

National Circuit Rider Conference 2006

Principles and Practice: The middle ground

The theme for the 2006 Circuit Rider Conference was **Principles and Practice: The Middle Ground**. The event presented practical working examples of technology support in the sector alongside the policy, standards and working principles we use. Participants learned from one another and from specialists in the sector leaving with new ideas, information and skills to inform their work in practice.

Organised by Lasa for the ICT Hub 15th and 16th January, 2007 at Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council (BVSC), 138 Digbeth High Street, Birmingham, B5 6DR

Spectrogramme - Where Do You Stand?

3 Questions that will get you moving to make a stand!

- There should be a set of standards that circuit riders should adhere to
- Without accreditation, Circuit Riders will not be taken seriously by those who they work for
- The sector is not ready to pay for Circuit Rider services - frontline organizations that are being served - they aren't ready to pay

Notes from Session on Beth Kanters Blog

http://beth.typepad.com/beths_blog/2007/01/lasa_uk_scircui.html

(thanks Beth!)

Ethics and ICT - is Circuit Riding a Moral Pursuit?

This session builds on the work done last year in the Good Practice for Circuit Riders workshop. We aim, with your help, to produce a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Circuit Riders. We will identify the main ways, both good and bad, in which the actions of computer professionals can impact upon computer users and organisations. We will identify the risks, challenges and social impact of technology within the voluntary sector. At the end of the session we hope to have the basis of a document which will enable ethical decision making for all Circuit Riders.

Pauline Baker, Greater Manchester CVO and Ian Runeckles, Lasa

Session Notes

Introductory discussion

Ethical issues around discovering pornography on the chief executive's laptop in an organisation you support:

- How serious is it? Legal or illegal?

- If it is child pornography then should always report
- Are there policies in place in the organization to deal with the situation?
- Who do you report the CEO to? Trustees?
- You have a duty of care
- Is it unintentional? Have to make judgement e.g. between a link shown in History or obviously downloaded images
- Should ensure org. has systems in place to stop/avoid in the first place
- What right does the CR have to look at private information on an org's system? May depend on your contract with the organization.
- CR org needs its own guidelines on what to do in this situation
- Individuals have to have their own guidelines in place
- May depend on the relationship with the org e.g. long or short term, what you are there to do etc
- No written terms of agreement
- Specific guidelines which should be measurable against the law

Ethical issues encountered and examples of good and bad actions

Example - Software piracy:

- Should never install – or are there shades of grey depending on the organization etc?
- Ethical answer is to use open source software
- Have a clear policy for the CR – only install if the organisation can prove they have licences (do you need to see them or just take their word for it?)
- What do you do if you discover an illegal copy on a PC? Do you report or remove?
- Protocols required – the ethical stance is OK but you need to have protocols to be able to deal with issues.

Good actions:

- Promote good practice
- Identifying file sharing / resource abuse to SMT – explaining implications
- Identifying internet radio – explaining implications
- Finding misuse of time e.g. lots of internet shopping
- Sector can recognise the true costs of ICT – inform and educate, groups make a choice and take ownership
- Creative accounting when reporting to funders re client choice
- Offering advice off the record
- We need to cover ourselves in writing
- Must not create organisational dependency – aim should be to put ourselves out of a job

Bad actions:

- False accusations (made by us as CRs)
- Is it relevant / is it our business?
- Don't be too prescriptive
- Respect for confidentiality
- Nagging over illegal software – depends on nature of relationship, will orgs go somewhere else who will do it?
- We need to be informed about what we can and can't do
- Legalities/contracts/confidentiality
- But what are about circuit riders who are individuals, not employed and have no one to escalate to?

