of all businesses and industry associations are no different. Every association should have this expertise on their board to ensure best practice adoption is adhered to. We support our clients by offering one of our senior management to facilitate this role for them.

What is changing with online advertising?

Unfortunately, Google paid advertising is becoming too expensive for many businesses. It is no longer as cost effective as it once was which means Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) has become more critical today than ever before. Google have become so dominant that they are the new Microsoft and many businesses cannot survive without the leads generated by them.

At the opposite end of the spectrum Yellow Pages is struggling to stay relevant. Many of our clients have dropped their Yellow Pages investment year after year, and now they aren't spending with them at all.

With industry associations a lot has changed. First, information of all kinds is easier to get than it used to be, so anyone is now an expert on everything. That has diminished the role of the association as the key information holder for an industry sector.

So what is the "new" value proposition needed by associations when their members can access information so easily? We belief they need to be able to deliver a more personalised solution tailoring the information delivery to each individual member which requires a new generation of smart technology – the Aspedia solution.

What about social media?

Social networking is also having a big impact but most associations don't understood fully how they can capitalise on the opportunity it offers them. Charities are exploiting social media, but not necessarily including it in an overall strategy.

Across the board, customers today want more complex solutions due to the requirement for ebusiness automation. Business is moving faster and clients have to have information at their fingertips to respond. People have more choice. They have less loyalty. They want answers now.

Social network can be used to manage the fast paced information delivery needed today. Understanding these solutions and integrating them as a marketing and support channel can offer significant opportunities to all associations.

Associations are struggling with delivering a "valuable" service to members. It's no longer about getting better deals on cars, insurance, holidays or mobile phones. Associations need to focus on helping their members improve business efficiency, achieve better customer service standards and increase their profitability. Each and every service delivered to them should go towards supporting these goals.

Industry associations often don't fully understand what technology can deliver these days and many have lost touch with how much solutions have dropped in price with the newer "cloud" based systems. You don't have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to get the best solution any more.

Particularly with cloud based solutions the price point for best of breed software solutions is dropping constantly while the features are improving at the same time.

For associations a lot of their income has traditionally come from providing HR, IR and other professional services. Thus, they need to be able to track and manage billable hours so they can maximise revenue streams plus use this data to demonstrate the true value of the membership service provided. Choosing the correct solution can't all be left to the IT manager or an external consultant.

Associations have to understand they need one integrated solution covering all their membership management requirements – not lots of separate applications. This should include their website, member portal, member management database, recruitment and renewal marketing, invoicing and debtor management all provided by the one solution to ensure seamless data flow which maximises client satisfaction and greatly increases member retention rates.

How have you been successful?
We want our customers to be successful which in return makes us successful. We want to deliver solutions that help our customers achieve their business goals. If you do that properly, success follows for all parties.

What prompted you to focus on associations and education?
We sat down five years ago and looked at what we could do to expand our ISP business. We figured that if we could help associations to become more effective, then that would have some good flow on benefits for our business.

Initially we were approached by one association that wanted a website. Once we had built a solution for them we began to understand more about what their specific needs and challenges were. We then built a membership management system that integrated with their website, then a marketing management system and so on. Today we have a product which stands second to none in terms of its functionality, and flexibility.

Our solution helps our clients better understand the needs of each individual member and automatically delivers content and services to them, which meets their exact needs. This saves an enormous amount of time while greatly improving member satisfaction rates. There are different types of members in an association, so different members have different access rights and authority across the website and management system.

For us to address all the different member needs, we have to establish with the association what each member can do when they reach the site, what they can see, what areas of the site they can access, what they can download and whether they can post messages or articles onto the site for others to see.

There is also the issue of who manages the system, and who can log on to see what members are doing. So the overall site has to address all these issues and many more. We organise all content on an association site into three areas – public, private and premium. Then we can determine who gets to see what.

Managed properly, the system can allow a visitor to see enough information to encourage them to sign up to become a paying member. Then they can access even more useful information as they build their member profile setting their interests and preferences. The site actually interacts with visitors and becomes a powerful marketing tool in its own right.

When a member gets a lot of valuable information and communication, they feel they are getting a good return for their membership fee.

The association management system can track and measure how much information they see, how many newsletters they get, how many events they attend, how much training they have done and so on.

It can also bench mark them against the entire member community so they can see if they are fully getting the most out of their membership. This lets an association improve their value proposition and justify the membership fees it charges each year.

How do you decide what the association needs?

We arrange to meet with a group of their senior stakeholders plus some key staff. We interview them to determine where we can add value through our experience across a range of industry sectors and highlight what could be done better in terms of processes, reporting, training, marketing and so on.

Because of our considerable experience with associations, this process is well documented, structured and formatted. Once we have determined the key requirements, we put a proposal together that addresses the needs. The project definition process often takes the most time of any stage during the project and in many ways it is the most important part of the solution.

How much time does it take to complete the project?

Implementation typically takes 8-12 weeks but the decision making process can take a lot longer due to interaction with stakeholder groups and boards. We often play a senior role in this process, presenting to the board our initial findings and the project plan with features, time frames and budgets.

Where do customers go for advice?

Some associations have staff with IT knowledge or can find somebody to give them advice. This is not always a good thing as these projects should be driven by business and marketing needs, not technology.

If we can define the needs clearly and demonstrate a solution that can be delivered to address them, then the association can be confident in their decision making process. It is critical that they have senior management commitment to the outcome and stay involved throughout the entire project.

How do they know who to trust?

Trust is essential. The association has to trust that the vendor has the same goal in mind. That is what the sign off process and milestones in our documentation is about. It allows both parties to check progress and outcomes at every key stage of the project. This builds a strong partnership between both organisations and ensures a win-win outcome is achieved.

Are customers happy with the work you have delivered?

We haven't had any real issues in the work we have completed for associations over the years. By the time we take the stakeholders through the steps, they can see the professional approach we are taking and the results we are delivering.

The transparency of our approach helps ensure an outcome that we are both happy with.

How much does a project cost?

We break each job into two parts. There is a planning stage that covers strategy and pre-production. Forty percent of the cost will go into the planning. Get that bit right and the build becomes straightforward.

The build stage covers design and development. This stage defines the features and functionality of the project. Typically, the price range across a variety of different projects would be $20,000 to $60,000, depending on their complexity and functionality.

We are now looking to provide solutions for a monthly fee, rather than a one off payment, which allows smaller organisations to access best of breed solutions without the massive upfront outlays of the past.

What mistakes have you made that you wish you hadn't?

We have only ever had two associations leave us. They employed new managers who came to the association with pre-existing relationships and a different view of what they wanted and who they wanted to work with. That is just part of business and happens all the time. There is not much that can be done about that.

We have also learned that when dealing with smaller associations we need to ensure functionality is kept as simple as possible to reduce the need for ongoing training. We are always careful to assess whether the association has the resources in place to support the solution.

What advice would you give others?

Every association has similar issues but it all comes down to scale. Each association needs to match planned activity to their resources and capability. For example, if they are small, they don't need to do a newsletter every month, they could send one every three months. Our system can be easily tailored to meet these changes in requirement.

We try to help each association build a better value proposition for their members and this varies from association to association depending on their size and the scope of services they offer.

We track everything that happens every time anybody logs in, reads an article, opens a newsletter, comments on something or whatever. We can then schedule an email digest to let the senior stakeholders know how the site is being used. It is a checklist on what has been delivered.

We then give that information to the administration member so they can track the effectiveness of what they are doing in managing the site.

We are now converting the information digest into a CRM system so we can measure what the actual value of each service is. Then we can define how many services have been delivered in return for each membership fee. The end result is members get more value for their money and are hopefully retained for life.

What are the business benefits?

Improving member satisfaction is the fundamental benefit delivered, which increases the association's value proposition, which results in an increased member sign-up and retention rate. Additionally, business process improvements will increases revenue and staff efficiency which adds significantly to the bottom line of the association.

Our solution provides a clear sales funnel taking each visitor through a managed user journey encouraging the user to become a member. We highlight the member benefits along the way building the value proposition.

Additional association benefits include accounting system integration to reduce double entry of data, training system integration, plus ecommerce, event management, publicity, project management, special interest groups and committee management. The ecommerce system automates recurring payments for renewals, plus new membership signup, event ticket sales, training and resource purchasing.

We have built VoIP into the association management system as well, so we can record every conversation between staff and members. Associations can now easily augment their revenue stream by offering a professional advice hotline for members. The system can detect who is the appropriate on-call professional, link them to the enquiry and let them deliver the advice, bill for the time, pay any commissions to the advisor and manage the whole process seamlessly.

Often up to 70% of calls coming in to an association are for professional advice (IR, HR etc) and now this can be tracked, delivered and billed accordingly.

The great thing is that all the functionality outlined above is available in the one software package and streamlined for industry and membership associations.

Smaller associations can start with a basic solution and add features as they grow, and larger associations can replace all their "stand alone" legacy software systems with the one fully integrated solution, which greatly improves their business efficiency.

What is the most important thing you've learnt in the last year?

The learning process is continual so there is no standout lesson. Today our base association membership management system retails for just $18,000 plus GST, which we are constantly told is remarkable value for money. We offer a 21st century solution for industry associations with full functionality covering all aspects of association activity.

The real value to many association members is the training they receive. So that is the other major thrust of what Aspedia offers - training through our learning management system Webducate.

Industry development and training is an important service offered by many associations and we believe they should be the central hub for their industry sector.

What are you planning to do next?

Roll out our latest release association management system on a broader scale. The new product has been further refined to increase its value for all associations, including our existing association customers. Our business focus for the future will focus on associations and membership organisations, training providers and professional services firms.

Client management software - Codehouse

Designed with the aid of user feedback, Code House Integrated Payroll for Labour Hire and SHARC – Staff Hiring And Recruitment Centre offer a fully integrated suite of tools designed specifical*y* for the Recruitment and Labour Hire industries.

SHARC Staff Hiring and Recruitment Centre has been designed to administer all front office functions of your Recruitment or Labour Hire business. Incorporating a Contact Management system as well full searching facilities, this system will always ensure that the best candidate in your database for a position is found quickly and easily.

Codehouse case study

Labour Solutions Australia is a labour hire and recruitment company based in Brisbane, focusing on labour hire for the construction and manufacturing sectors. The company was established in 2004 and employs five people.

Who are your clients and customers?

Clients are primarily in the construction and manufacturing industries, though we are now looking at the agricultural sector as well. We offer a more in depth service than our competitors, and offer to have somebody on site, so companies can outsource the complete HR function for us to manage.

Who are your competitors?

Other employment agencies

What changes are taking place in your category?

The cost of replacing a general labourer is estimated to be about $10,000. One of our clients had a turnover rate of 87%, so constant staff turnover represents a huge cost to the business. Our role is to encourage staff retention, improve staff morale and job satisfaction.

There is a general shift towards outsourcing, especially with the current low unemployment rates. There are over 400 employment agencies in Brisbane alone, so there is plenty of competition in the sector. Overall labour hire doesn't have a good name in the marketplace, but this is slowly changing as companies such as LSA bring a much higher level of professionalism and accountability into the market place.

There is a shift to not just looking after the client but looking after the workforce as well. By reducing staff turnover everybody benefits.

Finding good candidates is always hard, especially with general labourers and semi-skilled workers. Because of the increase in infrastructure work in Queensland, there will be more demand for labour across the board and this will impact our business. So retention becomes even more important.

How have you been successful?

We have a good team of people. And our business focus on staff retention and extra service has met with approval from clients across the board. We have only lost one client in the past three years, and we have added many.

Do you have a Web site?

We have a website that is basically an online brochure. We manage the website content through a content management system.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

The growth of the business meant that we had to find a way to manage client and employee information effectively. Initially, we were managing everything using Quickbooks, which couldn't produce the reports that we wanted.

So there was a lot of double entering of data and transfer to other programs and it was obvious that this would not work as we added more clients. The main downfall was that Quickbooks could not run a payroll of the sort of numbers we are working with.

Did you write a project plan before starting?

Not as such, but I knew that we needed a program that would cover all contact details, job history, current placements, payroll, reporting and job orders…a proper integrated system that covered everything we do.

So I asked competitors and looked on the internet for information. As a result of this research, I probably looked at and short listed six different systems.

The key issues for us at the start were price and capability of the system. All the programs we looked at did pretty much the same thing. There are better programs but at ten times the cost.

So the decision finally came down to Codehouse. They are based in South Australia. They are always developing the program and have responded and implemented changes that we wanted. The program has steadily become more applicable to our business than to our larger competitors.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

Once we selected the program, it took about two weeks to get up and running.

Where did you go for advice?

We worked it out for ourselves.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes. Codehouse transferred the data across from Quickbooks. Our local IT support company is also reliable, honest and trustworthy which helps a lot.

How much did it cost you?

It cost us about $8,000 including training. And we pay an annual licence fee of $2,500 that covers updates and support.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

You can get taken for a ride easily with software, websites…anything. Our local IT support company set up our system to be scalable, so we could add to it at any time. We can't afford to overcapitalise on anything. As with every investment whether it be IT, marketing, staff etc it is imperative that the business is getting the best possible return from every dollar spent

What were the main risks you took?

I had no idea about IT before I did this.

What advice would you give someone else?

Ask questions. Do your homework. I was nervous because IT was a foreign thing to me. I used my network to find trusted and reliable help and advice.

With the software, we got quotes ranging from $5,000 to $50,000. Even our PABX system quotes ranged from $5,000 to $15,000. There is a big difference in cost, so you have to be very sure of exactly what you need.

What were the barriers to the project?
There were none.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
Searching for records quickly and easily, and payroll. We would not be able to operate a labour hire business without it. The volume of people you're paying is huge. And you might have one person working for four different clients in one week. You need an automated system. It would be impossible to do it otherwise.

We now need to merge further processes into the system, so we can track employees from interview, to induction, to medical, to placement…all on one screen.
I'm pushing for Codehouse to develop that now.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
Yes. The program outlines each employee's hours of work on the invoice. We are going to instigate electronic timesheets on the bigger sites.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
I've learned just how much homework is necessary to get this right. You really have to look at what the IT company is offering. Does it suit your business? Software developers rarely have a clear understanding of what a business does, or how most people perceive software. We need it to be simple, idiot proof and easy to use.

It's not obvious to me that you have to click a box in one part of the screen before you can do something elsewhere. That might be second nature for a developer. But for me and most other people, that sort of thing has to be automatic and hidden. The functionality and usability of the software is something that a majority of programmers fail to address and that can be quite frustrating.

Given what you know... would you do it again?
You would have to.

What are you planning to do next?
We are expanding into the Agricultural sector with seasonal work in remote areas. So the IT has to work with that. We will need remote access.

We are also pushing heavily into construction and then expanding geographically. So once again the system will have to support our expansion.

Client management software - Ecare

IT Integrity (formerly Datacare) has developed a range of software products to assist with accounting and client management. These packages are currently being used to assist in aged and community care including respite or residential services, disability services, community centres and similar groups.

Ecare case study

Sequal is a disability support service that offers people with multiple disabilities the opportunity of experiencing recreational and vocational activities of all kinds.

Based in Brisbane, Sequal has ten fulltime staff and ten volunteers, who support forty clients with multiple disabilities.

Who are your clients and customers?
Adults with multiple disabilities.

How do they benefit from the service you offer?
They get to be out and about in their local community. We visit cinemas, concerts and sporting activities, take them to work and link them up with their families.

Who are your competitors?
Mostly we share resources with other disability services.

What changes are taking place in your category?
Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) is currently implementing a quality system across the services that it funds. By 2008, if we aren't accredited, we will lose our funding.

There is a set of ten standards that we have to meet and we will be assessed by an external body. This will inevitably increase the demands on our administration. That will mean more time on paperwork and less time for service delivery.

I understand the need to standardise quality control and ensure limited funds are allocated appropriately, but the downside is always going to be less time for service delivery.

This was one of the key drivers for us looking for the best administrative client management system. The more efficient we can be in handling administration, the less impact the administration will have on the core activity of helping our clients.

The other issue is that clients are wanting more. Quite rightly they want the opportunity to get out and about, and this is happening right across the sector.

How have you been successful?
I think the commitment from everybody involved to run an ethical, caring and supportive service to our clients.

Do you have a Web site?
Yes. It's an online brochure of three or four pages describing the services we deliver. We've had the site for just over a year.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

E-Care. It's a client management system that allows us to record all our client information – details such as likes and dislikes, medical needs, the staff that support them and the plans that cover the different types of support that we provide. We can also enter diary notes on any significant things that happen on a day-to-day basis.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

I didn't write one. I knew exactly what I wanted. We had been fiddling around for some time with Access and MS Word trying to create a useful database to handle our clients.

I felt it was necessary to have a client management system as part of the quality control system we are required to implement. We needed a good system that anyone could access and was also easy to use. We have a wide range of computer skills in the office and it had to be viable for everybody.

I opened up the Yellow Pages and called around. I knew there were companies out there, but I was surprised at how few there actually were. A lot of the other disability organisations that I conferred with were worse off than us, or they were bigger and had more resources to work with. We were looking for a system that would cost around $5,000. That was a hard ask.

Where did you go for advice?

I trusted in my own previous experience in using software systems. I used to work for really large organisations in the sector and I knew what I wanted. I saw the ad for E-Care in the Yellow Pages and called them. I explained how small we were and they came to the office and did a presentation on the E-Care product. There was a suite of E-Care modules available for the sector, which they modified to our specific needs.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

It took a day to load the software onto the system and then we had about seven hours training in the package. Once the system was in, we then spent about 25 hours loading in all our client data.

How did you know who to trust?

I trusted my previous experience. DataCare also provide software to Halwyn, which is an accommodation service next door to us, so I went and spoke to them about the system and there was also a level of confidence in the fact that Blue Care were also using their software.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes.

How much did it cost you?

The software cost about $4,000, and we also bought some new computers from DataCare at the same time.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None.

What were the main risks you took?

There was a risk that it wouldn't be as user friendly as I hoped. There was also a risk that we would have wasted the organisations money if it didn't deliver. But neither risk has eventuated.

What advice would you give someone else?

You do need to be clear about what you want. And you need to be able to articulate that.

What were the barriers within your business to your project?
The main barrier was the different level of experience and computer skills among our staff.

How did you overcome the concern?
So far not everybody is using the system. We have only had it for a month and we want to be sure that the data is entered fully before we train others in using it.

How did you decide which technology to use?
There weren't any other options within our price range.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
I wanted an integrated client management tool that was user friendly, plus safe, secure and confidential. E-Care fulfils the requirements of the DSQ.

Are any of these benefits quantifiable?
All our client information is now in one place, rather than a mixture of paper-based and computer-based, or all in different computer based files.

It's easy to access. It saves the time of staff. And in the long run it will help with providing services to clients. So clients will get the most value from our time.

Are staff happy with what you have done?
Yes.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
That it is important to have a client data collection tool. We shouldn't have waited.

If we had bought and used it from 2001, it would have been much easier. Because now, we are trying to encapsulate the last five years worth of information for each client and enter that into the system.

The other thing I've learned is the value of having a server and a fully integrated network. That's something we should have had from the beginning.

What are you planning to do next?
The next step will be a new financial software package that will integrate with the E-Care software.

Integrated client and facility management – IT Integrity

IT Integrity has developed a range of software products, integration and project management services to assist in aged and community care including respite or residential services, disability services, community centres and similar groups.

Integrated facility case study

Star Gardens is a residential aged care facility located in Beaudesert, Queensland. Star Gardens employs more than a hundred staff and has been in operation for fifty years in Australia.

Who are your clients and customers?

Star Gardens is currently a residential aged care facility, but we are planning to move into other aged care services in the near future. Our residents are older people that can't be cared for elsewhere.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Customers are more demanding than they used to be. This includes both residents and their families who want to be more involved and take a greater interest in day-to-day activities, events and future plans.

We are seeing the results of more drug and alcohol use in the community influencing the ageing process. We have a lot more clients with early dementia than we used to.

The sophistication of all stakeholders in aged care is increasing – GPs, pharmacists and materials suppliers and this offers an opportunity to move towards more connection and automation through the use of technology.

This allows us to improve the assessment process, with less intervention and better care. So that is an underlying trend that we are taking advantage of.

The aged care sector is less profitable, primarily due to under funding from Federal Government. Probably 50% of the sector would be making a loss. There are very tight margins in the sector. The Productivity Commission has released a report warning of the looming crisis and we are hopeful that the Government will heed the report recommendations and reform the industry.

How have you been successful?

