

We live in the age of computers and technology; the problem is that far too many people working in the voluntary sector are so bogged down by the increasing requirements of their day job that they do not have the time, or funding, to be able to make effective use of the technology that is available.

This is an area where younger volunteers can come into their own and can help with improving the digital and technological evolution of the organisation. What I'm not saying is recruit some young people and then tell them to get you on the internet and social media; that is asking for trouble. As with any step like this, time should be taken first to develop a policy and strategy so that everyone is aware of the right way to progress in this area.

One fact that I think it's important to share is that it takes up to 18 months for your social media profile to become an effective tool, and that means cherry picking the information that you want to share.

I mentioned micro volunteering during the first of these articles and now, in the last of them, I find myself coming full circle and returning to the topic. Technology naturally lends itself to micro volunteering and the range of opportunities that it can offer; from posting on social media to contributing a small piece of a larger project and at a time that suits the volunteer, after all if the technology has the ability to only publish the articles that we have written at a time that meets the needs of the organisation then let's make use of it to get the best from volunteers and the technology.

Technology is a tool that we can use to make our organisations much more responsive to the needs of both staff and volunteers. I'm not saying that everyone in an organisation should be highly skilled when it comes to technology or be social media experts; what I am saying is that with a little support technology can be another tool in your arsenal to help you save money and support staff and volunteers more effectively.

Within Voluntary Action we have the skills and abilities to be able to build and maintain our own website and social media pages. We won't say that we have gotten things right the first time, every time, what we have done is taken the lessons and learned from them and tried to improve the next time. We have worked with Communities Together, Harbour Place, Care4All, Grimsby and Alexandra Dolphins Swimming Club, Capacity Buildings and others to help them develop their websites and building on the skills of staff and volunteers in those organisations to be able to maintain those websites.

Digital volunteering is a highly skilled area, just like financial volunteering, currently underutilised and an area that we need to grow and develop; as with the measures that have been put into place with financial accountability, there needs to be good practice measures created and enacted to ensure that we are keeping up with advances in technology and usage.