Ethical Principles

Discussion points

- Principles must be explained and set out – e.g. the negative impacts of e.g. illegal software use
- How do you work with organisations which do not have their own ethical policies in place? Do your own policies override theirs?
- Must be an informed choice
- Must protect employees of the CR organisation
- Emphasise difference between IT support (techie) and CR's who have a more strategic/capacity building approach.
- CRs must promote policies and procedures
- May require a list of principles which are underpinned by longer explanations which can be adapted as technology etc. moves on
- Should inform and educate groups i.e. legal, cost, free
- Be informed and educated
- Empower organisations (make independent)
- Be aware of risks to CR organisations
- Acknowledge grey areas
- Support for CR – legal, HR, contractual)
- Confidentiality and privacy

Resources:

eRider principles (as formulated in Philadelphia 2004)

- Helping organisations to become self sufficient
- Talking in non technical, easy to understand language
- Sharing resources and tools with others
- Giving back to the community
- Taking a holistic view of technology - never promoting a specific solution or technology just for the sake of technology
- Working to gain a deeper understanding of the mission, vision and values of the groups we work with

Additional principles from 2005 CR Conference session:

- Up skill / empower organisations to make informed decisions / help them to become strategically self sufficient / manage their IT
- Explain any jargon terms in plain language / expand acronyms
- Look at business plan / gather information about the organisation / empathetic listening

Summit Collaborative Technology Support Provider Principles – can be found at <http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page5398.cfm>
BCS Code of Conduct can be seen at <http://ethics.iit.edu/codes/coe/british.computer.soc.b.html>

Next steps:

Ian/Pauline to write up session notes and distribute

Start to pull principles together and discuss with session attendees

Helping voluntary organisations plan their websites

A session for web designers and non-designers alike, to discuss how you can ensure that organisations get the websites they deserve, and to learn about the tools that can help you to help them get their site up and running.

Jason King - HAVS and Abilitynet

ICT Hub Knowledgebase article:

www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/helpgroupsplanwebsites

AbilityNet guide *How To Commission & Design Accessible Websites* available from AbilityNet (www.abilitynet.org.uk)

LASA / Superhighways Partnership website healthcheck form (PDF 73Kb): www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/fileadmin/ICT/pdf/Website_healthcheck_list_table.pdf

Further information:

Jason King's website: www.kingjason.co.uk

ICT Hub forum 'Your Website' discussion:
<http://forums.ict hub.org.uk/list.php?20>

For Profits Can have Sector Values

Is it possible to work with the VolCom Sector, make a profit and hold true to your values? Here we aim to face the issues full on so come prepared to say your piece.

Paul Webster ICT Hub, Rob French Project Cosmic, and Morgan Killick

Nurturing Free and Open Source support in the VCS

FOSS seems to align well with the ethics, needs and budgets of many VCS groups, but uptake does not currently reflect this. The Open Source Project @ NCC is addressing this by delivering focused, bespoke FOSS training to Circuit Riders in every region. It is hoped that this will enable more organisations to choose whether or not they wish to use FOSS.

Meet and greet a support and training network of Circuit Riders utilising Free and Open Source Software alongside proprietary software.

We will demonstrate a Customer Relationship Manager, VOIP and a Virtual Learning Environment by using the ICT Hub FOSS suite so that you can see what FOSS is like for yourself.

Join a discussion surrounding FOSS in the VCS at
www.openitup.org/moodle.

Results of the workshop "Reasons not to use FOSS" at
www.openitup.org/index.php/downloads/

Circuit Rider training details also at www.openitup.org/index.php/circuit-rider-training/

Matthew Edmonson and Mark Briers

Demystifying Web 2.0 Tools for VolCom Groups: Blogs, RSS, Tagging, Wikis and Beyond

You may have heard the words, but what do they really mean for nonprofit organizations? This session introduces the concepts and tools behind the next generation of internet technologies or what has been dubbed "Web.20" or "Social Media." We'll do some live demos of these tools, discuss their potential to enhance our work, along with some of the concerns they raise.

You'll come away with a basic understanding of and context for the words that are buzzing around us, along with references for continued exploration.

Report available at:

http://partnerships.typepad.com/civic/2007/01/running_the_soc.html

Presentation at: <http://socialmedia.wikispaces.com/presentation>

Beth Kanter and David Wilcox

Effective Technology Advising - Being the Expert - How to be a more Effective Technology Advisor

How can staff and consultants advise charities about technology in the most effective way? VCS technology advising is an evolving profession in an ever-changing field, so how can we maintain our effectiveness as an advisor, implementer, therapist, etc.? In this session we'll describe techniques and practices that can improve the advising/consulting experience for everyone involved. We'll review the stages of a project and discuss how to create mutually satisfying working relationships. We'll learn by sharing tools, tips and advice. This peer-learning session is most appropriate for those with at least 1 year of consulting/advising experience.