We deliver a very high level of care to our residents. To remain successful into the future we are planning to increase our beds and expand into retirement villages and in home care with better margins. We are planning to be ready for any changes in the industry and because we are small we can change and adapt quickly.

What prompted your most recent IT project?

Five years ago I moved to Star Gardens from Bluecare. We knew and our board knew that we had to make significant changes. So we worked on a strategic plan reviewing everything. One of the key issues identified was to improve governance.

That is where we started. Next we looked at management and our systems and this is where technology can deliver enormous benefits if it is implemented properly.

When I first arrived the only technology in place was the financial system. I knew this had to change and I knew the culture had to change with it.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

I spent a couple of years looking at all the issues. I had to get it right. Because we are a relatively small facility we couldn't afford to make the wrong choices with our technology investment.

So I looked into IT use in Aged Care, looking for innovators. I networked and visited Aged Care facilities across Australia. I looked at the care systems and what the software applications were behind the care system.

About four years ago I went to the first Aged Care IT conference. The following year there was a grant from the government to improve IT systems. I used the grant to upgrade the Datacare financial system first. Then I looked at the rest.

The first thing I looked at was the Vocera voice communicator system, which allows staff to contact each other for assistance anywhere in the facility.

I visited an Aged Care facility using the system to see how it helped the organisation. A consultant analysed the tasks before the system went in and then reviewed it afterwards. There were huge benefits.

I next looked at clinical systems. Once again I visited facilities and looked at their clinical systems to see how they worked in situ. During that period we built additional residential space and added more beds. We also had new staff join us and other staff leave.

I knew that I had to view any new clinical system and the Vocera system as an overall integrated and connected system that had longevity and would give us the productivity and improved service delivery we were looking for long term.

Any decision had to involve all the key stakeholders, so when I visited the Aged Care facilities to look at the IT they were using, I took the board with me so they could see it for themselves. I started taking my Care Manager along with me as well. I wanted the whole management team convinced before moving.

I wrote a complete strategic plan. The technology was the foundation.

How did you decide which technology to use?

I didn't know exactly which systems would be the best, but I knew that it all had to happen over the next three years. We had to grow to stay here long term. But we had to get the system decision right. I knew I couldn't wait three years to put the system in place.

So I discussed it with my Care Manager. We needed to make the right choice to put the system in. We went to look at places using the systems I thought would be most useful. The first key decision was the clinical care program. There were fifteen or so systems available but probably only three or four to seriously consider.

We wanted to look at the system operating in a similar sized Aged Care facility. After looking carefully we decided on iCare. I then went to visit their headquarters and met their people. They had a good team and a high level of commitment to ongoing development.

They gave us a presentation on the software and I asked them about the best way to implement. I was impressed with their implementation process and training proposals.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

I went to look at places where iCare was operating and discussed the training and implementation process. I knew we had to have the full training and support to be successful.

Before we put the iCare system in place I looked at the rest of the overall system I would need. I discussed this requirement with IT Integrity, our IT consultant and systems integrator.

I wanted the system to be live with staff connected by tablet computers, so I needed wireless throughout the facility. Because we needed wireless for the tablets and Vocera, I had to look at our overall communication system.

We began with the documentation and management system for iCare. This contains the resident details and allows staff to keep care notes up to date as well as recording any incidents. We then added the medication module, which manages medication information and links to the local dispensing pharmacy.

The system is accessible through tablets, so staff can walk around with a trolley and check medication as they go. The care manager has access to the system and can keep an overall eye on everything as it happens. The system is transparent and reduces any chance of mistakes.

My key people are the carers and nurses who interact with residents every day for medication, incontinence and personal care. If I can make it easier for them, it makes both staff and residents happier.

Did you use outside contractors?

The project was project managed by DataCare (now IT Integrity). They coordinated with the various vendors involved with the project, as well as supplying the desktop computers, notebooks and servers.

IT Integrity also provides ongoing managed service support that allows staff to call one number regardless of the issue. They will then determine what the problem is and work with the vendors to resolve it.

How much did it cost you?

It has cost about $400,000 for everything including the new IT and infrastructure.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None really. I knew that every system we implemented, I had seen in operation. I knew the system would do what I wanted it to. We also had the right training for staff and the right support.

What were the main risks you took?

The biggest risk was doing it all in one hit. My board thinks I've done enough IT implementation for now. It's a risk putting in new technology systems, but there is a much bigger risk if you don't. And any risk can be mitigated by research and planning.

People forget the three years of planning to make it all happen. In each case we started with the wish list – "what would we like?" – and then we priced it and made changes to that list if necessary. One thing I cut out was putting the GPS system in.

What advice would you give someone else?

Be open to opportunity. When we looked at the Cisco infrastructure for the wireless system, I heard about a product called Simavita.

This is an electronic incontinence management system. It uses microchips in the incontinence pads that let staff know wirelessly that attention is required. The system monitors and assesses any incontinence episodes providing an indication of the level of care required.

I wanted to know whether we could link the Simavita system into our overall system as well. At the moment Simavita sends information to the mobile phone network. I want to link it directly to iCare so that it will put information into the system automatically. So I am talking to iCare and to Simavita about linking the two products seamlessly for the sake of the whole Aged Care industry. It is looking hopeful.

For the first time ever, we have been able to reduce our incontinence budget by a significant amount. There are some unexpected benefits as well. Because we are able to respond so quickly it builds confidence with residents and with care staff. It has had some really good care outcomes.

One benefit leads to another. As a result of integrating everything, we needed to have a better integrated financial system. I wanted a roster system as well. So we put in Corporate Information Management, which is an Aged Care financial system with HR and rostering. We are also moving to palm readers for staff management scanning. What I am looking for is to get rid of paper. That will streamline the system.

The final bit of technology was from the Alfred Hospital. They have developed some software called ChiSL that uses smart cards to allow staff to securely logon from any computer and it returns them to the window of the last open session. So you can be working on something, get a call to another part of the facility and continue working from any other desktop.

Our telephone system also needs upgrading. This will allow us to get rid of the speakers and do everything through the personal communication system.

What were the barriers to the project?

There was a lot of change in a relatively short time period. We needed to manage the change properly. We needed to get all staff used to using computers and not being frightened of the technology. All of our staff were used to the manual systems we had in place and many were not used to computers at work.

So we surveyed the staff to get feedback and we found that three or four were quite worried. Then we initiated a "train the trainers" program to ensure that our key staff were confident with the technology. We chose a project leader for iCare.

We then selected our training team, which included some staff who were worried about technology. We deliberately chose people with different levels of computer skills, knowledge and age range. We targeted the staff who were most threatened to help them with extra training and attention. I set a decent budget for training. It was an investment in our future.

We didn't only have to bring our staff along with the project, we also had to bring the pharmacy and local GPs along as well.

iCare and the medication module talk online to the local pharmacy. I had to get them on board. We also have Medical Director in the facility to connect to the local GPs. It also talks to iCare.

We put an iCare icon on the doctors desktop system, so they can look at our residents from their surgeries. We would like to get the hospital on board but that will have to wait until they are ready. So as you can see, we have linked the whole local caring ecosystem into the one connected iCare network, plus the Vocera staff communications network as well.

That meant that all our IT infrastructure had to be upgraded with new PCs, Windows 7 operating system, three new servers, plus a new database serer and terminal server. Vocera also interfaces with the PABX system, so phone calls can go direct to staff from any extension.

In due course, we will put a Vocera icon onto smart phones so that we can use iPhones to link into the system as well. We can then provide the same connectivity to the local GPs as well.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The business benefits are wide ranging. We don't have any infrastructure duplication. So information goes into the system once. Reports come out how we want them. Information is available throughout the whole site and it is correct.

Being this connected and automated has helped with our funding.

Staff motivation and leadership has improved, partly from training, and staff are learning new skills.

We save time with resident care and there is a new level of confidence in the information and residents details. Staff can find the information they need easily. Staff can find the people they need easily. So residents see a more confident staff.

We have made some productivity gains. I have made some changes to the night shift as a result of being able to analyse what is required clearly. We have also improved communication dramatically because of the great communication system.

We will have a 3.5 year payback on the investment. It is a difficult business with tight margins, but we wouldn't have survived without the changes.

Are any of these benefits quantifiable?

We are about to bring iCare back to do an audit, so we can see what is being used and what isn't. I did this after three months. The results showed that we are using more of the iCare system than any other Aged Care facility.

We are about to do an audit on the Vocera system. I would expect to be able to quantify this in the next couple of months. We are now getting calls from other Aged Care facilities to have a look at what we have done.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

Yes they are. Before we started we told families what we were planning. They love it. We are now helping residents and their families use computers and connect with each other through Skype and other communication tools.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

Universally, they are really happy. We don't have any unhappy staff. People pick things up at different speeds, but now they are all up to speed.

It was a lot for the staff and the management team. So I am delaying the next upgrade until March next year, until things have settled down a bit. We spent about $110,000 on the training budget. We normally spend half that. But it worked. In another year things will really be looking good. I think we can get a lot more out of the system.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

Never underestimate what the right planning and training can do for you. Don't underestimate your people. You can move a mountain.

What are you planning to do next?

We are going to move from 78 beds to 102 beds. We are changing the layout and landscaping of the facility.

We are going to put in a new model of care including a gym and personal trainer. We have plans to build a retirement village and we are planning in-home community care. We also have developed considerable experience and expertise in high end care for dementia.

We want to share our learnings and experience in education and training in a more formal way, probably through a relationship with a university or other research organisation. So we have a lot to look forwards to.

Fundraising system - ThankQ

Fundraising software suitable for non-profit organisations should be both affordable and flexible. ThankQ Solutions is the leader in Australia for Asia Pacific fundraising software specifically designed for charities and non-profit organisations.

ThankQ is an affordable database driven solution, which can be tailored to meet your organisation's specific needs. ThankQ helps charities working in a wide range of areas including medical research, aged care, education, animal welfare, religious, environmental, and human rights to maximise their resources.

ThankQ case study

Taronga Foundation is the fundraising arm of the Taronga and Western Plains Zoos. Established in 2000, the Foundation is based at the Zoo in Mosman and employs ten people.

The Zoological Parks Board of NSW administers both Taronga and Western Plains Zoos. In the last fifty years zoos have evolved from simple menageries into conservation organisations with an important role to play, working with wildlife agencies to protect and secure biodiversity and a future for wildlife.

The Taronga Foundation has a key role in supporting that endeavour through fundraising and raising awareness of the conservation activities of the Zoo, and the opportunities to participate actively through philanthropic support.

Who are your clients and customers?

Our customers are our sponsors, donors, Zoo Friends, visitors to the zoos and the general community.

How do they benefit from your service?

The benefits of individuals donating are largely intangible, however contributing to the Zoos allows organisations and individuals to know and feel they are doing something practical to help with conservation, when it is all too easy to believe that nothing can be done to stop the adverse effects of economic growth, environmental degradation and climate change.

We do however have a membership program – Zoo Friends…that for a range of fees offers free entry to the zoo, various discounts, a quarterly magazine and invitation to special events. There are now about 54,000 members. This program is administered by the Association of Zoo Friends.

We have a separate animal sponsorship program – Zoo Parent, where an individual can sponsor an animal through a tax deductible donation.

And we have a Corporate Sponsorship Program with more than 80 business sponsors. For these, we offer tailored benefits packages including venue hire, zoo visits and events to help corporations achieve brand, marketing, sales and corporate social responsibility objectives.

Who are your competitors?

Other charities.

What changes are taking place in your category?

There is an increasing need for funding. The last decade has seen an unprecedented increase in the rate of human consumption of natural resources, with a resulting decline in biodiversity across the

globe. As one of the oldest continents on the planet, Australia has an incredible natural heritage, which needs protection.

The Zoological Parks Board of NSW has an enviable reputation as a conservation organisation. The recreation and tourism operations coupled with the fundraising work of the Foundation, provides a sustainable revenue stream.

But there is an expectation from government that organisations will do more under their own steam. The more money we have…the more we can do. So the Foundation has a challenging task. One of the ways we can increase our capacity and ability is by the more productive use of technology, through the introduction of new ways of fundraising like e-philanthropy and online fundraising. Our customer relationship management or donor stewardship is also an important aspect of our fundraising activity.

How have you been successful?
We have taken a structured approach to growing our donor base. We have segmented our market between business-to-business marketing, business to consumer and targeting high net-worth individuals.

Then by implementing technologies that allow us to measure and track response to our marketing, we are evolving a more productive and effective strategy for fundraising.

Do you use a regular e-mail newsletter?
There are two main email newsletters. One is for the corporates and the other is for Zoo Parents. The newsletters are used to engage our donors and to keep them involved with the Zoo's activities. We are currently setting things up to allow donations by email rather than paper. There are 9,000 donors on the database, but only about 35% have email addresses.

Do you have a Web site?
We have a Taronga Foundation website, which is an online brochure of what we do and why we do it. We have recently launched our www.oceansappeal.org.au site, interactive site that will allows real time online donations. We worked with ESIT to interface the website with the ThankQ contact management and fundraising system. This assists with issuing receipts for donations improving our customer service and reducing the administrative workload.

What is your most recent IT project or development?
Implementation of the ThankQ contact management and fundraising system.

Did you write a project plan before you started?
We are a State Government organisation and we went through the standard tendering process for this project. The project specification was developed in conjunction with all internal users – the Foundation, the finance department and the IT department to ensure that the system would work with our existing Centaman and SAP systems.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
There were a lot of responses to the tender. These were measured against six key selection criteria and five solutions were short-listed. From the short list we selected ThankQ as the product that would best suit our needs.

We developed an implementation plan that included data cleansing, customisation and training. There was a considerable information history that needed to be cleaned up for the data transfer.

We used a consultant to help with the process. Once we had completed this, we ran a test database to work through the bugs and we kept the old system as a back up.

The whole process from tendering to implementation took over a year. But the actual change over took about three months to implement.

Where did you go for advice?

We used a consultant who had worked through the implementation process with another charity. We found her through our industry network. ThankQ worked out the timeframe, set up a help line and provided their staff for training.

The ThankQ system tracks donor relationships and history and provides us with accurate reporting, contract servicing, lets us know when we need to invoice…all the actions that relate to donor servicing.

Many of the things we do as an organisation are similar to other organisations. But some things are unique and we do have specific needs in many areas of our business eg our animal sponsorship program. So the system needed to reflect this.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes, the support has been fantastic and the development work has been very responsive.

Every new fundraising initiative requires some development…Friends of the Future relates to bequests at some unknown stage in the future. Working out how to manage this initiative in the database required some development work.

How much did it cost you?

Over $100,000.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

No mistakes. It was painless. Having Jason Haigh in Australia…the person who wrote the software…has been fantastic. Any problems, he can deal with quickly and easily. ThankQ was developed originally for Comic Relief in the UK.

What were the main risks you took?

The only risk was that the system wouldn't work. But we still had the original system as back up. The other risk was to do with the flexibility of development that we required. Other fundraising packages couldn't offer the same flexibility…local development.

While we are not very big…we do have unique needs. Even with Zoo Parents, we had to put pictures and details of all the animals in and allow people to sponsor animals individually.

And if you have a program like Zoo Parents that has been running successfully for 30 years, you don't want to change the way you do things or the language you use to suit the technology, you want the technology to adapt to suit the Zoo Parents program.

What advice would you give someone else?

For charities and fundraisers, the most important thing is how you use your system. The quality of the data that you put in is critical to your relationship with donors and your ongoing marketing

efforts. Focus on outcomes and the types of reports you will need. What is going to add value to the business?

What were the barriers within your business?
Initially the financial commitment was an issue, but the business case addressed this. We needed to take a long-term view.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
I wanted to improve the communication and management of the relationship with key contributors. And in doing so, improve the financial return.

As the business grows, it's becoming more important to understand giving patterns, average donations, the number of enquiries, leads, conversion of leads, renewal patterns. We need to know this so we can improve our marketing - which leads to enquiries, leads and donors.

We need to improve our prospecting – the number of events we do, tours and conversions. And the quality of our proposals – how much did we generate?

By developing our knowledge across these areas we can then track the value of each process and decide where to put the most effort.

We now have a full twelve months of using ThankQ in place and for Year 1 we have seen 300% growth. ThankQ allows us to track what works and what doesn't.

We will also move towards using benchmarking. Then we can look at targeting donors by frequency and amount, to maximise potential income.

We can tailor our effort and improve our conversions. We can also improve our communication in terms of accuracy of message…if someone is mad about elephants…we can invite them to elephant events. It also allows us to respect the privacy considerations of individuals.

Right now, we have more leads than we have the ability to convert. So we need to move into prospecting and conversion, and pull back on marketing. But without the ThankQ management system, we wouldn't have been so aware of where to put our efforts.

Given what you know... would you do it again?
Definitely

What are you planning to do next?
We have just launched online e-fundraising and e-philanthropy.

Related to that is the new capacity of online ticketing for the Zoo. We will be able to engage with visitors booking online, and feed the data into ThankQ. Then at a very low cost we can target people who have been to the Zoo for donations and support of the Taronga Foundation.

Social media – Flood Aid

Flood Aid was a website created in response to the Brisbane floods to connect people in need with people that could help. It was an unusual and swift response to a dire need, and it all started with a tweet.

Flood Aid case study

Flood Aid was not a charity, nor a business, or a non-profit or an organisation. Flood Aid was an international group of likeminded people responding to a disaster, following a vision and combining skills to create a social network to help.

What prompted your to create www.floodaid.com.au?

The heavy rains and floods in early 2011 affected 75% of Queensland, including major towns and the capital city of Brisbane. We thought we could do something to help.

So, by appealing for help using social media, in twelve hours we had over 500 responses from across the globe, which we narrowed down to a team of thirty people spanning nine cities across five continents, all with varying skills.

Less than three days later, we launched www.floodaid.com.au. Social media has become a powerful tool to rally people to a cause, saving lives and connecting communities.

How does it all work?

It is simple. People register their details on the site, telling people what they need. People who can help, register their offer and state how they can help. The site allows offers of need and help to be matched up.

The other key element is to let everybody know that the site exists through their networks using Facebook and Twitter. People spread the word far quicker through their networks than traditional media ever could.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

No, we just did it. It started with a tweet.

Once people realised through the news reports that the flood was going to hit Brisbane, everybody started going to the Brisbane City Council website to look at the flood maps and see whether the flood was going to hit their property. The site crashed.

A number of IT companies created their own flood map sites to help out. It was an individual response from "people who could" to help "people who couldn't".

One of my associates who had created a site tweeted, "Building an application to let people know if they are in a flood area." There was an enormous response to that tweet.

We had developers from all over the world respond. Everyone wanted to do something, but they didn't know what to do.

There were more than 500 responses and we whittled them down to 50 developers. The main team was in Sydney and there were probably around six that were active every day. In Brisbane there were five people who became the core management team, coordinating the response from the IT community.

It was very organic and grew quickly and naturally from a heartfelt response to an obvious need.

There were a lot of ideas and we saw there were heaps of people that wanted to help. We started by looking at which areas would be affected by the flood and what the scale of the event was likely to be.

Once we realised that thousands of homes and people close to the river were going to be hit we knew there would be an overwhelming need for practical help that couldn't be realised by emergency services and council workforce alone. This was going to be so big it would require an army of volunteers to help.

So we kept our first steps simple and focused on building an application that would connect people that needed help with people who could offer help.

How did you decide which technology to use?

The developers and the IT volunteers decided which technology to use. They wanted a commonly used development platform that would allow them to develop the site seamlessly.

There are a number of fast development, open source content management systems that are widely used internationally and the team finally decided to build the site using Drupal.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

It happened quickly. It was up and running in three days. The site went up at www.floodaid.com.au and people started using it straight away. People would logon and say, " I need help in Annerley. I have to move my kids. Car needed." Other people would logon, see what was needed and offer help.

People would email or phone the person and say, "I've got a car, where do you want to go, where do we meet?" and so on. It was practical, very simple and effective.

The main "help" categories on the site were transport, food, accommodation and tools.

Everyone who knew about the site started telling everybody else through phone, Twitter and Facebook. The site quickly went viral.

That week, even the Queensland Police Service made 250,000 friends. The public response to the floods was unprecedented.

Did you use outside contractors?

The developers were from all over the world. They collaborated on development across the internet, but the main development team was in Sydney.

How much did it cost you?

People contributed their time and effort for nothing. We managed 10,000 volunteer man-hours in the first week.

