

# BOOST FOR IT OUTSOURCING IN CHARITY SECTOR

**Fairtrade Foundation** is the campaigning and certification organisation behind the Fairtrade mark, is upgrading its IT infrastructure and systems. The work is being done mainly through its own staff but certain aspects are being handled on an outsourced basis by IT company appiChar.

**Says Chris Cranie, ICT manager at Fairtrade:** "We were finding that the demands on our in-house IT department were increasing daily and with only two internal IT staff we had insufficient resources to implement regular maintenance and upgrade requirements. This included upgrading our Exchange server (2003 to 2007), as well as other much needed infrastructure upgrades and security reviews. As our time was becoming more stretched, we decided that Fairtrade Foundation needed a partner to help plan, implement and maintain these upgrades. We also required additional support to free up my time, as ICT manager, to manage the implementation of the infrastructure and additional database projects."

**Says Cranie:** "Projects are now proceeding well, to budget and on time. And importantly, where problems have occurred, they have been dealt with promptly and professionally. appiChar has also taken the time to alter its reporting methods to accommodate us. We will continue to work with appiChar to finalise these projects as well as using them to assist us with planning our future requirements."

## **Cranie gives some tips for best practice IT outsourcing:**

- **Ask other organisations who they would recommend.**
- **Look for a company which will provide a good level of communication as well as highly skilled technical ability.**
- **Put out a clearly defined tender and invite prospective suppliers for meetings to gauge how comfortable you would be working with them.**
- **Ask to meet the engineers who would be working for you; talk to them, ask for their opinions and discuss some of your problems. It's important you can work with them.**
- **Look for a flexible company which has the ability to grow with you.**
- **Don't always go for the lowest price – look for value.**
- **Look for suppliers with a proven track record in the sector.**

## **Says appiChar founder Ian Ryder:**

*"Outsourcing can give cost saving benefits, increase team efficiency and bring new knowledge and skills into an organisation when planning for future IT requirements. Charities shouldn't be afraid to outsource their IT. There is sometimes a fear amongst some charities that they might lose control and face spiralling costs, but in fact the opposite is generally the case."*

*"IT should not be seen to be shrouded in mystery. The right IT can save a charity time and money and there is no great secret to this."*

appiChar has teamed up with the charity Lasa (London Advice Services Alliance) to help ensure Lasa's online Suppliers' Directory remains a free service.

The Suppliers' Directory is a searchable directory of ICT suppliers which provide goods and services to the voluntary and community sector in England.

Inspired by the US site Techfinder, Lasa partnered up with NTEN and Compumentor to develop and deliver a specific English version of this resource. The directory received initial funding from Capacitybuilders' ChangeUp programme.

Following the closure of Capacitybuilders, the future of the free Suppliers' Directory was under threat. appiChar's support will provide help toward the continuation of the service.

appiChar is also to sponsor the IT volunteering charity iT4 Communities to ensure more charitable organisations benefit from volunteers providing professional IT support. The sponsorship was announced at the Information Technologists' Livery Company's New Master's Installation Supper.

iT4 Communities was set up by the Information Technologists' Company in 2002 to make IT work for charities by introducing them to volunteer IT professionals. The 5,300 iT4 Communities volunteers have so far delivered over £3 million worth of IT support to the voluntary sector.