John Kenyon

Session notes

This session presented important concepts and models for effectively advising charities about technology and facilitated a discussion among participants about their challenges, strengths and practice methods. The primary goal of the session was to help participants move to a more conscious understanding of their practices and level of competence.

The group was first asked if they would hire a lawyer who had just learned on their own, and no one agreed. They were then asked if they would go to a doctor who had taught themselves. Again no one agreed. It was offered that, in a way, this is what we are asking our clients to do when they hire us, as there is no set program of education for helping charities with technology. This session is an attempt to give participants a common understanding of their practices and ways of approaching their work.

After the speaker introduction, the session opened with participant introductions. Participants were put into groups of two and asked to indicate the primary organization(s) they work for, their primary area of service in the UK, their work focus/area(s) of expertise and what they were attending the session to learn. Several groups were then asked to report on what they learned about their partners.

Participants reported working for organizations such as social enterprises, local community councils, technical support organizations as well as independently

Participants reported practicing in a variety of geographic areas in the UK and Ireland.

Their work focus/areas of expertise run the gamut from network support to ICT strategic planning to database and website design.

Participants said they were here to:

- Network
- Learn from other's experiences
- Get the right perspectives on their work
- Find out how the sector really works
- Pick up different ideas
- How to fund circuit riding
- How to improve services
- Learn about sustainability.

The presentation portion proceeded, covering the Client-Centered model of consulting/advising. Each section of the model was described, including the Nonprofit/Charity context, the Client's world, the Advisor's world, Effective working relationships, Effective Process, Clear Roles and the expertise brought by both client and advisor/consultant.

The nonprofit/charity context was described in terms of organizational culture, organizational structure and contributions of individuals. The environment of the client and advisor was explored next, including needs, concerns, principles, practices and guidelines. The stages of an engagement and appropriate junctures for go/no go decisions were discussed. The discussion then turned to the various reasons clients engage advisors/consultant and the roles each can assume. The various dimensions of client and advisor expertise were then described.

Attendees then engaged in a peer discussion dyad where they spoke with fellow attendees to describe their greatest asset, a piece of advice or practice learned and a memorable achievement in their practice.

The next section of the presentation focused on managing client resistance and responding appropriately to that resistance. Following this was a discussion on why advisors should avoid rescuing clients without the client's involvement.

The presentation wrapped up with six pieces of advice gathered from long-time practitioners of technology advising to charities

The session then turned to a group discussion. Attendees were asked what they found useful and what they had questions about regarding the concepts that were presented.

Participants said that it was very useful to see the various roles detailed and laid out with the party primarily responsible for solution identification and implementation.

The stages of an engagement were also mentioned. One participant offered that too often their work agreements with clients were verbal, which lead to them regularly being taken away from what their focus was, in this case the website, in order to fix problems like printer malfunctions.

Others agreed and offered how they had encountered the issue of unrealistic expectations because their projects, and their roles in those projects had not been written down and reviewed with clients.

Regarding the recognition and reporting on resistance, a participant asked if it was better to report the resistance via email, phone or in person. It was offered that email was easy to ignore or misinterpret, telephone was a bit preferable although voicemails could also be ignored and that face-to-face was the best way to report the resistance.

Some common elements and challenges of working with charities in the UK were then discussed, including the participation of councils, the funding from the government, the changing nature of the government funding and the various different demands of working with urban and rural communities. This brought the session to its close.

Power-Building Your VCO - How to target your use of ICTs to improve you organisational effectiveness and efficiency

ICT needs assessment and planning is still a necessary step in the quest for effective use of advanced technology. However it need not be a painful process to go through and in this session tricks and techniques will be shared to make both assessment and planning simpler. We'll review easy to use tools, talk about ways to get the information you need and tips on how to accelerate your decision making. We'll also look at issues related to working with vendors and consultants and how to better position yourself to raise needed funds for implementation.

Marc Osten

Regionalising Google - Search as a community service

Search now drives information retrieval across the internet and we all rely on the power of Google and the other giant search engines to give us a level of visibility which we may already take for granted. But what else can search do for us? What if we start building our own search networks in our local communities? Does greater focus on specific content make the 'right answer' easier to find?