The Flood Aid program became full-time for six or seven people for two weeks. After that everyone went back to their day jobs and monitored the site in the evenings and weekends for another month. After three months it finally died down.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None really. We just responded to events as they happened. We watched the entries coming through. There was a huge volume of requests and offers of help. There were no problems with trolls or anybody trying to take advantage of the site. The site was fuelled by goodwill.

After a while we started to see businesses posting. But we stepped in and emailed them, letting them know that this was a site for donated services only and if they wanted to charge for services they should go elsewhere.

We monitored and managed the postings and took down anything that was not in the spirit of the site.

What were the main risks you took?

In the first week every posting was authentic. Probably only a month down the track did people really try to take advantage of the site.

Simultaneously we were developing applications for mobile devices – iPhone, Blackberry and Android. Not everybody had access to a computer, yet nearly everybody still had a mobile device.

Even when a home had lost everything including its computers, there were a lot of community volunteers who went into the flood affected areas with a laptop and a dongle to sign people up to the site. It was incredible.

The other risk we anticipated was people taking advantage of the information posted on the site. But luckily it didn't happen.

We contacted people regularly to check on who came to help, and we asked them about results. We had to monitor the results of what we had enabled.

We also made contact and started working with selected non-profits that had expertise in key areas like emergency accommodation to manage the matching of people looking for places to stay with people offering help.

There was potential for this to become a problem, so we wanted to use organisations that were experts in the area. That worked well. The accommodation issue was probably the most dangerous potentially. It was a serious issue and we got legal advice about it. The lawyers said we needed to manage the risk professionally, which is why we transferred the responsibility to experts in this area.

What were the barriers to the project?

After the first few days, the Brisbane City Council began to respond more effectively with the "Mud Army". But people had to go into town to sign up, often to be bussed out again to the same area they came from hours later.

I know that the council had to look after the issues of workplace health and safety, injuries and so on, but the core value of Flood Aid was immediate one-on-one help.

The two activities ran side by side, and there were no real barriers, but it was a clash of two different cultures and approaches to the same problem.

It did expose how little control government has once things happen at the grass roots. We have all witnessed the same thing in the Middle East. Individuals will just get on and do it, and with the collaborative power of social media, they can.

What are the benefits you are hoping for?
The benefits were obvious. We matched hundreds of people in need with people that could help. The situation was so chaotic, that we couldn't do metrics, other than through the site, in terms of measuring the number of requests and responses through the matchmaking system.

We also made contact with other groups, such as Baked Relief. This was a group of mums who had baked cakes and other goodies that were distributed to volunteers and people affected by the floods.

The woman who started Baked Relief tweeted a picture of a cake to her friends and said, "I am taking this to the Mud Army…you could do the same."

Baked Relief became massive. It was more a movement than a website. They also took flyers from us and distributed them to people with the food.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
People were blown away by what was achieved.

Are staff happy with what you have done?
We had no formal staff or management. But people took on key roles. Some people spoke to the media and others managed the development team. Others monitored the site.

We had stories in Ad Media, the News of The World and local newspapers. We were never an organisation. We were just a bunch of guys that knew each other.

Tweets and comments were passed on. We just used the media and channels that were there. Volunteers read the messages and replied. It was simple.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
The big thing that came out of this was the government's response. They didn't understand what had happened, because it all happened so quickly.

It is not the way they normally do things. And we all know that government response to disaster always takes a good while to get going, sometimes weeks or even months. We were up and running in three days.

What are you planning to do next?
The site is still online. It's like a living archive. We needed to encourage people to get back on their feet again and take back responsibility by closing the site down. It was planned obsolescence.

Social media – Mummy's Wish

Mummy's Wish is a charity established to offer practical support and information to mothers with cancer. The organisation was established in 2007 and has two part time managers and up to twenty volunteers.

Mummy's Wish case study

Mummy's Wish uses its website, Facebook and Twitter to promote news and events and to raise funds.

How would you describe the organisation?

The two founders of Mummy's Wish have both been through cancer treatment. We found there were large gaps in finding useful information and getting access to practical help and decided to do something about it. There was no central place to find information about services and support during treatment

Who are your customers?

Mums with cancer who have young children of primary school age or younger. We don't want to replicate services, and organisations like Canteen already focus on teenagers.

How do they benefit from your service?

We are there to ease the burden. Our organisation lets mothers focus on getting healthy and looking after children rather than anything else. We also find and provide all the information they need to know.

What changes are taking place in the sector?

At the moment, cancer support is very breast cancer focused. Many other cancers and conditions are being left behind in fundraising and media attention.

People in general are more media and internet savvy and we are very proactive in getting our message out. It is a lot easier and cheaper to reach people than it ever has been through the internet, social media, using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Skype.

How have you been successful?

Our cause tugs at the heartstrings. Everybody has a mother. People see that when there are young children involved mothers can't fend for themselves.

We have also been very proactive in using all the tools of the internet to promote our message to a wider audience.

What prompted your to start using social media?

We started originally with our website www.mummyswish.org.au. The website contains information about support, news and events, sponsors, contacts and other services.

The other founder is an IT specialist and she put up our first website in 2008. At the beginning of 2009, we were offered a more interactive and professional website that allows us to update all the content ourselves directly. 2AM Webworks built that for us for free. This allows us to manage our own content without having to call up the web company for help.

We regularly put up news and let people know what volunteer roles we have available.

Did you write a project plan before you started?
No. It just evolved as we went along.

How did you decide which technology to use?
At the beginning of 2009 we started a Facebook group. I had been involved in Facebook from the beginning for my family and friends, so I knew how to work with Facebook.

We probably had about 200 people in the Facebook group at the beginning, a mixture of relatives, friends and people we had met through the charity.

We started publishing information on events and what we were doing and generally keeping people informed. The group was mainly focused on fundraising.

It is easy for us to decide what to do because we are responsible for all the decisions. We don't have to refer every decision to the board.

Did you use other social media?
We then started a Twitter account to promote Mummy's Wish. It was time to use social media proactively.

So I started by following people in Brisbane and in the Charity industry, looking at who was tweeting certain words such as charity, fundraising, donations and so on. You can even look at who is tweeting these words near Brisbane.

Our charity focuses on Brisbane and southeast Queensland, so it was important for us to localise this enquiry. I found people who were active in the industry near Brisbane and started following them. We also followed traditional media people as well.

Lots of people were starting to follow us and engage us in conversation, and we also got more contacts through traditional channels such as email and phone calls from people asking about services or offering to help.

More recently, we have had the traditional media - television, radio and newspapers contacting us for stories.

Mummy's Wish has an office but we mostly operate from our home offices using a mixture of online and offline services. Web based mail, VoIP and Skype are important to us, but so is Microsoft Office and Excel. We choose and use whichever technology suits our needs.

Being Queensland based, long distance calls are often necessary as well as using mobile phones. We have looked at CRM systems but they are too expensive or not tailored to the non-profit sector. Costs are too high for us, starting at $10,000 and going up to $40,000. None of the CRM systems I looked at is suitable for our needs.

One of the most valuable services we deliver is to provide Mums in hospital with a laptop and internet connection so they can stay in contact with their children and families through email, VoIP, social media and Skype.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
We started and grew using our website, Facebook and Twitter. We needed to be on Twitter and we needed to publish several tweets each day to keep our audience informed.

You have to get the balance right. Too many tweets and you are suddenly sending spam. We got a few polite emails and tweets telling us that what we were doing was considered spam, so we modified our practice to get the balance right.

We looked closely at what we were doing. How do we get more followers? Did we want more followers? Do we want these followers? Do we want quantity or quality?

We have now moved into managing an ongoing conversation with our selected audience.

Where did you go for advice?

We learned as we went. We considered using other online media as well. We looked at blogs, YouTube and Linkedin. But you only have so much time, so we had to be selective. Where was the best place to put our energy?

I update Facebook every two days, so that is like blogging anyway, so there is little point doing both things at once. It is far better to keep our audience concentrated in just a few places.

Linkedin is mainly focused on recruitment and finding professional contacts, so it doesn't really suit our needs. We do use YouTube and we have five videos about Mummy's Wish created by television news outlets and students.

You have to connect your resources together and have them all point to each other to get the most leverage.

How much did it cost you?

It costs time and effort.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

The only mistake we made at the beginning was overtweeting. We haven't made any huge mistakes. Some people blocked me in the early days. But once they do, you can't let them know that they did this.

What were the main risks you took?

None really. We occasionally get spam and inappropriate comments. Anybody with a popular site gets this. You have to stay on top of it. There is nothing wrong with using the delete button.

The other thing to remember is that you can't rely on social media alone for promotion. You need to have a total media strategy that includes all media options, including traditional media. Social media offers you a selected audience. You have to cast your net wider to reach new people.

What advice would you give someone else?

Find organisations you respect that you believe have been successful. Contact them and ask for advice. Most people in the sector are willing to help.

How do you measure what you do with social media?

Facebook and Twitter are the main media we use.

We have 3,010 followers on Facebook and 2,790 on Twitter. Measure your followers regularly and track how the number fluctuates and understand why. I check the numbers every day.

The main reason for us using social media is to promote information and to raise funds. So we tell stories about the people we help to encourage people to donate.

Twitter increased followers for the first 18 months then it settled down. We are now focused on deciding who we want to follow. We are conscious of where each message goes.

Our experience with Facebook has gone through different phases as well. We had a huge increase when a related site mentioned Mummy's Wish and what we were doing.

You have to put the time in to get the best results. I spend two hours every day on social media.

We are working with another organisation – Brisbane Kids – on an online auction using Facebook. We have been able to source all the products and services for this event through our online audience.

Our use of Facebook and Twitter is Brisbane focused and about 10% of our referrals come through these two channels.

Google analytics lets us measure visitors to the website, with data on who came from Twitter or Facebook. In the past twelve months we have had 8,684 visits to the website, with 594 from Facebook and 206 from Twitter.

At least a third of my tweets are retweeted.

And you need to know what people are saying about you to manage your online reputation.

I follow Mummy's Wish and occasionally we may be mentioned in a conversation about something completely out of our normal conversational environment that we need to respond to or influence in some way.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
Many customers come to us through the website and social media, maybe 20-30%. We get a lot of referrals from hospitals.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
To keep up with it all.

What are you planning to do next?
The next step is to expand our services within Queensland. The process has already started and is being driven by people in the regions themselves. They found out about us through social media and are fundraising to help us provide services in their region.

Apple centric services - Rype

With over 25 years experience in technology innovation and Apple product leadership, Rype is a new fresh IT technology business offering Apple-centric and cloud based business and creative solutions.

Our professional hi touch services include project management, technical integration, sustainability IT advice, customised training, collaborative help desk support, and web, software and iPhone and iPad 'App' Development.

Rype is proud to be leading the revolution of collaborative hi touch interfaces and new open web standards.

Rype case study

Rype is an IT Services company, which consults, implements and supports IT products and services, mainly focusing on the Apple product platform. The company was started in 2009 and employs ten people working from the office in Logan.

How would you describe the business you are in?

We are an Apple-centric business. Apple is our chosen platform, because it has fewer problems. It works. We consult and provide services to businesses and other organisations to help them seamlessly incorporate Apple products into their existing computer networks with no pain.

You should be able to choose which platform you want to work with, because it suits your needs. At the enterprise level, the CIO tells you what to do and what to use. So our main business focus is to integrate Apple functionality into the enterprise space.

Universities all over the world have been doing this for years, with no problems, so it should be something other large enterprises look at seriously. At the personal level, Apple is being adopted fast worldwide. We want to see if this can happen at the enterprise level.

Who are your clients and customers?

Clients range across small business, design and advertising companies, not-for-profits and now larger organisations such as councils. When we started the company, I thought that our main customers would be designers and advertising businesses. We have now identified local and state government as an opportunity for growth.

How do they benefit from your services?

We started out in the home market and have moved into the enterprise market, because we have the expertise to handle the issues they have. They want to enjoy the same productivity benefits others gain from using the Apple platform, but they want a high level of service that is beyond smaller IT services companies.

We proved what we could do with clients like Logan City. The CIO had an open mind and wanted to know more. People were joining the council and asking why they couldn't use their iPhone or bring in their Apple laptop. The IT department couldn't support the platform in council and was also worried about security.

Most of the firewall filters at that level wouldn't allow anything other that Internet Explorer. So the CIO looked for an organisation that would help them manage Apples in council.

What changes are taking place in your category?

I started as an Apple technician in design and advertising, which is where Apple was strongest and still is. I worked for just about every reseller in Australia and moved into sales with Apple.

Over the years, computers have become faster, with more memory. The internet has also become faster and more ubiquitous. Businesses have moved from a paper based environment to a digital environment.

Customers have moved from buying boxes to buying service. It's no longer about buying computers. It's about how do I work from remote locations? Who do I call when I need to network all the computers in my business? How do I make my staff more productive?

The emphasis has moved from technology to what you get from technology. And people want it simpler.

The major hardware suppliers have all gone online and now sell direct as well as through their channels. We now get people that buy their equipment online and then need help with integrating what they have bought.

How have you been successful?

We deliver on the solution. In Logan, we came up with a recommendation and we delivered what we said we would. In fact, we exceeded the CIO's expectation.

It went off without a hitch. There was a lot of trepidation and concern, but there were no problems at all. The CIO has now started using an iPad as well as several of the senior executives.

We ran a series of training courses to help people become more familiar with the Apple platform. It was a six-month program, monitored weekly with a monthly review. We look at user acceptance, productivity and satisfaction.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes. It's - www.rype.com.au.

What prompted you to start your business?

There is something exciting about helping others to become more productive and excited about technology again. Apple is the world's most innovative company and it is proving good for us to be associated with their new products and constant innovations. We focus on helping people benefit from using these innovations productively in their businesses.

Our business has become a consulting business, rather than a sales business.

What sort of projects are you working on?

In Logan Council the Advertising and Marketing department was running on Windows, not very successfully. Most applications they were using were from the Adobe Creative Suite – Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Acrobat Pro, Flash and Dreamweaver.

Programs were crashing. The network was dropping out. There was general frustration and stress within the department and they weren't very efficient or effective. They estimated they were running at about 40% productivity, compared to an external Apple based environment.

The council servers were hosting all the marketing information. A lot of what the marketing department creates is large image based files, and being able to store and access the files was proving a problem. The files really needed to be stored separately on their own network, optimised for fast access and delivery to the desktop and printers.

We were asked to look at the problem. To demonstrate what could be done, we showed them an operating environment at the Queensland State Library, where there were twenty Mac Pros and twenty 30inch displays.

It's a showcase of what technology can do in a creative environment. I took a small group of Logan staff members into the State Library with some files they were working on.

They operated and used the files as they would in the Logan office, and the same productivity measurements were taken. We looked at the time it took to complete a whole series of operations, from opening files on different programs, to completing chosen actions, saving, rendering and so on.

The results were compared with measurements taken at Logan. The operations were faster, easier and seamless. It wasn't hard for them to reach the decision to change.

We then prepared them to change over to a similar operating environment to the one at the State Library. Part of our solution required that we train them up on all the Adobe Suite of products to increase productivity.

We are also working with Fitec Training Timber, training people across the timber industry. We are putting together an online training system for their students.

How much does a project cost?

Logan went ahead with the change over for 8 people in the marketing department at a total cost of about $70,000, and they now have a 40% increase in productivity.

That will improve as they become more familiar with the new products as a result of the training. Normally when you implement new technology there is an initial decrease in productivity. We achieved an increase in productivity from the very start.

We charge by the hour for projects, $165/hour or $1,500/day for each person allocated to a job.

But I don't think price is a major issue. Apples are a lot cheaper now than they were. When you buy a Mac, you get a lot of software that comes with it.

Apple only represents 1% of the enterprise market. If that moves to even 2% it will change attitudes. Why walk around with a laptop when you just want to access a few documents and emails? An iPad will do just that and more.

Did everyone support the project?

There has been a shift in attitude at Logan. The Macs are now fully integrated into the Logan system, including Citrix, LDAP and KEURBRIS. We have also convinced them that the marketing department files should be stored on their own servers for speed of access.

How did you overcome concern?

We won trust and confidence by listening and understanding what people actually want. We then saw how we could deliver a solution that really helps.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

Probably undercharging. There is no margin in hardware these days. What we have focused on is adding value to organisations through technology and charging for it from a consultancy not sales perspective. We can add value to the way an organisation performs. That applies to everything that they do.

What were the main risks you took?

Undercapitalisation is nearly always a problem for new businesses. And finding the right staff to help deliver on our promise and commitment is difficult.

What advice would you give others?

Have a clear idea of what you are going to do. What services do you offer? How much should you change for them? And how do you consistently deliver?

What are the barriers that you face as a business?

Funnily enough, the biggest barrier we have is Apple's success. They are so busy, they don't follow up on the business opportunities we can offer. Every new product they roll out just adds to the demand and they don't need to go looking for new business. It's banging on their door. So for us, it can prove difficult to get the support that we might expect.

What are the business benefits?

The main benefit we deliver to organisations is productivity…more work done in less time for less money. But there are other benefits as well, that are just as important to a business. Vision, partnership and the support of innovation and new ideas within the business.

Apple products are all sustainable, and Apple is deliberately designing technology to be the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

Most definitely.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

Yes.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

How little I knew about business. I've worked for some very big firms. But I didn't know anything about running my own business. It has been a massive learning curve.

What are you planning to do next?

We will continue on the path we are on. We will continue with developing the enterprise market. That means more good IT services people joining our business. We are actively looking for more people with our core values.

Business vitality check – WRS Centre

The Workplace Resources and Services Centre (WRS Centre) provides a range of quality services and products to ensure a business manages risks and optimises its performance.

HR Advance, is Australia's most comprehensive web based HR Toolkit and WorkplaceInfo provides timely daily alerts of Employment Relations and OHS matters to ensure businesses are notified of change and updated on contemporary workplace matters.

We have a distributed business model with a broad range of business partners delivering consulting, product and training services business to business.

Business vitality check – case study

Workplace Resources & Services Centre (WRSC) is an agent for a range of HR, IR and WH&S solutions for business. The company was started in 2009 and employs eleven people working from regional locations across Queensland, with its head office in Brisbane.

How would you describe the business you are in?

WRS Centre can provide a unique mix of technical software solutions and consultancy to small and medium sized businesses, local government, industry associations and corporates, not just in Queensland but across Australia.

We provide IR, HR and OH&S online software solutions plus a range of business diagnostics including Business Vitality Check, which is a business health diagnostic used by thousands of businesses across Australia.

Who are your clients for Business Vitality Check?

Clients for Business Vitality Check are primarily small to medium sized businesses employing up to a hundred people and also mid sized non-profit organisations.

Business Vitality Check is used by 2-3,000 organisations in New South Wales and this number will grow swiftly as the product is promoted and made available across Australia.

How will customers benefit from your service?

Business Vitality Check is a business diagnostic tool that helps you assess the health of your business. It covers business management, strategy and planning, marketing, finance and operations.

It's a secure, web-based tool that includes a comprehensive range of questions that provide a complete overview of business health.

It gives the business decision maker an overall perspective on how they compare with a benchmarked group of businesses. The results provide a report on the status of the business with an indicator for the status of each area of your business ranging from poor health to super fitness.

Business Vitality Check highlights where a business has problems and where it is doing well. It then guides the business owner through each of the issues and provides detailed information on the key areas for improvement.

Once you have the report and advice, you can speak to WRSCentre about what to do next to improve your business. We have years of experience and can match a business to the best available resources, advisors and help.

The objective is to diagnose business health as cost effectively as possible. At $770, it is an affordable proposition for any business owner and it is a quick and valuable way of finding out where weaknesses and strengths are across all areas of business activity. Once you know that, it is a straightforward exercise to improve things.

Who are your competitors?

There are a lot of different benchmark tools available but they mainly focus on financials. Business Vitality Check provides an overview of customer service, customer communication, planning, risk management, profile and positioning, human resources, IT and financial controls and ratios. It really is a complete business vitality check.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Customers have become a lot more adept at using internet based products. Even the most conservative and traditional of businesses have no fear in using web-based tools these days. The diagnostic is very easy to use. It's simple and user friendly. It's a cost effective way of providing a business health check to businesses.

Most business improvement toolkits have developed in response to a pent up demand from industry association members. They need a tool to help them become more productive, profitable and sustainable. They need to know how they are doing compared with other businesses like themselves.

They want help with business improvement and it has to be secure and cost effective. That is why Business Vitality Check was developed.

Business Vitality Check was first used by one of the larger motor vehicle associations that decided to review all their statewide operations. They wanted to look at issues with specific agents, geographic issues and systemic problems. So they put everybody through the benchmark questions.

The results were invaluable. They were able to see that some specific regional operators needed a lot of help, plus there were some big problems across the whole group, particularly in the regions. It was a very comprehensive report and the association was able to improve its operations and become more successful.

This exercise demonstrated that the diagnostic tool could be tailored to an industry's specific needs, and then used to address systemic issues within the industry sector and across different regions and locations. Solutions could then be tailored accordingly.

Once proven, the product was made available to other industry associations, businesses and non-profit organisations of all sizes. If an organisation can't implement the report recommendations for themselves, we can provide help for an additional fee.

How have you been successful?

Business Vitality Check has been successful because it is a secure, easy to use web-based tool kit. It suits business people. It takes a few hours to complete the questions, but the results are really useful.

It doesn't have to be done at one sitting. A business owner can return to the questions without having to start the whole thing again. Each business then receives a hard copy of the report mailed to the business owner.

The owner can quickly see what is needed to fix any problems and what is needed to up-skill staff to maintain and improve the overall business performance.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes. It's www.wrscentre.com.au. It presents our products, services and partners.

What prompted you to offer Business Vitality Check?

Australian Business originally developed Business Vitality Check in-house using the data they had gathered over many years.

They wanted to create a best practice tool for the benefit of businesses and allow it to develop and improve in the market.

The product has been proven in New South Wales and is now available elsewhere in Australia. Some of the larger educational institutions are very interested in what it can do. They can see the potential for them to accurately align an organisation's training requirements, through independent benchmarking, to the solutions they deliver.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

The product has been available now for two years. It is very easy to use and only takes a couple of hours to work through all the questions and complete the business vitality check. The report is then mailed out to the business owner. So the whole process just takes a few days from filling in the questions to receiving the report.

How much does the solution cost?

It costs $770.

What do you get in the report?

The report is personalised for each organisation and gives an executive summary of findings and an overall business assessment positioning the business as either "In poor health, average, healthy, fit or super fit".

The report then drills down to look at the organisation for each area of business activity – customer service, customer communication, planning, risk management, profile and planning, human resources, IT and financial control and ratios.

Each area is evaluated and allocated a result on the spectrum of poor health to super fitness. So the business owner can quickly see which areas need improvement.

The report then goes into each area of business activity in depth, providing useful comments and suggestions.

It provides a step-by-step guide to improvement with recommendations on what can be done practically to make the business more effective.

These recommendations can be acted on by the business owner or in conjunction with an external advisor or specialist. WRSCentre can help with all areas of business activity improvement if required.

For example, in the area of customer communication, the report responds to the question "How many times do you proactively contact your very best customers during the year?"

The report goes on to analyse the diagnostic response and offers suggestions on how to manage customer communication more effectively, through newsletters, seminars, presentations and events. Every piece of advice is actionable and designed to improve profitability, performance, productivity and customer relationships.

The report goes in-depth through each area of business activity, providing suggestions, recommendations and ideas. Each report can typically run to 50 pages or more of useful information.

Business Vitality Check distils much of the business wisdom and best practice employed by large corporates and makes it available to small to medium sized businesses in a practical way. It really is a powerful and useful business support tool.

What advice would you give others?

The Business Vitality Check diagnostic tool is extremely valuable to smaller businesses and other organisations. It allows a business to do a 360-degree check on all aspects of business health. People really like the product.

Some larger organisations are planning to apply the product across their whole business network, to improve quality across the board and measure and monitor the improvements. This will help them with implementing and managing a program of training and continual business development.

The product could be used by any organisation that is creating an award structure for businesses, like "small business awards". These programs are offered by the media, government and corporates every year. The tool is ideal for comparing performance and professionalism in any industry sector.

What are the business benefits?

The Business Vitality Check provides a quick benchmark diagnostic that can guide a business to focus on the key issues and problems that need solving to be able to improve performance, with guidance on the next steps. It is a very powerful strategic tool for any business owner.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

Yes, absolutely. It is a great way of delivering some quick wins for any business owner and helping them establish a clear future direction.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

You can't do everything for everybody. You have to pick the right opportunities and work in those sectors that are responsive.

People will make up their minds when they are ready. So we get the message out, show them the solution and leave them to make the decision in their own time.

What are you planning to do next?

We are planning to promote the Business Vitality Check to businesses and organisations across Australia.

DonorTec (Novita) – Connecting Up

DonorTec provides donated and discounted technology products and services from companies such as Microsoft, Symantec, Sophos, Kaspersky and Cisco to eligible income tax exempt (ITE) Australian nonprofit groups. Through this program nonprofits can access the latest technology via donations or generous discounts.

This is an exciting program to assist Australian nonprofits build their ICT capacity and has already assisted thousands of groups to make huge savings in their operations.

DonorTec case study

Novita is a multiple service provider for children and young people with physical disabilities living in South Australia. Services include therapy, equipment and family support services (such as respite and in-home supports).

Services are provided by allied health professionals, psychologists, doctors and volunteers. The organisation also supports staff in childcare centres in the north west of South Australia, enabling them to better assist children with special needs.

The organisation originated in 1939, is headquartered in Adelaide and employs 265 people across South Australia.

Who are your clients and customers?
Our clients are primarily children and young people aged 0 – 18 years with physical disabilities.

How do they benefit from your product?
We deliver rehabilitation support, equipment and emotional support to families to assist the child and the family to better participate in everyday life activities. We also provide information to families, and work extensively with other agencies, such as schools, preschools and child care centres who are providing service to our clients.

What changes are taking place in your category?
There is consistent downward trend in government funding. Five years ago, approximately 70% of our funding was derived from government. Now it is closer to 50% which means that the organisation has to work hard to find the other 50%.

This means that fundraising has had to be ramped up and we have been forced to become leaner and meaner with business processes. We now have less people doing more administrative work. So my focus is on how we can leverage IT to help us spend less on administration.

Another significant issue for the organisation is data integration. We have tried hard to reduce the number of data repositories within the organisation, but we know that ultimately we'll have to implement a more fully integrated system.

We are just about to undertake a data mapping project which will enable us to look at ways we can optimise our data management. After this we will consider storage, database and front-end applications that can be used to access data repositories.

In doing this we will be thinking carefully about systems that can use DonorTec concessions.

Do you have a Web site?
We have a number of web sites and also an intranet for staff information.

How did you first hear about Donortec?
We heard about DonorTec through a newsletter. One of our staff who received the newsletter drew my attention to it. It actually sounded too good to be true. I remember thinking "I can't believe this…what's the catch." I asked one of my staff to get more information and they got in touch with Josh at DonorTec.

The responsiveness of DonorTec has been brilliant. They have been very helpful in guiding us through the ordering process. We were provided with clear information on how to do the application. Then we sat down and worked out what items we needed over the next 12 months.

We particularly appreciated the fact that we could spread our ordering requirements over our 5 locations.

The timing of leaning about DonorTec was particularly helpful, given that we had just become aware that we were under-licensed for MS Office. The DonorTec program allowed us to bring our licensing up-to-date very cost-effectively and in one hit.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
It took a few weeks from start to finish. However now that we are familiar with the process, I expect that future orders will take less time.

Where did you go for advice?
We have an IT team of four and we outsource our high-end network support to Comunet, a medium sized company that is sensitive to the needs of community organisations. Comunet have been very helpful not only in providing hands-on assistance, but also access to expert knowledge on new and emerging technologies.

Were you happy with the work and help given?
Yes.

How much did it cost you?
We ended up saving more than $20,000 by using the DonorTec program. The all up cost would have been over $30,000 for everything we ordered. We got it for the administration fee of $9,700.

We ordered multiple licences for MS Office 2007, Citrix Windows server and Citrix Terminal server, SQL server, Frontpage, Visio and MS Project, plus Cisco switches and a Cisco Security Firewall appliance. Our budget would have been blown if we had needed to pay the full cost.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?
None really, due largely to the support provided by our DonorTec contact person.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?
It has allowed us to start thinking about strategic issues we wouldn't have considered before. I realise now that we might finally be able to do some of these things.

Before using DonorTec, I concentrated predominantly on basic hardware. Now, I'm starting to explore new and emerging IT solutions, such as VDI and blade centres. DonorTec has allowed me to be more creative and strategic.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
How to use the DonorTec program. I've now become very familiar with the website and have confidence in the support available from DonorTec.

I now read each issue of the DonorTec newsletter very carefully. I realise that the DonorTec program is constantly evolving and I want to be in the best position to take advantage of new offerings.

What are you planning to do next?
Our main focus for the next couple of years will be on evaluating the use of collaboration software, data integration, server virtualisation and looking at high volume storage systems.

DonorTec (McIntyre) – Connecting Up

DonorTec provides donated and discounted technology products and services from companies such as Microsoft, Symantec, Sophos, Kaspersky and Cisco to eligible income tax exempt (ITE) Australian nonprofit groups. Through this program nonprofits can access the latest technology via donations or generous discounts.

This is an exciting program to assist Australian nonprofits build their ICT capacity and has already assisted thousands of groups to make huge savings in their operations.

DonorTec case study

The McIntyre Centre is a disability service provider based in Queensland. The organisation started in 1964, employs twenty people and provides therapeutic and recreational horse riding to people with disabilities.

Who are your clients and customers?
Our clients are people with a disability, predominantly children.

How do they benefit from your product?
They enjoy a mixture of benefits across a number of areas - therapeutic, psychological, wellbeing and enjoyment.

What changes are taking place in your category?
The biggest impact is government funding not keeping pace with the demands of the service. So we can't rely on government funding and seek donations from multiple sources.

How have you been successful?
The organisation has been successful because we provide a different alternative to other therapeutic methods. The program builds skills and confidence.

Do you have a Web site?
We have a web site – www.rda.asn.au. It provides information about the Centre, its programs and contact details.

How did you first hear about Donortec?
I went looking at the Microsoft website, to see what was available for the non-profit sector. I saw that Donortec were now managing the program.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
It was simple. I signed up on the DonorTec site. At the time, we were putting in a new office and I needed some licences so I ordered them through DonorTec.

Then we converted another building to give us more office space, so we needed a Cisco router. Once again, I went through DonorTec. I bought a couple of wireless routers to test them out. I was a bit concerned they might be affected by the high voltage power lines that run across the property, but they have worked fine without any interference.

And when we expand further, we might need a wireless router down the other end of the Centre site. So I wanted to be sure they worked successfully, before we made a commitment.

Where did you go for advice?

I used to run my own IT business, so I am experienced with all the IT issues and requirements involved in the organisation.

How do you know who to trust?

DonorTec is the distributing agent for major international companies such as Microsoft and Cisco, so I didn't have any concerns.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes.

How much did it cost you?

I bought two server licences plus Office Professional software for the Centre. All up, we saved about $40,000. We couldn't have done the development without the DonorTec program. We now have two servers, state of the art software and desktops for everyone. We couldn't have afforded it otherwise.

What advice would you give someone else?

I tell everyone I meet about the program.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The savings are obvious. But one of the biggest benefits is the legality of the software infrastructure.

HR services – WRS Centre

The Workplace Resources and Services Centre (WRS Centre) provides a range of quality services and products to ensure a business manages risks and optimises its performance.

HR Advance, is Australia's most comprehensive web based HR Toolkit and WorkplaceInfo provides timely daily alerts of Employment Relations and OHS matters to ensure businesses are notified of change and updated on contemporary workplace matters.

We have a distributed business model with a broad range of business partners delivering consulting, product and training services business to business.

WRS Centre case study

Workplace Resources & Services Centre (WRSC) is an agent for HR services, delivering a range of HR, IR and WH&S solutions for business. The company was started in 2009 and employs eleven people working from regional locations across Queensland, with its head office in Brisbane.

How would you describe the business you are in?
Australian Business Consulting & Solutions approached me about becoming a special agent to deliver cost effective solutions to business, particularly using the range of online software tools that had been developed by them to meet the changing conditions and expectations of businesses in the 21st century.

So I built an alliance with some of the best consultants in the regions to create WRS Centre. We can now provide a unique mix of technical software solutions and consultancy to local government, industry associations and corporates, not just in Queensland but across Australia.

We provide IR, HR and OH&S online software solutions plus a range of business diagnostics.

Australian Business Consulting & Solutions (ABC&S) is a division of the NSW Business Chamber, which has tremendous resources because of its size, history and experience. The industry association has great links to the business community. It is the most successful of all the state associations.

We deliver a number of online software services that could be useful to businesses anywhere in Australia. They are HR Advance, OH&S Advance, Business Vitality Check, Workplace Info and Workplace OH&S.

Who are your clients and customers?
Our clients at this stage are industry associations, local governments, corporates and small to medium organisations.

How will they benefit from your service?
The service puts compliance into a business. It is easy to tailor the software to any business type or business interest.

Who are your competitors?
Most competitors have HR manuals, but they don't have the IT wizardry that we have.

What changes are taking place in your category?
The introduction of the Fair Work Act has allowed our system to be used nationally. Before there were state awards, but our system is national.

At the end of the year there will be a national standard for OH&S. This is a good thing. National standards make things simpler for business, especially businesses that work across different regions of Australia.

Australian Business Law is one of the top practitioners in Industrial Law. They also provide a service solution. We have direct access to them for advice and consultancy.

Customers have become a lot more adept at using internet based products. Even the most conservative and traditional of businesses have no fear in using the system.

The system is very easy to use. It's simple and user friendly. It's a cost effective way of providing a compliance solution to businesses.

How have you been successful?
What has given us the foundation we have today is the adoption by LGAQ. That has proved to everybody that the product can be implemented into local government for all sizes of organisation. Once we were able to demonstrate that, the solution got overwhelming acceptance in the sector.

LGAQ couldn't have been a more demanding customer. But now it has been adopted, the other state local government associations are interested as well.

Do you have a Web site?
Yes. It's www.wrscentre.com.au. It presents our products, services and partners.

What prompted you to deliver the service?
My strategy is to deliver the solution through existing channels. I want to create a mining version of HR Advance, then a medical version and so on.

Customisation of the product is done by ABC&S working with the industry association or franchise. With LGAQ, we worked with the Australian Business Law specialists to customise the documents and add new documents in as required.

What industry associations like about the solution, is that it is a way of unifying what everybody does in a sector. It provides a way of making good practice universal in a cost effective manner.

For instance, OH&S is mandatory in the mining and construction industries. But for other issues like IR and HR it is difficult to get a universal approach. This is a way of pushing best practice into all industry sectors.

How did you decide which technology to use?
I couldn't find any other product that was as good. There are some products out there, but not as universally applicable or comprehensive. The top end version of HR Advance has more than 200 documents covering all the aspects of business that you might require.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
Probably only a month once I had identified the product. I built a website to support my sales activity and trained all our consultants in the new solution.

How much does the solution cost?

The cost ranges depending on which product is most appropriate to a business or organisation's needs.

The full service suite of HR Advance for organisations with more than 15-20 staff costs $1,800 for one licence (2 users) for one year. In the second year it only costs $1,400.

If there is any change in legislation, you are advised and you change your documents. Any new legislation and all customers receive an alert.

The next level product for small to medium sized businesses (SME) is $800 per annum. It has half the number of documents, but contains everything an SME would need.

Where did you go for advice?

I already had considerable experience from my time working in corporates and industry associations. So I knew what I was looking for. But I did get advice from colleagues and lawyers. The consensus was that this was the way to go.

How did you know who to trust?

Experience is the main benchmark. I trust my intuition.

Did you use external contractors?

Australian Business has created the product. I distribute their product. That gives me an enormous reservoir of support, in selling, presentation and implementation of the solution.

Are you happy with the solution?

The quality of the product and the people at Australian Business is first rate. The LGAQ project was executed with great sensitivity, precision and responsiveness.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

The only mistakes were in getting up and running in the first place. Things always take longer than you hope. The project with LGAQ took twelve months. It is the same with most of the large industry associations.

It is all about doing things in a different way. That means somebody has to change the way they are currently doing things. So even when you come in with a much better solution, it still takes time for people to accept that and then make the change.

There are two things the industry associations understood in the end.

One, that the product delivers membership value at the same time as delivering information to the members.

Two, that by creating an on-selling service to members, it allows the association to generate revenue which then allows them to do more for members.

So associations like the product.

We can tailor the solution to any industry, which gives an association a point of difference. We align it to their industry rather than just deliver a vanilla, "one size fits all" product.

What were the main risks you took?

We had to fund the business from scratch. So the risks were around business stability and longevity. Only now are we starting to get critical mass, which will see the investment of time and money pay off. But I had faith in both the product and the consultancy network, so I knew it was just a matter of time.

What advice would you give others?

You must be compliant to the Fair Work Act. If you were going to manage it yourself, it would costs tens of thousands of dollars. Every time you build a new set of documents and forms, or engage a consultant to do it for you, it costs thousands.

The toolkit takes a company directly to best practice compliance at an affordable price. The Business Vitality Check diagnostic tool is very useful. It allows a business to do a 360-degree check on all aspects of business health.

What are the business benefits?

They are cost saving, compliance and risk mitigation. If you get caught by the Fair Work Ombudsman, the costs could run into thousands of dollars in fines, legal fees and consulting. If you are doing the right thing you manage your risk. The toolkits are very cost effective.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

Yes, absolutely. Our consultants know it will deliver a best practice solution and free them up to do strategic consulting. It automates the basic documents and covers all the regulation issues thoroughly.

Customers ask us, "How long has this product been around? It's great." A lot of people still don't know the product exists.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

You can't do everything for everybody. You have to pick the right opportunities and work in those sectors that are responsive.

People will make up their minds when they are ready. So we get the message out, show them the solution and leave them to make the decision in their own time.

What are you planning to do next?

There are three state local government associations interested at the moment, beyond LGAQ.

They see that this could be the compliance tool that could be used across Australia. That would save everybody time and money, as well as reducing red tape. I am developing all channels. Some are excited and some are wary.

The other major sector is government. There is no reason why the product shouldn't be applied to Health, Environment, Trade, Tax and so on. They could use this system as their HR, IR and OH&S toolkit.

The questions LGAQ asked were, "Can it be white labeled?" Yes. "Would it be maintained 24x7?" Yes. Is ABLaw best practice?" Yes. "Will it deliver a high quality solution to a member in Thursday Island as well as to somebody in Brisbane?" Yes. That was what it took, and that summarises what everybody else wants as well.

Managed services - Newbase

Newbase is a highly skilled and qualified systems integrator with twenty years experience in the delivery of technology solutions. Newbase is highly accomplished at translating complex technologies into compelling value propositions for its government, non-profit and corporate clients.

Newbase case study

NewBase is a systems integrator with its head office at Newstead in Brisbane. The company was started in 1992 and employs twenty-eight people.

How would you describe your business?

We are a systems integrator but what we do has changed and evolved over the years. Essentially, we are a business that can look at any customer business problem and then scope, design and create the most appropriate IT solution.

We are able to understand the overall business requirement, which might involve implementing highly complex infrastructure and applications, and break it down to simple steps.

Because the market is always changing, we have to stay responsive to shifts in customer demands and expectations, and also stay aware and knowledgeable of the ever-changing mix of technology solutions as they become available.

Who are your clients and customers?

Typically, we deliver project-managed services to medium to large clients, and for enterprise clients we tend to focus on a specific vertical technology need.

Our medium to large sized clients would usually have anywhere from twenty to five hundred employees using the company network in some way.

How do clients benefit from your services?

We professionally provide clients a solution that is aligned with their business goals. That might encompass software development, software services, implementation, managed services and project services.

Essentially, we identify, analyse and solve business problems using IT. That's what technology is for. We then manage and adapt those solutions to suit the changing business and technology environment. So our clients always have the most agile, robust and responsive platform to run their businesses effectively.

What changes are taking place in your business category?

We have seen a lot of vendor rationalisation recently, with companies merging and being taken over. This affects the choice of IT products and services in the market as well as impacting supply and availability.

The market has moved from selling products to selling services. Since 1992, we have had a product arm and a service arm. Our competitors were heavily into moving boxes – servers, desktops and peripherals. So we have been able to adapt to the changing market easier than some others.

We have seen the emergence of Apple in the consumer space, now impacting all parts of the market. People are bringing their devices to work and expecting to use them and for them to be integrated with the rest of the business network.

That is a change that is causing ructions beyond the IT department, on into HR and management. I think we have yet to see the full impact on our business.

Management in a lot of our clients is now realising they have a tool that can push the boundaries.