Mark Walker of SCIP has been Project Executive of theplacetobe.net for five years, developing an innovative community portal at p2b.net, which is a search engine for Brighton and Hove. He'll explain how the project grew from a collaborative community project into a leading edge technical service. It uses a state of the art Google Search Appliance to deliver search results which can be managed down to an individual URL level, based on an index of over 300 local sites. It delivers search services to local partners and community sites. As well as explaining the technology behind the service he'll be inviting your views on the way ahead for local search and community information services.

Web links:

www.scip.org.uk, www.p2b.net.

Mark Walker - Scip

Outcomes are the way Forward

What do you say about 'Outcomes' if you are a Circuit Riders advising on data management? Most current systems are not designed to capture outcomes even though this is what funders want our bids to be based on. So, how do we go about giving the right support?

Presentation: [www.preponderate.co.uk/PREP CR Outcomes are the way forward.ppt](http://www.preponderate.co.uk/PREP_CR_Outcomes_are_the_way_forward.ppt) (Powerpoint format, 213Kb)

Case studies: [www.preponderate.co.uk/PREP CR 2007 outcomes case studies.doc](http://www.preponderate.co.uk/PREP_CR_2007_outcomes_case_studies.doc) (Word format, 42Kb)

More information: www.preponderate.co.uk/outcomes.htm

Simon Davey - Omega Alpha Limited

Closing Spectrogramme Circuit rider accreditation - Issues and concerns

Circuit Rider Conference – Birmingham, January 2007

Circuit Rider accreditation – issues and concerns

Ratings – (H) High (M) Medium (L) Low - shown where known

Abbreviations: CR – Circuit Rider

Group 1

- Who's going to do the accrediting (H)
- How is it measured (L)
- Content of Accreditation course and criteria (H)
- Should we be looking at multiple Accreditation e.g. website riders, database riders (M)
- Will it exclude some CRs e.g. can't afford time or money (M)
- Sustainability (H)
- Keeping Accreditation up to date – continuing professional development, refresher courses (H)
- Who teaches the course? (L)
- Modes of study (L)
- Soft skills modules (H)
- Course completion or Accreditation? (L)
- Modular approach – what happens if you fail one? (L)
- Different level or types of Accreditation (L)
- Will standard Accreditation suit everyone e.g. urban v rural, different client groups (H)
- What will it achieve (H)
- Merits and value (community standing?) of the Accreditation agency (H)
- Training v Accreditation (L)

- Where do non-paid/voluntary staff fit in? (L)
- Materials – issue under Creative Commons or proprietary (M)
- How is it/will it be community driven e.g. what is important to one community may not be to another. (H)
- How will it work with existing Accreditation e.g. MCP, MCSE (L)
- Arbitration/disputes (M)

Group 2

- How to incorporate the “trust” references (L)
- How will it be funded – cost to individual and organisation (L)
- Who does is shut out (H)
- Is Accreditation the right route? (H)
- Who is the Accreditation body going to be? (M)
- Is there a timeline and plan to develop and implement
- How much say will the community have? (H)
- Is it going to be restricted to the sector? (M)
- How rigid will the Accreditation be? (M)
- Key players need careful selection (M)
- Is there a membership (M)
- What benefit is it to CRs (H)
- Is this to meet targets (ICT Hub?) (L)
- Will it be welcomed by VCOs with a trust relationship with (non Accreditation) CRs (L)

Group 3

- Time getting Accreditation takes away from supporting the organisations
- Couldn't be mandatory (will send good message to funders) (M)
- Who will deliver training materials (H)
- Define criteria – what standard, by whom, who accredits/how accredited, how often, minimum requirements (H)
- Increased costs to everybody – who will fund and sustain? (M)
- Is it thematic? Cars work in different ways and different levels (H)
- Different routes of Accreditation
- Can other qualifications contribute to Accreditation process
- Are we teaching or checking those already doing the job are doing it right?
- Is it time limited? (H)
- Will it make us better CRs
- Do the groups (we work with) care? (H)
- Are there people out there that shouldn't get Accreditation
- What are the “value adds” for the individual?
- Use something that already exists if relevant - “Bolt on” to other quals e.g. MCSE, LPI (H)
- ITQ style? (modular work based)
- Ethics (H)