A few years ago, the move to server based computing had a big impact because the ROI was quantifiable. For a hundred users you could have just four operating systems rather than a hundred operating systems. This made things much easier to manage and reduced costs considerably. You also had the ability to manage communication to remote users. Virtualisation is now really starting to have a big impact.

What has changed with customers?

Customers want to be serviced at a business level, bringing us closer to their business and its goals. They want a higher level of contact, service and communication. It used to be that you had to be technically proficient. Now that is not enough. Today, communication skills are critical.

Our best technicians are those that can communicate effectively not just with their technical peers in client IT departments, but with any senior manager, helping them to understand the business benefits of a solution in plain English.

Our work processes start with the customer telling us what they want, and the customer requirement is at the heart of everything that follows.

What has changed with suppliers?

There has been a rationalisation of suppliers, which will probably continue. There have been some efficiency improvements with the electronic delivery of licenses and renewals.

What affects us most is stock availability. It always holds our projects up. After the global financial crisis, we saw 6-8 week waiting periods. When the major distributors make internal changes that affects our profitability as well.

Some of the major manufacturers have moved to Singapore and elsewhere in south east Asia, and that also makes our lives more difficult. Everything takes longer, and there is more complexity in ordering, fulfillment and payment systems. In the last ten years, distributors have become very risk averse.

Any other demands?

There are always going to be technology changes. These demands have to be built into our business planning and processes to give us the ability to evolve and adapt.

We have a program of works at NewBase to do just that. We constantly update the toolkit of internal productivity tools for our staff. I don't think we would exist today without our internal systems. They give us sustainability.

How have you been successful?

We have a commitment to long-term relationships, investing in work practices that are sustainable and deliverable, and building effective change into our business model. Those are the main reasons for our success.

We have always done it. Managed services is a means for a customer to share the risk and liability of managing their IT asset with somebody else. Historically, IT has been a reactive service. When something is broken, it must get it fixed. Turning IT into a proactive service is our way of extending our service to the customer.

Over the past ten years, the growth in remotely servicing our customers has been significant. A lot of the services we manage are managed remotely, from our office in Newstead, via phone and the online help desks. So the current hype around "cloud computing" – delivering services over the internet or other connection is just a natural evolution of what we have always done.

In fact, we are beginning to notice our engineers are "pushing back" and wanting to get out from behind the help desk to visit the clients and customers.

This human contact is important, especially with higher cost services. It links the technicians and engineers with the managers and client IT staff at the coal-face, and helps all parties understand issues more thoroughly and transparently.

Managed services means different things to us, depending on what the customer wants.

At one level, the customer might want us to manage the whole environment.

At the middle level, the customer already has a small team that needs assistance.

At the upper level, customers might have a large IT team, but the CIO wants us to support them for bigger issues and projects, or when one of their key people is on holiday or ill.

These days, a lot more customers have IT people on staff. And a lot more are worried about the productivity of these people. Are they keeping their skills up to date? Are they abreast of all the changes in the market? Involving us, allows these issues to be looked at closely.

Remote access allows us to do a lot more things. Businesses have learned that connecting people up remotely improves productivity. So there has been a steady evolution towards remote access for files, remote access to desktop, remote to the server, and now remote to all sorts of devices.

We are in a situation where any of our staff can work from anywhere. We had a staff member flat on her back in bed with an injury, who chose to continue working from home. For ten weeks, with a major back issue including an operation to fix the problem, she only took one-week sick leave.

One of our technicians works from Rockhampton and comes down for a couple of days a week. Mobility and remote access gives power to the individual. We've been looking at remote access and managed services for twenty-five years. For us it is not new. It used to be PC Anywhere and now look how things have changed.

I think nobody really appreciates that the internet gives us the ability to consistently collect information about our clients that helps us monitor and protect their business operations better. We can monitor systems so they don't fail. You need enough bandwidth and you need everybody to want it to happen.

It is important for me to regularly meet with and listen to clients at the coal-face. I look at the behaviour of our clients. If I notice anything different, I meet with the customer and have a review meeting.

Customers assume that they are going to have problems with IT services. Our promise is to take any problem on board and fix it. If it is our fault, we will apologise and fix it. If is not our fault, we will show the customer exactly what occurred and why. We are totally transparent. A great deal of transparency leads to trust.

How do you deal with new technology?
Our processes and our system remains the same. How we deal with new technologies changes depending on market forces.

We have our core system and other systems that check our core system and alert us if there is a problem. It's the same for our engineers. We have a workflow system that gives us the ability to not forget anything or anyone. That gets back to us building productivity tools to help our staff.

How do you decide which technology to use?
Our technology choice is based on the core set of skills that we have. We select technologies that work reliably, sustainably and are supported. We want reliable server equipment. If you don't have reliable equipment, you won't get to the other issues and deliver value.

We listen to the market, and assess equipment. We can look in both directions, to customers and to manufacturers and that gives us the best of both worlds. We can match real needs with real products and avoid the hype and over expectations.

Where do you go for advice?
Technical advice is provided by our team and through our evaluation processes. If we need external advice, we have manufacturers, distributors and business alliances to talk with.

How do you know who to trust?
Behaviour. It is about how people talk and behave. Then it is to do with personal experience.

What mistakes have you made that you wish you hadn't?
You do make small mistakes all the time but you adjust. What I notice with engineers especially is they get upset when nobody listens to them or recognises the risk that they see. Listen to them, and the problem evaporates.

What are the main risks?
Bleeding edge technology is a risk. Sometimes you do end up using it. Sometimes you assume the technology is going to perform and it doesn't. That is a problem, because you have the client contact and contract. The manufacturer doesn't. You can believe it is just leading edge and proven, but it isn't.

The other risk is refusing to deal with leading edge technology because you are risk averse. Both attitudes can hurt you and you can become non-competitive. You have to keep learning.

What advice would you give someone else?
Make your IT systems agile and leverageable. Share the risk with a managed service partner. Don't take all the risk yourselves. Make sure you use a partner that is certified. Then, don't mix projects with ongoing operational support.

Operational support, daily, weekly, monthly is what keeps the business going. Don't mix the two. There is a risk involved at every integration point. So you have to separate the two. Don't jeopardise your business. Customers shouldn't resource for projects. They should outsource. Projects have to be done in a time and cost efficient manner. So they should be managed separately.

What are the business benefits?

Managed services means that your solution will be aligned with the business requirement. You will be able to leverage the latest technology.

There is a cost saving. You can be more proactive. The customer gets more responsiveness with support because we are connected. If you have to put an engineer in a car and drive across town, it is all too slow and too hard. With managed service connection, we can get onto any problem in ten minutes. So that saves time and money.

The other advantage is proactivity from our end. We monitor customer systems constantly in many ways. Our highest level monitoring even allows us to predict user performance. In a few years, we will be able to write this into our service level agreements.

Mobility business benefits include staff retention, flexible working hours, stretching the working day and staff defining their work lifestyle.

Mobility addresses many HR issues as well as IT issues. Businesses have to define new KPIs for staff and reinforce them. The job needs to be done. It doesn't matter where it is done.

Are customers happy?

They are. A key benefit of managed services is the customer doesn't have to worry about IT skills sets. We worry about that for them. That is also a cost benefit.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

The most important thing I've learned is that public cloud computing forms part of the purchasing options for a customer. It is a purchasing option, nothing else. It is an evolution not a revolution no matter what the hype says.

What are you planning to do next?

We have a natural evolution framework built into our business. And we have a number of initiatives that use our affiliations to attack new sectors of the market. We are extending our knowledge and capabilities with new products and tools.

"Cloud computing" is an evolution for us, because that's what we have always done. Sometimes you get caught up in the hype, but once you have made sense of it you can manage it.

When I look at why we can run a "cloud" environment, it all goes back to a little tool we used in the 90s that sits on Linux. We learned how to keep that running at all times.

Because we already have the work practices in place, to run, keep up and sustain a network, we can apply all that learning and experience to the "cloud". Understanding how to run an environment operationally is important.

Non-profit recruitment - NFPRecruitment

Not For Profit Recruitment is the specialist consultant for the NGO or nonprofit sector. Our values based recruitment process ensures the focus is on matching your nonprofit organisation's values with those of the candidate, all whilst reducing the cost of your recruitment campaigns to a manageable level.

NFPR case study

Not For Profit Recruitment is a recruitment and career specialist focused on traditional recruitment and online job services. The company was started in 2010 and services Australia, with its head office in Brisbane.

How would you describe the business you are in?

Everything we do, we believe is about challenging the status quo and the way non-profits recruit talent. This is most evident with both our non-profit-careers job board and recruitment businesses.

They were developed out of our general recruitment business, when it became evident that the needs of the non-profit sector were not being properly serviced. We spent about eighteen months reviewing the sector in some depth.

Turnover in the sector can be high. Some organisations have an annual staff turnover of more than 40%, yet don't necessarily see this as a problem. They don't recognise the financial costs and associated costs in time, training and familiarisation involved every time somebody leaves and somebody new is employed.

We found that many organisations in the sector were finding it difficult to manage their recruitment, especially the smaller organisations (0-50) and also the large (175+). The mid sized non-profits tended to manage recruitment internally with little outside assistance

The cost structure for general recruitment was another issue for the sector. The standard fee range in the recruitment industry for general business recruitment is between 15-24% of annual salary, which is viewed as expensive by the non-profit sector.

Most recruitment agencies don't understand or specialise in the non-profit sector. So we saw there was a need to create a service that could address the concerns of the sector across all these issues.

Who are your clients?

Primarily professional associations and community services organisations, and we are starting to work with charities and foundations as well. Essentially, we are looking to work with organisations that believe what we believe.

How will customers benefit from your service?

It's all about values. We use the GAINS profile analysis methodology created by Doctor Ivan Meisner to define the needs of the organisation and the staff they require. This looks at Goals, Accomplishments, Interests, Networks and Skills.

We use this in three ways, first when speaking to the organisation about themselves, next when creating the position statement and finally when short-listing or interviewing candidates.

We want to know why they are advertising the position, what is the importance of the role and so on. When we interview the prospects we can match the individual Goals, Accomplishments, Interests,

Networks and Skills against the larger profile. In many cases this approach reveals good applicants that wouldn't necessarily have come up using other means.

Using this approach also reduces turnover and reduces the cost to hire, as we are recruiting on values, not just skills alone. We have a flat fee for our service that can reduce the cost to hire by 40-50%. So we offer proactive recruiting, reducing time, cost and staff turnover.

Who are your competitors?
There are only a handful of other recruitment businesses that we know of that focus on the non-profit sector. And there is nobody else with a national non-profit focused job board like www.nonprofitcareers.com.au

What changes are taking place in your category?
It has been great going to conferences and listening to non-profit CEOs talking about managing their organisations like a business, maximising profitability and efficiency in order to provide a higher ROI on their mission.

They are taking ownership of what they do, and getting rid of the charity mindset. Interest in organisational improvement is growing and non-profits are recognising that they operate in a highly competitive environment and have to be far more savvy in how they communicate and operate.

Today they are more attuned to the concept of outsourcing than they used to be. When we explain the value that we can offer in staff recruitment and why recruitment is not a core activity of the HR department, we find more and more CEOs understand the importance of outsourcing that role. That is our specialty, we love it and we do it every day.

There is a move away from using a standard set of selection criteria to find new staff. You can be just as successful asking the right interest questions.

There has been a major move from newspaper advertising to internet job boards over the last ten years. Seek is the main player in the game, but industry feedback tells us that it doesn't address the recruitment needs of the non-profit sector usefully.

At the moment there is no sector-wide internet job board tailored to the needs of the sector. That's why we have spent the last year developing one.

Government is tightening funding across the sector and this is making non-profits think outside the box in trying to do more with less. We can help with analysis of what the staff in organisations deliver for the salaries they receive.

How have you been successful?
We have put the hard yards in and continue to do so. We understand the sector and are constantly acquiring more knowledge in order to offer the best possible assistance. We work exclusively in the non-profit sector, this is all we do – we get it! We price to the sector budgets and we take the hurdles away.

Do you have a Web site?
Yes. It's www.nfpr.com.au. The job board is at www.nonprofitcareers.com.au

What prompted you to focus on the non-profit sector?

It is all about mission and helping people. We have experience and expertise in recruitment focused on the non-profit sector, which is fulfilling a long-term need.

The sector has staff turnover rates of up to 44%, which is ridiculous and wasteful, yet many organisations are happy with that. How much is that impacting the bottom line and the mission of the non-profit?

Those are administration costs that you can do without. By reducing recruitment costs and staff turnover, more money can be channeled to service delivery.

We have become specialists in the sector. We get calls every day from people wanting to work in the sector, but because they don't have non-profit experience they don't get looked at. This is really short sighted and is something we are working hard to address.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

Yes. We sat down and brainstormed a lot of ideas. We had identified many of the issues the sector faces and we began to create solutions that would address them. Our plan is to develop sites within the sector – initially focused on professional associations, charities, community services and independent schools.

As it stands our focus is on the Australian and New Zealand markets prior to expansion into other overseas locations.

What are your products and services?

We provide a specialist coaching and service to the sector, but our face to the world is our two web sites.

One is focused on recruitment and consulting. That side of the business manages reactive recruitment with full service recruitment and short-listing of candidates. We also work with organisations on proactive talent spotting and acquisition. We sit down and discuss the organisational strategic plan, what are the hard to fill roles, what is the time to hire and the costs involved. We then work with them to manage the process.

The job board evolved out of organisation frustration with what existed already in the marketplace. We constantly heard complaints about online recruitment job boards and decided that we should do something about it. We listened carefully to what the CEOs wanted, did a lot of research and developed a job board more attuned to the sector needs.

We work with organisations to frame the position statements that will be advertised to find new employees. We then place the advertisements in selected media supported by social media campaigns using Twitter, Facebook and Linkedin.

We are in the process of developing a brief video interview overview of an organisation's activities. This will help candidates understand how they can leverage their skills in the service.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

We started development six years ago. We are now ready to launch the job board the first week in November 2011. It will be priced to allow non-profits to use the site.

Where did you go for advice?

It has been a combination of experience, learning and making mistakes. We spent a lot of time speaking with CEOs in the non-profit sector about their issues and problems. We also spoke with a range of people that specialise in the sector. We wanted to get the best perspective we could.

How did you know who to trust?

I always give people the benefit of the doubt. You have to trust people or you are not going to grow. I look at what the biggest challenge is for whoever I meet and look at how I can help them with it.

With customers, we need to understand the major issues and problems. That comes from us asking the right questions. For example, the 44% staff turnover figure means different things to different people. You have to ask.

We also need to educate the market on what is available to help them manage reduced funding and increased demand. They don't know what they don't know. We are here to assist them in getting a better result.

How much does the solution cost?

For the www.nonprofitcareers.com.au it is a standard cost of $88 per advertisement. That gives them as many words as they like for a period of 30 days.

In the recruitment business we have a flat fee structure not a percentage of salary. For short-listing we charge $2,475 inc GST and for full service recruitment we charge $6,978 inc GST.

Interestingly it doesn't take any more time or effort to recruit a CEO or a receptionist.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

There has been a lot of learning. Initially we weren't focused enough on which part of the sector we could help. We now know that we can help organisations with 0-50 staff and organisations with more than 175 staff. They understand what we can offer and most importantly they believe what we believe.

What are the main risks you took?

Getting our web sites right has taken a considerable investment in time and money. Our main challenge is keeping on top of the technology.

What advice would you give others?

Speak to a professional recruitment provider, not necessarily us, but somebody who specialises in the sector. Understand why the position is vacant. Do you really need to fill it?

What is the cost of recruitment? 9 out of 10 times, outsourcing will give a better result. Recruitment is a different skills set to HR. It is more akin to sales and marketing.

We run regular monthly lunch and learn sessions for the sector. For us education is important. We get a lot of clients that come to us after two or three previous attempts to find staff.

What are the business benefits?

Many non-profits that are sick of high staff turnover have no idea of the cost of recruitment. We can demonstrate that recruitment is an investment rather than an expense. We can save them time, money and reduce staff turnover.

We have reduced the time to hire for many large non-profits, and reduced their cost to hire.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
Most of our customers are happy. We've only had to replace one role in all our time and that was due to the floods.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?
I've learned the importance of working with the market. We have to explain the value of what we do. The sector is still young in its attitudes and especially in its approach to outsourcing.

I have really understood why the jobs board is so important to the sector. The market is fed up with not having a non-profit job board. We developed it and have trialled it with feedback from the sector. Now we are ready to launch.

What are you planning to do next?
Launch the job board. Then expand into New Zealand and Canada.

Value mapping – Endpoint Corporation

Endpoint Corporation is a consultancy that focuses on identifying the route an entity should take to reach a goal – the endpoint. Endpoint looks at what the goal of the entity is, whether the journey can be affected by anything and whether the entity can generate value in reaching the endpoint, hence the name.

Endpoint has created a methodology that can be applied in consultation during a project, can be outsourced and licensed to partners or other consultants, or productised for general use as an online service.

Endpoint case study

We don't have a head office. Our organisation is based on people. We have no office, business cards, website or employees. We have contracts and revenue. There are two directors of the company and up to fifteen or twenty contractors at one time. We partner with organisations that have hundreds of employees.

Who are your clients and customers?

Clients are typically from government, corporates and large organisations, which are wrestling with the new informed interrelationships of all kinds, created as a result of the digital revolution.

Endpoint has completed projects for the "whole of government reform committee" in the SA government, Human Services and Centrelink, and the RTA as well as the mining industry, telecommunication companies, banks and other sectors. A number of projects have led to the creation of "Software as a Service" (SaaS) solutions.

Endpoint has built a system to automate welfare concessions for the SA government. Partnering with AC3 the NSW government hosting organisation, Endpoint has built the first "cloud" SaaS for government in Australia.

In mining, Endpoint Corporation is working with partners Hudson Gates to develop a SaaS "contractors passport", that will prove the contractor is fully credentialed to do the job required, and has been approved by all of the relevant authorities and regulatory bodies.

How do they benefit from your service?

We can take an organisation where they want to go, further and faster than they can. The demand for our services has mainly been around customer service delivery, where government has to deliver better services for less money.

What changes are taking place in your category?

What the banks did twenty years ago was recognise that they needed a single customer point of view for themselves. They then understood that if they gave that view to the customers, they could then transfer cost to the customer, transfer value and unlock value. They could also market to customers through the channel they had created.

The airlines followed suit twenty years later. Passengers now process their own tickets. When I first suggested to Qantas they should do this, they looked at me as though I was mad. They explained all the reasons why it couldn't be done, including the requirement for a five-day training course to issue a ticket. Then Virgin did it and Qantas followed them.

Customers want to see and know what their options are directly, not see what the vendor tells them they are. So what is good for the customer (increased power and knowledge) is also good for the vendor (reduced cost and new channel to market).

In government, treasury has told departments they don't have any money for high capital expenditure projects. Typically, the minister wants the department to deliver more and better services for less, so we have to move to DIY. Luckily for them, there is an ongoing rise in customer recognition and expectation that they can do things online.

We are at a tipping point in large organisations, where decision makers recognise they can capitalise on this demand. They also recognise they will be irrelevant unless they move.

It hasn't mattered within government so far. But the implications are now beginning to register, "Do we need a Centrelink and a Medicare, or do we merge them both together?"
That means streamlining of government, and the driver for that is cost cutting.

Because of the GFC, floods and cyclones, everyone is looking to rationalise and aggregate supply. It is creating challenges all round. In a fragmented market you can have five or ten suppliers. Once things become organised through demand aggregation, you only need one.

So suppliers are struggling with how they are going to manage an increasingly sophisticated market. Utilities are saying, "How to we organise our resources better in order to make better offers?"

Suppliers are beginning to recognise that once it learns to organise, demand side will have an equal capacity to negotiate power in future markets. So the non-profit sector (already organised) will have an increasing need for wholesale services not retail.

What you will end up with is demand aggregation brokers and supply aggregation brokers. It is already happening in telecommunications and publishing. The brokers then look for places to exchange – marketplaces.

The basic principles are the same. Nothing has changed since the middle-ages. We have buyers and sellers, exchanging goods for money in marketplaces. The difference is going to be scale and speed with the tipping point being aggregation occurring in real time like a stock exchange.

How have you been successful?
Rather than tell people what we do, we demonstrate what we do. We explain what strategic problems we can fix, and what operational pain we can reduce and turn into value. People respond when they see we can do something about their problems and they are then open to further options base on that experience.

It is a very practical methodology. We work through problems in the context of the new interconnected world, in which they find themselves. We explain what it means to interact in a new set of relationships they never had before.

That's very different from us saying, "Buy our product and it will be business as usual for you." It is not like that any more.

What prompted you to start your company?

My partner has taken five internet businesses from start up to sale. So when Kim offered to productise and automate my IP, I thought it was the best way to maximise the results of thirty years work.

How did you know who to trust?

I work out whether I can trust people based on what they do, who they report to, whether they can make decisions and whether they have sufficient operating capital to fund a project. If I know that, then I can trust them to act in a certain way.

Occasionally, I come across people who are trustworthy but that is rare. That's a different thing. These people are leaders because they know how to operate in an interconnected world. They understand that trust is the currency for collaboration. I make decisions on trust based on either of those two criteria.

Are you happy with the work and help given?

Yes. Everything we do is founded on defined outcomes, because of the roadmap we use to scope any project and its predicted outcomes. So we can predict results and reduce the risk factors in adoption.

How much does your service cost?

We put a 30% mark-up on everything that we acquire from a third party, such as licences and contracting, plus we have our own IP that can be licensed.. That is transparent to all parties involved. We generate value from each project and we often generate IP that nobody even considered.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

I have misjudged some people in terms of how I thought they might behave, particularly in government. That has proved expensive in time and money.

What were the main risks you took?

Everything really. With a start-up you risk everything. The bigger the organisation is that we work with, the bigger the risk. Big organisations take a long time to make every decision.

There is no real respect for entrepreneurship in Australia, not in the same way as there is in Silicon Valley or even China.

What advice would you give someone else?

You have to understand what your endgame is, where the world is heading. Those who own the most consent from building trusted relationships will benefit the most.

Trust is what sits on top of all transactions. So whether you are operating from the demand or supply side, you have an ongoing relationship with trust. Unless you manage that relationship, you won't have anything. Consent is the key to aggregation.

What are the main barriers you face?

They are mostly institutional. Institutions provide a lot of power to people to block innovation.

For instance, I did some work for Charlie Bell of McDonalds some years ago. It was around the potential for McDonalds to become the first global family bank, building on their trust and loyalty structure. He thought it was a great idea. But the board wasn't ready to take large steps and were only prepared to defend the current structure – the franchise model.

In government, people are judged by process not outcome, so innovation happens despite not because of government. Endpoint Corporation often sells itself as a risk mitigator, rather than a value adder. We wear the clothes that they respect.

How do you overcome concern?

By stealth. We only give a value proposition to individuals focused on their interests. Then we work with the people closest to them, where the proposition means something.

The big picture view is given to the selected champion within an organisation who can drive the project forwards. If you can break down the vision into small parts, the project can move along.

So we say, "This will save you 30 cents on each transaction." "This will save you 5 minutes each time, meaning you can manage five people an hour rather than four." And so on.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

We help organisations do better for less…that's less money, less effort, less time. We deliver more value, using their criteria not ours.

Most people don't know what value is. They see the projects as relieving them of pain or a problem. So a typical project starts with pain relief, then moves to efficiency, and then moves to recognising value and adding value.

Most value has little to do with money. It's about power, ease, time or satisfaction, or all of them. The more sophisticated organisations are looking for more knowledge or intellectual property.

Are customers happy with what you have done?

With some exceptions, no they're not. We are disruptive. Most people in large organisations operate in a condition of constant stress, confusion and unease. If they aren't experiencing that, we wouldn't be asked to come in and do our job.

We offer a way to make sense of it all. People, especially baby-boomers have to understand that with the way the world is changing, it will be disruptive for the rest of their lives. The next generation thrives in that environment. We offer them the ability to accelerate.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

We are about to see the next genuine evolution of the internet from what was predicted in the 1990s. We will see a new state where you can transact with anyone, anywhere you like or with any group you like.

So you can identify yourself, but not be identified, as opposed to having somebody else tell you that you are who you say you are.

This will lead to "swarming", people collaborating to get the best price. In China it is already happening. We are about to see demand aggregators become a reality for consumables, utilities and services in a global sense.

You will no longer buy a car as an individual. You will buy like Avis and purchase it at 45% of the retail price. It isn't a technological change. It's an attitudinal and capability change. The new demand aggregators will act more like the stock exchange, where you know that all the rules will be enforced.

We will launch a fully orchestrated suite of our products for adoption worldwide, alongside a community of practitioners.

We will launch a cloud-based suite of technologies, which will allow communities of common interest to create standards for non-repudiation. That means nobody can challenge the process or transaction itself, only any abuse of the process or transaction.

For example, when faxes first came out the signatures on faxes were challenged. Then everybody including the legislators agreed they were ok. All these things have to be bedded down in a legal structure, and they will.

Once that is agreed, organisations representing the church groups, for example, would be able to aggregate the household demand for consumables and utilities for 80% of the country.

As a consequence, the church groups would gain political, economic and social power like never before. Any community of common interest can do this.

Not only would they be able to get cheaper cars, but they could demand greener cars as well, that lasted a long time.

Some car companies are preparing for this.

Stage one. They recognise that aggregation groups for customers will appear. Showrooms will move to shopping centres and car services will move near the bus and train stations.

The showrooms will sell brands, not cars. Customers will select the model they want, but the car will be bought through the aggregation group.

Stage two. You will be able to influence manufacturers on other issues such as sustainability, if that is what the group agrees it cares about.

Stage three. You will be able to ask for long life, rather than the built-in 7 years. If the manufacturer doesn't respond, the group will be able to go directly to the assembly plants.

You have to have a reason other than money to hold the aggregator together. It will be like guilds in the middle ages, professional guilds, social guilds, religious guilds and so on. So you can see the implications for this next stage are confronting.

We are also establishing a non-profit organisation, the Common Good Foundation, as an app-store for social enterprise.

Budgeting and cashflow reporting - Calxa

Calxa is a software product that simplifies budget and cashflow forecasting for not-for-profits and small businesses. Calxa provides software that allows you to quickly and easily view, understand and present financial information.

Calxa makes it easier to manage finances with simple tools for creating animated, professional and intuitive financial reports, graphs and charts.

Calxa case study

ACT for Kids is a non-profit organisation that provides free services to treat and prevent child abuse. The organisation was started in 1988 and employs 180 staff working from six major centres in Queensland and five safe houses.

How would you describe the business you are in?

We work with children, their families and carers, focused on children who have been subject to abuse or are at risk of abuse. We also run some workshops in schools to teach kids how to keep themselves safe from abuse.

Who are your clients and customers?

Our clients are children, young people, families and carers. ACT for Kids provides expert counseling and support to thousands of abused children and their families and carers every year.

What changes are taking place in your category?

The biggest change for us has been a greater shift to early intervention. Originally our work was about building awareness of the issues of child abuse, which tended to be swept under the carpet. The trust was set up by health and community workers who were witnessing the problem firsthand and decided to do something about it.

Our early intervention programs are proving to be very successful.

In the area of technology in our organisation, smart phones and iPads have made life a lot easier for our teams.. Our client database is now web based and staff can access it over a secure web interface from any location at any time.

iPads are also proving to be useful and popular therapy tools for working with children. Kids immediately open up and respond positively to the simple and intuitive, touch screen interface and this makes iPads powerful support tools for therapy.

How have you been successful?

Over the years, we have developed many programs that work effectively. We have a nationwide reputation for the work we do, and increasingly deliver good outcomes for both children and their families.

What prompted you to look at the Calxa solution?

We were frustrated with MYOB reporting capabilities. We have upwards of thirty different budgets at any one time. Because of the nature of the grants we receive from government, they all need reporting on separately. Government has significantly simplified reporting over the last two years, but we still have to manage each budget separately.

Being able to report by program is important to us, and to our ability to manage each program effectively. MYOB can't do that. It can't capture budget information by program. You can capture a budget for the life of a job, but we need to report month by month.

With Calxa, we can prepare a budget for each individual program, one for each head office department and one for fundraising. The fundraising department can budget for each campaign with a separate job code. It gives us immense flexibility and up to date knowledge of our budget status that we didn't have before.

Calxa is a powerful reporting tool, but you can use it to create budgets as well.

Our managers create their initial budgets in Excel and then import them into Calxa. I like them to start from scratch with each budget, so they get a good overview of their activities and associated costs. We have an Excel template for initial budget development and the budgets are then imported into Calxa.

I used to use a program called Money Manager, but it didn't have the functionality that I needed. We were offered a trial of Calxa and I saw that it was a much better program. It was designed with non-profits in mind.

The reports it generates look good and are easy to comprehend and interpret. That is far more important than it sounds. A clear, easy to read and understand layout can make a huge difference in the adoption and day-to-day use of a product. I can create charts and graphs that are simple for anybody to understand.

Reports can be distributed to stakeholders in all commonly used formats quickly and easily. With other products, I had to scan reports for distribution.

How did you decide which program to use?
I had a trial version of Calxa to play with. Once I had used it for a while, compared it to other programs and saw how good it was, I just kept on using it. We then formally made the decision to use Calxa.

The reporting restrictions of MYOB were a major problem for us. Calxa is far more useful and sophisticated. There is a whole suite of reporting modules in Calxa that can be used.

I can report for a region, by program, by program type, by manager, by month or whatever I want. There is no way I could do this in Excel. I would need three more staff to manage it.

The other key thing is that when you create a budget from thirty different budgets, you have to consolidate them into an overall budget.

If you are building a budget like this using Excel, so much can go wrong and it's easy to make an error with a formula. So you never have the confidence that something hasn't been overwritten accidentally.

With Calxa, consolidation is straightforward and you can see that nothing has been left out or misplaced. Creating a consolidated budget used to take forever. Now it is much quicker. The time saving is considerable.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

It was easy to get up and running with the program. Calxa is very intuitive. If you know how to use MYOB or Quickbooks and Excel then you will be able to use the program without any problems.

At the start, Calxa ran webinars showing how to do the change over. You could import data from Money Manager, MYOB or Quickbooks.

Where did you go for advice?

Based on my experience I knew Calxa was a far better program, so I didn't need any advice. In my previous working life I was an MYOB certified consultant, so I had heard of the program through my networks and past experience.

Calxa support their program with webinars, by phone and email. They are very helpful with advice and training where required.

How much does it cost?

Cost for five users is $1,495 for the first year and $995 for every year afterwards. Or monthly payments can be organised on request.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None that I can think of.

What were the main risks?

There were no risks from my point of view.

What advice would you give to somebody else?

Using a product like this increases productivity enormously. It allows our managers to look after their own budgets. If we didn't allow managers to be directly involved in the creation of budgets and management of spending, we would not be as effective an organisation as we are.

You can't expect managers to take full responsibility without giving them the proper tools to manage the job.

I couldn't manage the budgets from this office without Calxa. Without the product, I would have to double my immediate staff. Any questions that arise, I can answer them quickly and easily. If I am doing a report and I notice a variation in salaries, I can quickly create a report to look at this issue to understand why. You can't do this in MYOB.

I can even check the accuracy of the allocation of data in MYOB by doing a budget review with Calxa. That gives me immense confidence and assurance.

What were the barriers you faced?

There were no barriers in our organisation to adopting the product at all. The finance team love it. My longer term objective is to get all our managers to use it themselves to track and manage their budgets.

What are the business benefits?

The main benefits are effective financial management, reporting capability, speedier and more accurate budget preparation, increased productivity and increased reliability.

The financial department is far more responsive in its ability to respond to the board, management and government.

Are any of these business benefits quantifiable?
Time taken to prepare a budget has dropped by 75%.

Are staff happy with what you have done?
Yes.

What is the most important thing you have learned in the last year?
I learned that if I could allow the people responsible for managing budgets the ability to create their own budgets, and then produce their own reports it would diminish their reliance on me.

This would be very useful because most of our work at the moment is in Queensland, but our goal is to move into other states. Our plan is to move into one new state each year. So we are in the process of getting our systems ready for this move and making sure they are scalable.

That's why we are moving towards sharing our operational resources through Microsoft Online Services, with messaging, email, Sharepoint and videoconferencing.

That makes us more effective as an organisation. The same thing applies to sharing budget management effectively through wider use of Calxa. This is something we can apply as we move interstate.

What are you planning to do next?
We are planning to expand into other locations and build our IT support platform to support all our new activities.

Budgeting and cashflow reporting - Calxa

Calxa is a software product that simplifies budget and cashflow forecasting for not-for-profits and small businesses. Calxa provides software that allows you to quickly and easily view, understand and present financial information.

Calxa makes it easier to manage finances with simple tools for creating animated, professional and intuitive financial reports, graphs and charts.

Calxa case study

Health Workforce Queensland is a non-profit organisation with its head office in Brisbane, that helps support and retain rural and remote General Practitioners working in Queensland. The organisation was started in 1991 by the Department of health and Ageing, and employs 31 staff.

How would you describe the business you are in?

We run numerous programs of assistance for GPs working in the bush. Programs provide financial incentives, training and upskilling to encourage GPs to work in rural and remote areas.

Who are your clients and customers?

Rural GPs and their families. We are expanding into allied health service workers as well, because GPs operate as part of a team and all remote health workers need support. Programs are primarily financial, training and support.

What changes are taking place in your category?

In the current financial environment, everybody expects more for less. Customers also expect everything more quickly today than they used to.

Our GPs need more help too, with training and IT skills. They are time poor and a lot of rural and remote GPs still use manual systems.

There have been many developments in online and hands-on training for doctors, including simulation and videoconferencing. SimMan is a portable and advanced patient simulator for team training, which has proved to be very useful, allowing doctors to practice emergency treatment of patients.

Government is increasingly focused on improving health treatment in rural and remote Australia and with the increased focus, has come the requirement for more reporting.

How have you been successful?

We have very high level of rapport with the rural GPs. We are trusted. They know we are there to help them and they view us an important support channel. They can ask us any question about legislation and we take the burden of knowledge in this ever-changing area off them. We keep them informed about all changes in health and regulation.

What prompted you to look at the Calxa solution?

The increased demand for reporting is where it all began. We use MYOB, but we were frustrated with its limited reporting capabilities.

We started by looking at our organisation to see what we actually required with reporting. Because we are commonwealth funded, we looked at the sources of government funding and we looked at our operations.

We concluded that it would be best to set up two internal services – corporate services and grant services.

Funding comes from three main sources across fifteen different grants. Reporting levels under these grants are numerous. We have to be able to provide hundreds of different views of the data that we gather.

Reports could be doctor focused or outcomes focused with selected KPIs against regions, individual GPs, programs and locations. We had to be able to deliver answers to any question we were asked.

How did you decide which program to use?

I provided a paper to the board on our analysis of the organisation and its needs, and one of the main issues was our capacity to report against our funding.

I then went looking for a solution that would give me the reporting capability I knew we needed. I knew about Money Manager and I looked for other solutions on the internet.

We got an evaluation version of Calxa. I discussed our requirements with Calxa over the phone and I could see that it might prove to be the best solution.

I then tested Calxa in accordance with our plan to see that it fulfilled all our reporting requirements. Over a few days, I was able to see that we could create all the reports necessary and I organised a meeting on progress with the board.

I did a presentation demonstrating the capacity of Calxa to create reports and its flexibility. This was important. Everyone in the organisation manages a part of the overall budget. We try to customise each individual budget to suit the way the managers have to report.

Where did you go for advice?

I didn't need to. Calxa was obviously the solution we needed.

How did you know who to trust?

Calxa has been very good in responding to questions and suggestions. They are continually improving their program. They listen to their market and they add new functionality and time saving macros all the time. The program is very intuitive and user friendly.

How much does it cost?

Cost for five users is $1,495 for the first year and $995 for every year afterwards. Or monthly payments can be organised on request.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None. We tested the program thoroughly before committing to it.

What were the main risks?

Probably the main risk was not overcomplicating what we had to do. We needed to do something about our situation. The reporting burden was too much.

Using the program reduced any risks. You can pick it up and use it very quickly. A lot of it depends on the structure that you have set up in MYOB. If you have got that right, then Calxa gives you a highly enhanced reporting capability.

What advice would you give to somebody else?

I'd say definitely give it a go. You have the data there already in your financial software package, whether you use MYOB or Quickbooks. So see what you can do. You can export you reports in Excel or PDF. Errors are instantly reduced.

What were the barriers you faced?

Demonstration was how I overcame any internal concerns. There were no barriers.

What are the business benefits?

The program puts you in control of your data. It cuts down errors. It saves time. It really simplifies the reporting process. It allows you to automate and manipulate data with accuracy. Cashflow forecasts can be prepared in a few minutes.

It is a bridge between MYOB and Excel. It puts me in control of my data. I can consider and identify potential problems before they occur. It provides the managers and the board with the knowledge to run the organisation with eyes wide open. It is a very powerful business intelligence tool.

Are any of these business benefits quantifiable?

At the end of each month I can save more than two days in reporting.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

Managers are more hands on. The program is in a central location on a server, but it is dynamic. It allows managers to look at the real budgets as they change from day to day. It provides an ongoing reference tool so managers can compare their budgets with the overall board approved plan.

We run Calxa on a secure remote server, so all managers with access rights can connect to the program and run reports. So before each monthly finance meeting, they can connect and see the status of each program. They can see what has been spent, what is still to spend and what can be shifted forwards.

It means I don't have to email out PDFs of reports. They do it themselves in our centralised environment and it increases their sense of responsibility and control.

What is the most important thing you have learned in the last year?

Bringing the managers into using Calxa was a most significant event. It allows us all to work together as a team.

All managers have responsibility for a part of the operation. Now they can see how it all interrelates and where their program fits into the big picture. We have recruitment, locums and training, and by working together more effectively and transparently, the whole organisation is more effective.

What are you planning to do next?

With improved budgeting, we are taking it to the next level. Where we are heading is becoming more contestable with government funding. We are becoming more "lean and mean."

Government wants more for less. That is the current mantra. So managing budgets more effectively demonstrates the capabilities of a program like Calxa.

Risk management software - ionmycare

I.ON MY is a software solution for governance, risk management, compliance, accreditation and human resources.

The solution is designed for enterprise or individual organisation governance, risk management and compliance needs, with the following standards in mind: ISO 13000 (risk management), ISO 18000 (OHS management) and ISO 9000 (quality management).

ionmycare case study

Alphington Aged Care is a modern, purpose built, aged care facility offering low care hostel services between independent living and a nursing home.

The facility has 45 beds, employs 12 full time staff supported by volunteers, and is located in a suburb of Melbourne, Victoria.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Government regulations for the sector are weighty and significant. There are regular accreditation visits and these can take place at any time. This means the demand for accurate and timely reporting of all kinds has increased considerably.

How have you been successful?

Alphington is a boutique facility that is not clinical and not a hotel. It feels like home and this makes it attractive to potential residents and their families. We also have very good staff.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes. We have a website at www.alphingtonagedcare.com.au, which has information about the facility and services provided.

What is your most recent IT project or development?

It is the implementation of the "i.onmy care" software. It covers accreditation, compliance, risk management, event reporting and employee issues.

We have a need to manage continuous improvement in the way we run our facility. This is essentially the process whereby you have an idea for improvement and take the idea to fruition and follow up on it.

Government is enthusiastic about continuous improvement and it is something that has to be managed properly. Ideas are fed from regular meetings that cover issues such as OH&S, medication, resident lifestyle and HR.

Any ideas or issues that arise from these meetings are addressed and have to be followed up on. So you need a system to document, track and follow up events and issues of many kinds. This can become very complex.

On top of these meetings, we run an internal audit every month and government does an external audit at least once a year to determine your capacity to deliver services.

Meetings to evaluate and discuss issues plus the ongoing audits, feed into the continuous improvement process. At any one time you might have a hundred separate issues being managed.

This is difficult. You can create a spreadsheet, but ideally you need a system that prompts you and demands action. So we went looking for software that would do this.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

Not as such. I knew what was needed and made a bullet point list of my expectations. Then I started by talking to others in the industry. I also searched on the internet for appropriate software.

There are plenty of vendors willing to sell you clinical software for careplans and medication, but not a lot that covers all the issues that we have to address. So I kept finding software that focused mainly on clinical issues with a bit of continuous improvement added on.

The other major driver was incident management. Every time there is an incident of any kind – a fall, skin abrasion, absconding or infection - it has to be reported.

We found that compiling that data for our monthly audit meetings was laborious. We wanted a system that was efficient and simple to use. Any incident should feed into continuous improvement as well.

How did you decide which technology to use?

I ended up speaking to three or four different vendors and interviewing one face to face. It came down to two vendors…one with a mature product in the industry and the one we selected.

The thing that was attractive about "i.on my care" was its ability to track communication between myself and people delegated to take action. The software was more up to date, innovative and responsive to my needs. The one we rejected was designed for our industry but was too rigid. The "i.on my care" software was more flexible and more comprehensive – even covering HR.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

It was probably functional in two months and then really useful in six. First the software was configured for our facility. There was a set up and familiarisation stage. Then there was online training with online audio modules.

One weakness was no manual…though that is common in the software industry these days. Ideally there could have been a more comprehensive training package.

However Sonja was very responsive to any product improvements, suggestions and feedback I gave. Now the system is working fine.

The company made us an offer with a satisfaction guarantee, so we had nothing to lose. I felt that Sonja would deliver on her promises and she did.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes. We were happy. They worked hard for us.

How much did it cost you?

The product was costed on the size of our facility and the number of beds, so it was $2,250 dollars for the year.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None. The process was methodical and steady and we stayed on top of things all the way through.

What were the main risks you took?

The main risk was that the product is innovative and new to our industry. The risk was whether Sonja could keep the promise she made in terms of product capability and performance. But she did.

What advice would you give someone else?

We're happy with the product. It is a web-based system, with web support and training.

Its strength is accountability…keeping us in touch with our commitment and actions. You have to close an item or it comes back and prompts.

If you are looking to add structure and discipline to your processes than this is a very good product.

It will need a person within the organisation to drive, champion and sell it internally. Technical support is good with prompt response to any issue. And users might be surprised by other benefits of the package especially in HR. The people management system is something I am very happy with. And I must admit I wasn't really aware of this capability when I first decided on the system.

The HR module has helped me raise our profile in the eyes of the staff by being able to track birthdays, anniversaries and profiles in a systematic way.

What were the barriers to the project?

One member of staff needs help and encouragement with the system. But any change needs managing. We are planning to take the system to another level of management, introducing three new managers with responsibility for different areas. This will help with adoption and commitment to the system.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

The main benefit is accountability. It demonstrates our capability as an organisation. It is evidence that we are adhering to and achieving the standards that we have to work to.

The HR function allows us to manage staff development and reward. And the system helps with productivity, ensuring staff complete tasks. It is very specific about what has to be done.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

On the whole yes. But I think this will improve once we include the three managers in being responsible for using the system.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

I've really understood the power of the follow up process to ensure tasks are completed and evaluated. The system has built in reminders and alerts to prompt action and follow up.

Given what you know... would you do it again?

Yes.

What are you planning to do next?

I am going to delegate tasks to the three new middle managers.

The external government auditor was very impressed with the reports generated by the system. We were able to show a list of Open actions and Closed actions. It was undeniable proof that we were on top of all the issues in this area.

Staff management solution – Time Target

Time Target is a software company, which produces software for staff management. The company was started in 2002 and employs thirty people working from offices across Australia.

Time Target case study

Time Target is a software company, which produces software for staff management. The company was started in 2002 and employs thirty people working from offices across Australia.

How would you describe the business you are in?

We provide a staff management tool that automates and connects all the staff management areas – rostering, awards, staff times and attendance, and payroll integration. The software helps eliminate the manual processing of all staff management issues, lowering labour costs as a result.

Who are your clients and customers?

Our customers are in two general categories, either first time users or organisations replacing existing systems.

Time Target is particularly useful in the community services sector for industries such as Aged care, Health care, Disability services, Child care and industry associations, where there is a requirement to manage staff and volunteers efficiently, often across multiple locations.

The software is also used in other staff intensive industries such as Retail, Hospitality, Pharmaceuticals, Manufacturing and Local Government.

How do they benefit from your services?

We provide one database to manage all staff. This means more efficiency, single data entry, data reliability, increased accuracy and best practice in staff management.

Users are assured that they are always making the right decisions on rostering staff, compliant with legislation and awards.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Organisations these days need to do more with less. Our clients are no longer just looking for a time and attendance system, they need rostering and reports of all kinds to manage their KPIs and for budgeting.

In the non-profit sector legislation drives the demand for all these things. It is a requirement that organisations must be able to measure what they do. The software solutions that are successful are those that recognised this requirement four years ago and have planned for today.

Wages are increasing but revenue isn't, so organisations have to do more with less, and need to be able to control their operational systems better.

Our customers expect a lot more for their dollar. They have been watching hardware and software prices reducing over the years and expect that this will apply to all software solutions available today.

Hardware has become more accessible anywhere in the world. Because we can now access the most advanced technology, we have moved to "finger vein" scanning for more accurate tracking of time and attendance.

The finger vein scanner reads the individual vein pattern and provides a more accurate result than any other scanner on the market. It also allows scanning without contact, which is ideal for the healthcare industry. Time Target is the only company in Australia using this technology at the moment.

There have been huge changes in requirements for organisations to be legislatively compliant. Staff hours and staff numbers are stipulated for services and have to be managed according to the new rules.

Through our rostering tool, we can demonstrate that an organisation is fully compliant. This applies to external auditors and also to managers as they are building rosters for day-to-day work schedules. Managers know they are doing the right thing, and they can prove it.

Awards change regularly. The Modern Award was a big change for organisations and managers could easily lose track of exactly what their employees should be paid. Time Target automates that process, so managers know they are paying employees correctly.

The non-profit sector has grown and continues to grow, and there is increasing demand on the sector. Without the right systems and processes in place, the headaches will grow as well.

How have you been successful?

We adapted to the legislative changes prior to them happening. We planned for the new legislation and regulation. We made sure that we could update the functionality of the Time Target software to adapt to any changes, both today and into the future.

Staff and wages are the main liabilities in any organisation, so investing in the right tools to manage these areas effectively is imperative.

As a company, we are extremely responsive to all customer demands and requirements. So customers are happy with our solutions and our services, and that is demonstrated in the ongoing growth and success of the company.

There are now over 5,000 sites and 100,000 employees using Time Target on a daily basis.

What prompted you to create the Time Target solution?

The product was created to allow organisations to take control of variable costs, because this was starting to become a problem for all managers.

There are three key issues in staff management. Time sheets have to be accurate. Rosters have to able to meet the real needs of an organisation and staff payments have to be accountable and accurately reflect work done.

We saw a need in the marketplace for a solution to manage staff from end to end, from the time they walk into the work environment to how they are paid at the end of the week.

Time and attendance data has always been collected, but what was missing from the solution was rostering, award integration, staff qualifications, staff availability and the means to bring the total solution together. That is what Time Target does.

How much time did it take to get up and running?
The software and training is delivered to the customer requirement - how they want it and how it suits their needs. We have an executable solution available for licence and we have a web solution too.

Larger organisations with multiple awards, large employee numbers and multiple locations often prefer the flexibility of the executable solution. That is a robust, secure, reliable option for larger organisations.

They can buy the licence for the software run on an SQL database, but they might also want the web solution, so employees can do their employee profiles online. The key is flexibility and that is what we can offer.

For smaller organisations with up to 40 or 50 employees, the web-based solution is ideal, and for an organisation with only one or two awards it suits them perfectly. We made the decision to make our product available according to the way organisations are funded as well as according to their operational requirements.

We have a unique rapid deployment model. It is about getting the system up and running as fast as possible. Depending on the size of an organisation, we grab the employee data, awards and rosters, and create the database before coming onsite to implement the software. This is all about taking the stress out of implementation, so clients can get rolling as quickly as possible.

Typically, implementation takes 3-4 weeks for a smaller organisation and 5-6 weeks for a larger organisation.

Each client is unique so it is important to get a good understanding of the particular requirements. Efficient implementation and thorough training are the keys to success.

Training is broken down into modules for different areas of the business – payroll and administration, IT and operations. Users are then tested and certified on their capability and they receive a graduation certificate. Training usually takes a couple of days and the program is configured for each client according to their needs. We then offer follow up training in how to get the most out of the new system.

Do you use outside contractors?
We use a mixture of our staff and contractors depending on where the client is based. All our existing clients are really pleased with the product. The system pays for itself within the first six months of implementation. Our customer retention rate is outstanding.

How much does it cost?
Cost is based on employee numbers. For an organisation of 40 employees, the cost would be around $12,000 for hardware, software, training and installation. Then there is an annual support and maintenance fee of roughly $1,000.

For a smaller organisation, they can use the web-based solution for $1.80 per employee per month. The overall cost depends on what the specific requirement is, but that gives you an idea.

For a very large organisation with more than 250 employees, the all up cost would be around $25,000 for everything, with an annual fee of $2,500 for support.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?
None that I can think of.

What were the main risks?
Investing in a green field market. We believed Time Target would offer a new capability to the industry. That was the risk, but is has paid off.

What advice would you give to somebody else?
It is just as important to invest time, as it is to invest money, in making software solutions successful. The biggest returns come from the businesses that invest in day-to-day business operational solutions.

What were the barriers you faced?
Industry perceptions of what a time and attendance system could do. A lot of organisations had an existing attendance system in place and couldn't see what the larger opportunity might be.

As an example, a large social service organisation Presbyterian South Canterbury in New Zealand with a number of residential aged care facilities was using a paper-based system. The nurse managers used to spend a huge amount of time before payday entering data from time sheets and there were always mistakes.

When they put the Time Target system in place all that disappeared and they noticed many additional benefits they hadn't expected from the system. They even found it was a good communication tool for night staff to leave messages.

Everybody uses the system including the CEO, so it keeps people in touch with the actual time they work. Time Target has really simplified record keeping for them and allowed the service to easily and quickly manage and complete the surveys they have to do for government and funding bodies. They have no complaints and their staff really like using the system.

What are the business benefits?
The main benefit is automation of staff time and attendance, and managing leave accruals and reductions.

Customers also get the benefit of easy roster creation and allocation of staff schedules. Rosters can be adjusted from the web so employees can update and adapt rosters. Available shifts can be sent to employees via email, web or SMS. This helps management become more effective.

Payroll integration. Staff timesheets are sent to payroll for award interpretation. There is no new data entry at payroll, which is a huge time saving. This can save up to a couple of days a week in data entry.

Communication with staff members is enhanced through an Internal Messaging system. When staff clock-on they automatically receive messages through web or internal email. Staff can never again say they didn't get their messages.

The system also manages staff qualifications, so that jobs can be matched to the right skills profile.

Time Target manages date issues, expiries, visas…anything that is time sensitive. The administrator is prompted when anything is due to expire.

The system also prompts in the roster when somebody has hit the maximum hours they can work for their award. Time Target automates the total staff management function.

Are any of these business benefits quantifiable?
We have tracked a 2-4% labour cost reduction in the first year. If you have an annual wage bill of a million dollars, you can expect to reduce it by up to $40,000. That saving is mainly driven by "time creep", where staff stretch their start times and break times. The system stops this.

Are customers happy with what you have done?
They love us.

What is the most important thing you have learned in the last year?
The most important thing for a business is investment in the customer. Organisations have to invest time, resources and systems into getting it right for them. Systems fail when software vendors don't invest in customers.

What are you planning to do next?
We are taking our technology and mobilising it. We are trialing the software across a wide range of mobile devices. Time Target will be completely device and system agnostic.

This has two advantages. It will allow large users to extend their reach across their organisation down the individuals on the move, and it will allow small users to use a time and attendance software tool delivered over a mobile phone or tablet. So it will extend our existing market and create a new market of micro users.

Disaster recovery – Interactive

Established in 1988, Interactive is a leading Australian IT Services company. Our primary focus is 'systems availability' in the hosting, disaster recovery, maintenance and cloud computing arena.

Our team of over 300 staff provides services to more than 1,800 of Australia's most successful businesses and corporations. Interactive has offices nationally and runs 5 state-of-the-art data centres, which provide services across the Asia Pacific Region.

Interactive case study

Interactive is an IT Services company that supplies hardware maintenance, managed services, data centre and hosting, cloud and disaster recovery services to organisations of all kinds. The company was started in 1988 and employs more than 350 people in its offices in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

How would you describe the business you are in?

Playing a large role in the recovery effort following the Queensland floods early in 2011, Interactive had a number of customers that were significantly affected by the disaster. The systems availability provider kept all its customers businesses in operation throughout the crisis, thanks to robust disaster recovery solutions that had been fully tested.

Who are your clients and customers?

We have more than 1,800 customers in all areas of the market, from small businesses to government departments, corporates, banks and utilities.

Disaster recovery is particularly important to the banking and finance sector, but with the recent floods and cyclones in Queensland, the importance of resilience, backup and systems availability has hit home with customers of all sizes and from all business sectors.

How do customers benefit from your services?

We provide highly competitive solutions that can reduce operational costs for any organisation. Our experience and technical capability allows us to provide a high level of service for hardware maintenance, systems availability, infrastructure and networks.

We have very strong relationships with our customers based on a real understanding of their needs. We have a team specifically dedicated to working with customers to address their current issues and identify future needs. This allows us to stay ahead of the market, giving us the flexibility to respond meaningfully to our customer expectations. Over the last twenty-three years, we have developed a lot of expertise in disaster recovery and business continuity.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes. It's www.interactive.com.au.

What changes are taking place in your category?

Our business has shifted towards managed services. This area of our business has grown from 5% to 30% as the demand for storage, hosting and managed services has grown. Managed services and cloud services have been the biggest growth areas in our services business and we expect this to continue in the future as businesses seek to reduce their operational costs.

There has been an evolution driven by increasing storage needs and customers understanding the value of outsourcing selected services to trusted specialist IT service providers such as Interactive.

A lot of our staff members are engineers and technicians with accreditation and thorough knowledge of IBM, Intel, HP, Oracle and Cisco products and systems. We can support all the hardware, middleware and software typically found in larger organisations and government, and also have dedicated engineers with deep knowledge of all the main disaster recovery systems.

Customers are becoming more sophisticated in their understanding. It is no longer just the IT department or CIO making the decisions. The business leaders now understand more and they demand more from technology in supporting their businesses and organisations. There is a lot more understanding of the need for disaster recovery strategy and planning, particularly since the floods. It is a top down push.

What prompted you to move into disaster recovery?

It has been an evolution. Eighteen years ago we were setting up disaster recovery sites for existing customers, and it became apparent that other customers required disaster recovery but could not justify their own dedicated recovery sites, so we started to offer multi-subscriber disaster recovery facilities.

Initially we provided disaster recovery services on IBM midrange servers, and as demand grew we started setting up specialised disaster recovery centres and offered services across broader platforms. This has continued to evolve into us building highly resilient data centres with attached business continuity facilities. We now run five world class data centres in Australia and we are planning to build more.

How do you decide which technology to offer?

We started as an IBM services company. A lot of our disaster recovery offering was based on the IBM platform. Now we are completely vendor agnostic. Customers often decide which products they want to use and we are fine with this. We do have established relationships with various vendors such as NetApp for disaster recovery, but we are vendor agnostic on all solutions these days.

Because we have done this for so many years, we have a lot of background and understanding on which products are best for different services and different client needs. So we can match the best products to any need. We tend to stick with IBM and HP for servers, Cisco for networks and NetApp for storage and so on.

How much does a project cost?

It really depends on what the customer wants. For a small business we can provide disaster recovery services for nominal monthly fee, which provides the customer with access to a workstation for testing and disaster recovery. This enables the business to relocate staff if there is a problem.

For smaller customers, we would replicate their hardware, provide tape-based recovery and make sure their back up system works. We would also provide seats and workstations at our recovery centre for business continuity.

For larger customers we would scale the solution to suit their needs. Usually, we would go into their organisation and help them to plan their needs, which could call for a Storage Area Network (SAN) for backup, storage and replication. We can help them to set up a system, which they can manage and control internally, or we can provide everything as a managed service.

For a high-end customer, we can provide replication between two sites, with both sites mirrored and fully active, and with disaster recovery at both sites. This type of solution would only be justified for a large organisation with multiple transactions and demand for continual access. This is typically the service corporates, banks and government departments use.

For example, we look after two major finance organisations. One of them has a dedicated room that hosts their services so that if there is a disaster they can move into the facility and continue to manage their operation seamlessly.

The range of solutions we offer is broad and based totally on what the customer needs to ensure business continuity.

What were the main risks you took?

No risks. From an operational perspective we spend a lot of time ensuring our data centres are resilient and also that when the time comes to provide a recovery service, we haven't over subscribed customers.

Location selection for our data centres is also extremely important. The Eight Mile Plain data centre, outside of Brisbane, is positioned 50 metres above sea level in an area that was easily accessible following the floods – the building was fully secure and received no flood damage during the crisis. We managed the Queensland floods for a number of companies that were based in the Brisbane CBD or by the river. Whether it is fire, flood or denial of service we can cater for customers.

What advice would you give others?

Disaster recovery needs to be taken seriously. Some customers do test diligently, making it as realistic as possible and working through different scenarios; whilst others put it in place, but don't work through all the issues.

If you are serious about disaster recovery you need to consider all aspects of the process. We had some customers in the floods whose disaster recovery managers were stuck at home and couldn't get on site, and there were others that thought they could work from home but didn't have electricity. It's all about planning; sitting down and working through every possible scenario and the best solution for the customer.

People underestimate things such as how long it takes to get access back into a building after a flood or other event. Insurance company assessments take time, as does building refurbishment. It might take four or six weeks to get back into a property and businesses need to plan for this.

When the floods hit, we had eight customers who called us. We had to start rationing seats, but we managed to get everyone out of trouble. At the peak of the crisis, we had 140 seats occupied and we needed to relocate engineers and technicians from out of state to supplement local staff.

At one stage, we had 220 people operating out of this office. It was an intense time for all. We have great local relationships in the office park, so we were also able to locate people across the business estate to cater for the overflow. The Brisbane floods have certainly encouraged people to think more seriously about disaster recovery.

What are the business benefits of having a DR solution in place?

The main benefit is that you know that you can recover and continue to operate as normal. Being able to manage your business means ensuring no loss of revenue, and the extent to which a business can be disconnected from its data and resources varies from business to business.

During the Queensland floods, Interactive kept many customers in operation including a major financial institution that was able to make critical payments to Centrelink from the recovery facility, which in turn was distributing crucial funds for flood relief victims.

An insurance company was also able to process millions of dollars worth of payments to the Government from the recovery suites – due to the continued processing of payments, it was reported that the Government were completely unaware that the floods had even affected the insurance company. Call centres were also relocated to Interactive, ensuring the general public could still call and speak to someone and be reassured.

These are the business benefits of having a disaster recovery solution in place – being able to continue to operate your business as normal.

What is the most important thing you've learnt in the last year?
What was proven during the Queensland floods was the importance of planning and testing for situations such as this; as well as not to make assumptions. Many businesses assume that basics will be available, however at one point during the crisis, the main interstate highways were blocked and it was hard to even get hardware supplies into Brisbane.

We were able to demonstrate our ability to handle multiple disasters in a crisis situation. Our attention to detail and service focus ensured we were able to provide business continuity to all our affected customers.

Network Security – Bridge Point

Since commencing in 2000, Bridge Point has built a reputation as one of Australia's leading providers of Information Security and Network Integration services.

Bridge Point provides networking solutions, information security and compliance services to organisations of all sizes. Bridge Point has developed strategic partnerships with Check Point, Cisco, Blue Coat, F5, RSA, VMware, EMC and IBM ISS.

In 2008, Bridge Point became a Qualified Security Assessor as part of the PCI DSS program. In 2003, Bridge Point was the first organisation in Queensland and also the first IT company in Australia to achieve certification to ISO27001, the premier Standard for information security management.

Bridge Point case study

Bridge Point has built a reputation as one of Australia's leading providers of information security and network integration services.

The company provides networking solutions covering Internet Protocol (IP) convergence, unified communications, network analysis, optimisation and management, and security.

Information security covers secure gateway solutions, endpoint security, encryption, secure remote access, vulnerability and penetration testing. Bridge Point also offers a full range of compliance services including reviews, audits, policy and procedure reviews, risk assessment, training and security awareness.

Bridge Point employs forty-five people with its head office located in Fortitude Valley in Brisbane.

How would you describe your business?

Our business focuses on networking and IT security for customers of all kinds. Our role is to provide solutions and solve the problems of secure access to networks and applications.

We have been a Cisco partner for over ten years. We have traditionally worked with Cisco providing networking solutions for the IT department within organizations. Cisco has now extended its capability outside of the IT department and is promoting a strategy of "Smart and Connected" communities. This strategy is focused on home automation, building automation and the integration of these services with community services such as health, education and transport.

We are working with Cisco in enabling the IP infrastructure that supports all the smart applications involved in "Smart and Connected" communities.

Who are your clients and customers?

Our customers come from the mid-market (50%) and enterprise (50%), split across corporate (70%) and government (30%).

How do they benefit from your service?

We enable secure network connectivity for business applications of all kinds. Our role is to ensure people have access to the applications on their networks.

We work with a number of building services providers for BMS, CCTV, security, energy management etc. We aggregate a number of their networks onto a common IP network using Cisco.

Customers want us to be ahead of the issues, providing not just solutions around mobility, collaboration and secure access but also thought leadership about where everything is heading.

What changes are taking place in your business category?
Over the last ten years, there has been an increasing complexity of networks and applications. This has led to larger bandwidth requirements.

We have seen new opportunities arising with mobility and virtualisation. Both these trends bring challenges around access and security of data.   We are also seeing a growing demand for more bandwidth at the mid-market level.

We have seen new opportunities arising with mobility and virtualisation. Both these trends bring challenges around access and security of data.   We are also seeing a growing demand for more bandwidth at the mid-market level.

We are seeing a number of building service applications (BMS, CCTV, security, energy management etc) being IP enabled. This enables us to aggregate them onto a common IP network.

Increasingly we are seeing large corporates, government and enterprise customers seeking to consolidate their networks in a way that would never have been considered before, to provide cost savings and centralised business intelligence for better strategic decision making and control.

With more connectivity, collaboration and integration, there are major implications and opportunities for communities of all kinds – in health, housing, transport, schools and academic institutions, as well as towns and cities themselves. We are seeing developers and utilities beginning to think and plan holistically for the first time.

The bigger vendors are looking to benefit from these trends to create new markets and revenue streams. Companies like Cisco and Bridge Point are becoming involved in a collaborative discussion about how to make this work best.

How have you been successful?
We have remained focused on networking and security. We have been selective in the partners like Cisco that we work with, and we have employed some very good people over the years.

Do you have a website?
It's at www.bridgepoint.com.au. It explains all our capabilities across information security, data centres, networking, managed security and payment card industry (PCI) issues.

Explain what you do for clients?
Traditionally, we have focused on secure networking and IT security. This has been mainly on the IT requirements of an organisation. We are now expanding our services steadily into building management and industrial networking.

In the past, there has been little or no connection between the building networks, control systems and the IT networks carrying the enterprise business applications, such as accounting, ERP, email and CRM applications.

As building networks and control systems become IP enabled, there is a movement to establish connection across the entire network.   It makes sense from a management perspective, but introduces a new series of challenges around IT security, because the systems were physically separated in the past. Now the building networks and control systems are open to the same virus, worm and intrusion issues as the IT enterprise networks. Our role is to solve the problems of secure access to networks and applications.

Where are you seeing this new trend?

We are seeing the Cisco Smart and Connected strategy being implemented everywhere, in hospitals, stadiums, buildings and intelligent transport networks. Everybody is starting to think about this, and the earlier they start thinking the easier it is to map and create the right solution.

Consideration for building automation and industrial networking has to start at the concept stage of any new development. Architects, engineers, planners and system designers of all kinds have to be aware of all the possibilities, to be able to design the right solutions into their developments.

The other key trend is the convergence of different building systems. Traditionally, each system has been run on its own proprietary network. We are now seeing the aggregation of building systems – BMS, CCTV, physical security and energy management into a common IP network within a building. This provides cost efficiency and more effective control by running multiple systems on a common network.

We can also add non-building services such as internet, Pay TV and telephony into the same building network. This provides even more cost efficiency and control.

Can you give some examples?

We are currently working with Cisco on major projects in sporting stadiums, government buildings such as law courts and hospitals and other developments.

All of them are examples of how it is now possible to converge and connect networks of all kinds that traditionally were separate, running proprietary systems and equipment. IP convergence is the key to cost savings, simpler systems, freedom of choice with equipment and applications, and better management and control.

At the new Gold Coast hospital we are providing the IP based connectivity to run the CCTV security network. There are 307 CCTV cameras in the system, linked back to the security centre. Siemens will provide the CCTV equipment.

In another hospital, we are planning to initially provide the infrastructure to run the CCTV and building management system, including all the monitors and meters for the air-conditioning system. This will also include the swipe card security access system.   Later, we will extend this to incorporate the nurse call system, telephony and IT system into a converged network. The new hospital will be complete in 2014.

In the Brisbane Supreme Court building we will be installing Cisco network infrastructure as a platform that can be added to at any stage. Initially, they will add in the building management system, CCTV and access control.

We are seeing the duplication of networks steadily decrease as people begin to understand the advantages and possibilities of converging everything into one network.

The new AFL stadium at the Gold Coast is a little bit different.

We are providing the integrated IP network from Cisco for the stadium. The stadium management will run IPTV over the network, streaming each event to all the televisions in the stadium. The event can be projected onto the scoreboard system as well.

The Point of Sale terminals will be connected to the internet, and in the not too distant future, the system will enable smart card recognition at any Point of Sale terminal in the stadium.

The system will have the capability to be linked to external agencies such as Translink, so that queues, foot traffic, bus and train arrivals can be managed efficiently, and ultimately this can be connected into the vehicle traffic control system around the stadium and its approaches.

It makes sense that once all of your cameras, monitors, meters, card and access systems can be IP enabled or aggregated onto a common IP network, that they should be put into the same network.

It's the same approach that is being applied to building management systems covering temperature, lighting, air conditioning, energy management, CCTV, access and telephony.

In a Traffic Management Centre, they have CCTV, emergency phones, traffic counters, traffic displays, traffic lights and so on all running on the same IP network managed from the one building.

In the past the systems were all separate and analogue. Today, the system is IP enabled and on one network.

In one example we have worked on, the server and equipment room was 50 square metres and was packed full. Today there are two racks of servers and equipment sitting in a big empty room now that we have IP enabled the network. That saves energy, equipment cost and space.

The system is much more efficient and robust than before. We have provided Cisco industrialised routers along a major motorway that can cope with extremes of heat, cold, rain, hail, flood and possums, whatever the environment can throw at them.

All these are examples of what's possible and what's happening now. Our role is to ensure the networks are secure and enabled.

What are the business benefits?

This trend is a real growth area. The major stakeholder in all projects is consulting engineers, who have the initial responsibility for determining the design of these networks.

They should ensure that every new project is IP enabled. They should make sure they use commercial grade equipment like Cisco ruggedised equipment. They should make sure that the network is secure. And for big projects, you need to consider all this at the start.

When you start connecting everything up in the way it is happening today, there are a lot of players involved. It is a collaborative exercise by a broad industry with many stakeholders.

Our objective is to present our capabilities to as many of them as possible. That's a big challenge, because on the really large projects, our role is a very small part of the big picture.

What are you planning to do next?

We see this as a growth area for our business. We have to continue to be good at the foundation work, which is networking and IT security.

That foundation allows us to be knowledgeable, effective, and efficient in these new big converged network projects.

It has taken a while, but there are now many examples of where this is happening. It is no longer a wild idea with high risk. Now, it is a good idea, practical, secure, manageable, proven and the way the whole world is heading.

Mobile phone recycling – Mobile4Charity

Mobile4charity has partnered with UK based organisation SHP Limited to bring a tailor made mobile phone recycling service to not-for-profit organisations and charities in Australia.

This gives those organisations an opportunity to give their supporters and mobile phone owners the chance to recycle redundant handsets and raise money for their nominated charity at the same time.

Mobile4Charity case study

Mobile4Charity is a mobile phone recycling company that recycles phones for developing countries and raises money for charity. The company was started in 2009 and employs two people working from the office in Cooparoo.

How would you describe the business you are in?
We take old mobile phones that are still working and recycle them for use in emerging nations around the world. Non-working phones are destroyed and recycled according to the European Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive, which sets collection, recycling and recovery targets for all types of electrical goods.

Who are your clients and customers?
Clients are charities, not for profits, corporates and local government.

How do they benefit from your services?
We turn the used phone into cash. So a charity gets a new income stream that is less demanding on their regular and occasional donors. Corporates get an income stream that can be donated according to their Corporate Social Responsibility policy. There are a few other companies that recycle e-waste for profit, but nobody is doing it in quite this way.

What changes are taking place in your category?
Globally the attitude and approach to electronic waste has changed.

Poorer countries have been left a long way behind in the digital revolution. Many have large populations with low incomes and limited infrastructure. This has forced them to look at different ways to use technology to become more productive.

So we have seen innovations like clockwork, low cost computers, designed specifically because of little or no electricity infrastructure. We are also seeing the mobile phone networks being used not just for voice communication, but also for internet and television. It's easier to set up a mobile wireless network than a wired network.

In the world at the moment about 33% of people can access television programs. But by using mobile networks, it is estimated that in 5-10 years there will be an increase to 70%, with television programs being delivered through the mobile networks. So television manufacturers are making small, robust televisions, and mobile phone manufacturers are picky-backing this development.

Mobile phone manufacturers have found that it is cheaper and more responsible to buy back used phones in the first world and re-skin them to sell at low cost in developing countries, with a three month warranty and pre-paid contracts.

Australia is one of the few countries where most mobile phones are no cost – built into the contract. So the majority of people turn their phones over every eighteen months to two years, if they are on a

contract. This means there are a lot of older mobile phones about. It is estimated there are around 20 million phones in cupboards and desk drawers.

Last year 900,000 mobile phones were turned in for recycling. But last year 11 million new phones were sold in Australia. On average 9-11 million phones are sold every year. So you can see that something has to be done. Mobile phone batteries can't be recycled, so we pull them out and they are destroyed according to the WEEE directive.

Attitudes to recycling are changing, because Australians are tuning into it more. People understand the need to separate waste and the Global Financial Crisis has made people think where they are putting their money. Charities have noticed a big drop in donations. They are looking for a different way of contacting customers and not asking for cash, but getting cash-in-kind.

How have you been successful?

It's because we have been able to help people find money from a new source. Charities are excited because it allows them to go to customers with a new message. It also combines the charitable donation with an environmental message.

Corporates are more influenced by the ability to do the right thing. It allows them to include the recycling and donation strategy in their annual report to the board and shareholders. Many corporates already have relationships with charities and this gives them another way to redistribute wealth sensibly and strategically without using cash.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes. It's - www.mobile4charity.com.au. The site explains what we do and even allows a visitor to send in their old mobile phones for recycling.

What prompted you to start your business?

I have been associated with associations and charity fundraising for the last five years. I saw at first hand the problems with what they do.

There are two basic issues – fundraising and the environment. One mobile phone battery can pollute 600,000 litres of water, so it's not a small issue and it's important to take them out of the waste tips and our environment.

What sort of projects are you working on?

QMIR have signed up with us as a recycling partner. They run an "old mobile phone" competition at street festivals. Every phone handed in becomes an entry into the competition, where the winner gets an iPad. QMIR also sends out envelopes to supporters to collect phones and raise money.

Other charities are also distributing envelopes allied to a competition to collect phones and generate funds. Recycling in country towns is something of an issue. Many rural households and businesses think this is only something that happens in cities. But we are getting the message out through a range of rural activities and partners, so that everyone can participate.

Corporates can ask their employees and customers to recycle mobile phones, which can be donated to charity. We are involved with projects across all these areas.

What is involved with recycling a phone?

The phones are mailed into our premises. They are then shipped to our grading house in Sydney and separated into three categories. There are two levels of working phones and one level that is Beyond

Economic Repair (BER). Once they are graded, they are processed through the parent company to the initial manufacturers – Blackberry, Nokia, Samsung, LG etc, for them to refurbish and sell into emerging markets.

How much time does a project take?
It depends on the campaign. It could be a week or a month. Typically a promotional campaign lasts a month, including collection, grading, through to raising a cheque for the charity. We get paid once the phones are sold into the emerging market.

How much does a project cost?
The only cost to corporates and charities is the administration cost of managing each campaign. That averages around 20c an envelope. Which is very reasonable. Many charities spend considerably more in getting donations.

Did everyone support the project?
In general, support from charities has been overwhelming. They think it is a great idea that complements what they already do. The only downside with charities is that all new ideas have to go through their governing boards and that takes time.

However, offering people smarter ideas make it easier to implement. It's not about us just asking them to get the phones in. We help them through the whole campaign.

What were the main risks you took?
We didn't take any real risks. Picking the right campaign for a charity might be a risk. But we have expertise in what works and we give them alternatives to spread the risk in any campaign.

The only real risk is that we can't handle the volume of mobile phones in the grading centre. We have to ensure we are fulfilling the WEEE guidelines.

Industry solutions

Contact details for the solutions featured in the report.

Telecommunications, mobility & VoIP

Airwatch
Mobile device management
T: 1300 662 962
W: www.air-watch.com

As one of the largest independent suppliers of hardware and communication solutions in Australia, TAAConnect specialises in tailoring solutions to suit the needs of your business – big or small.

Cisco
Unified communications
T: 1800 134 349
W: www.cisco.com

Cisco has a full suite of IP communications solutions to let organisations extend communications services to staff in all workspaces, whether they are in the office, travelling or working from home or any other location.

GBM Software
Mobile workforce solutions
T: (07) 3210 0741
W: www.geobasemap.com

GBM Software produces mobile workforce solutions. GBM software has developed a range of commercial software focused on mobile workforce solutions, as well as continuing to carry out custom development.

Mobile apps development
Blink Mobile
T: (02) 4340 5110
W: www.blinkmobile.com.au

Blink Mobile is rapid forms development software that allows users to swiftly connect mobile devices to their networks to improve productivity and performance. Blink Mobile can deliver applications in days that would normally take months to create and deploy.

Over the Wire
Business grade VoIP
T: (07) 3847 9292
W: www.overthewire.com.au

Over The Wire is an Australian based telecommunications company, specialising in datacentre hosting, internet and private network connectivity, voice services and advanced application hosting.

Skype Software
Voice over Internet Protocol
W: www.skype.com

Free calls, video calls and instant messaging over the internet.

TAAConnect
IP Telephony & IT solutions
T: 1300 662 962
W: www.taa.net.au

As one of the largest independent suppliers of hardware and communication solutions in Australia, TAAConnect specialises in tailoring solutions to suit the needs of any organisation – big or small.

Virtual desktop - VMware
Virtual desktop
T: 1800 869 273
W: www.vmware.com

VMware View modernises desktops by moving them into the cloud and delivering them as a managed service. Processes are automated, security is increased and the total cost of desktop ownership is reduced by 50%.

Customer management software

Aspedia
Web development
T: 1800 677 656
W: www.aspedia.net

Aspedia provides a complete online package from concept, strategy, creative design and branding to website development to complement other marketing channels to rapidly drive leads and improve profitability.

Codehouse
Labour hire
T: (08) 8223 3151
W: www.codehouse.com.au

Code House Integrated Payroll for Labour Hire and SHARC – Staff Hiring And Recruitment Centre offer a fully integrated suite of tools designed specificall*y* for the Recruitment and Labour Hire industries.

IT Integrity
Client management
T: (07) 3373 1100
W: www.itintegrity.com.au

IT Integrity offers a range of software products for accounting and client management. Products are used by aged and community care including respite or residential services, disability services, community centres and similar groups

ThankQ
Fundraising system
T: (07) 3893 0958
W: www.esit.com.au

ThankQ helps charities working in a wide range of areas including medical research, aged care, education, animal welfare, religious, environmental, and human rights to maximise their resources.

IT and cloud services

DonorTec
Discounted technology
T: (08) 8122 2701
W: www.donortec.org

DonorTec provides donated and discounted technology products and services from companies such as Microsoft, Symantec, Sophos, Kaspersky and Cisco to eligible income tax exempt Australian nonprofit groups.

Endpoint Corporation
Value mapping consultancy
T: 0435 098 700

Endpoint Corporation is a consultancy that focuses on identifying the route an entity should take to reach a goal – the endpoint.

Newbase
Managed Services
T: (07) 3216 0776
W: www.newbase.com.au

Newbase is a highly skilled and experienced systems integrator with 20 years experience in delivering technology solutions.

NFP Recruitment
Recruitment Services
T: 1300 898 745
W: www.nfpr.com.au

Not For Profit Recruitment is a specialist consultant focused on the non-profit sector. NFPR matches the needs of the organisation with those of the candidate, reducing the overall cost of recruitment.

Rype
Apple-centric IT Services
T: (07) 3371 7188
W: www.rype.com.au

With over 25 years experience in technology innovation and Apple product leadership, Rype is a new fresh IT technology business offering Apple-centric and cloud based business and creative solutions.

WRS Centre
HR Services
T: 0450 747 337
W: www.wrscentre.com.au

The Workplace Resources and Services Centre (WRS Centre) provides a range of quality services and products to ensure business manages risks and optimises its performance.

Process management software

Calxa
Accounting reporting software
T: 1800 733 149
W: www.calxa.com.au

Calxa is a software product that simplifies budget and cashflow forecasting for non-profits and small businesses.

ionmycare
Risk management software
T: (07) 5502 8236
T: 1300 659 506
W: www.ionmy.com.au

ionmycare is a solution for governance issues, risk management, compliance, accreditation and human resources.

Time Target
Staff management software
T: 1300 886 698
W: www.timetarget.com

Time Target time and attendance, rostering and workforce management software system is an extremely easy to use software system for all industry sectors.

Disaster recovery & security

Interactive
Systems availability
T: (07) 3323 0800
W: www.interactive.com.au

Interactive is a leading IT services company, specialising in systems availability for hosting, disaster recovery, maintenance and cloud computing.

Bridge Point Communications
Secure networking
T: (07) 3231 5413
W: www.bridgepoint.com.au

Since commencing in 2000, Bridge Point has built a reputation as one of Australia's leading providers of Information Security and Network Integration services.

Other Resources

Mobile4Charity
Mobile phone recycling
T: 0448 481 158
W: www.mobile4charity.com.au

Mobile4charity offers a mobile phone recycling service to not-for-profit organisations and charities in Australia. Most handsets can be reused and are sent to developing nations, with the remainder being recycled.

Connecting Up
DonorTec and conference
T: (08) 8212 8555
W: www.connectingup.org

Connecting Up is a nonprofit organisation that works to strengthen the nonprofit and community sector in Australia by providing a variety of information, products, resources and programs.

InfoXchange
IT information and ideas
T: 1300 306 645
W: www.infoxchange.net.au

Infoxchange Australia is a community organisation with a mission to create social equality and opportunity by empowering people through access to information technology and the exchange of information and ideas.

Our Community
Advice and tools for non-profits
T: (03) 9320 6800
W: www.ourcommunity.com.au

Our Community provides advice and tools for non-profit community groups and state, private and independent schools, as well as practical links between the community sector, general public, business and government

About the survey

The survey was conducted across Non-Profit organisations in Australia. 2,029 surveys were received during the response period. 544 were eliminated (not completed or double entry) leaving a total of 1,485 responses included in the report.

Location of non-profits		
Location	**Total**	**Percentage**
New South Wales	472	32%
Victoria	324	22%
South Australia	234	16%
Queensland	225	15%
Western Australia	133	9%
Tasmania	55	4%
ACT	29	2%
Northern Territory	11	1%
New Zealand	1	0.06%
USA	1	0.06%
TOTAL	**1,485**	**100%**

Size of service		
No of staff	**Total**	**Percentage**
1-2	519	35%
3-4	161	11%
5-9	241	16%
10-19	194	13%
20-49	179	12%
50-99	74	5%
100-499	103	7%
500+	14	1%
TOTAL	**1,485**	**100%**

Representation by organisational type

Survey responses were provided by a variety of organisations. The highest representation in the survey was from Education, Training & Employment and Community Development.

Non-Profit Organisations		
Organisations	**Total**	**Percentage**
Education, Training & Employment	187	13%
Community Development	183	12%
Disability services	158	11%
Health & Health Treatment	137	9%
Service, Sports and Social Clubs	107	7%
Youth services and Welfare	79	5%
Creative & Performing arts & Media	77	5%
Child care & Child services	63	4%
Law & advocacy	62	4%
Business & Professional Organisations	61	4%
Religion	59	4%
Family services	56	4%
Environment	46	3%
Aged Care & Aged Services	45	3%
Housing & Shelter	44	3%
Philanthropy & volunteering	39	3%
Multiple services	32	2%
Museums, Libraries & Zoos	32	2%
Emergency services	18	1%
TOTAL	**1,485**	**100%**

The report is based on a sample of non-profit organisations contacted, not a complete census, and results are subject to sampling error. The maximum margin of sampling error for a sample of n=1,485 at the 95% confidence level is less than plus or minus 2.5%. When comparing results for divisions of the overall sample the margin of error increases.