

IT MATTERS

December 2010 bulletin



Welcome to the Winter 2010 edition of "IT Matters", the bulletin from VANEL's **IT Supporter Network**. The Network exists to help connect all those who have to support or implement IT within voluntary and community organisations across North East Lincolnshire. More often than not those supporting IT are 'accidental techies' - volunteers or staff who also support IT alongside their main role. If that describes you, then hopefully you'll be able to use our Network to learn, share, get support, give your own advice to others, and hopefully help your organisation improve its' IT infrastructure to 'do things better' or 'do better things'.

The IT Supporters Network got off to a good start this year and is probably more relevant than ever. Our sector is experiencing external factors (mostly funding related) that are putting on more and more pressure on organisations but also opening up new opportunities. Technology can help remove pressure points and barriers, it can help with communication and promotion, it can help you demonstrate value to funders in a competitive environment and it can help you work with your beneficiaries and communities in completely new ways. For many organisations and groups, IT is an expensive, complicated luxury. I personally believe that technology is a necessity which no organisation can ignore or trivialise, and - when applied appropriately - can empower organisations and individuals and amplify their impact.

But how to make the most of IT, or even how to get over the initial barriers and problems? The IT Supporters Network won't solve problems for you. But it will help inform, educate and support you. VANEL is not funded to run this Network so needs everyone to work together to make the Network successful for all of us. Thanks to Virtual Riders who are supporting parts of the Network at the moment (more later) but support is needed all round.

Hopefully this bulletin will prove useful, but I'd be more than grateful to have your feedback.

Karl Elliott, Hub Manager and IT Network Manager, VANEL - Karl@vanel.org.uk

this bulletin: Technical Surgeries / Quarterly Networking / ICT Training for CEOs / IT Training / Office software for free? / Website support & training / Wordpress training / Digital Media report / Resources / Virtual Riders

TECHNICAL SURGERIES

We've run them before, and they're back. Every fortnight we hope to hold a Friday morning surgery session in VANEL's IT suite, so that IT Supporters can meet up, grab a coffee, and have a technical presentation and discussion about all kinds of IT themes and issues. Each session will have a focal topic - our **December** one will concentrate on **backup solutions**, but will then be open ended so other topics can be discussed together and with Virtual Riders' IT guru, Glen, who will be running the sessions.

Sessions are free for Network members (but please book to tell us you're coming). Membership of the Network is free too to IT supporters in the VolCom sector (there's a fee if you are private or public sector).

Next session - 10 December 2010

9.30 start (9am if you want to turn up for a coffee & chat beforehand), finish around 11-11.30am

Future sessions - 21 Jan, 4 and 18 Feb, 4 and 18 Mar, 1 Apr - put the dates in your diary

QUARTERLY NETWORKING

The **IT Supporters Network** holds a quarterly half-day conference to ensure everyone has a chance to meet face to face and look at IT both at a technical and a strategic level. At our previous events we've had presentations from Simon Duncan (Yorkshire & Humber ICT Champion) & Virtual Riders, looked at Windows 7, talked through Cloud Computing and held discussions around looking at ICT & technology strategically.

Our *next meeting will be in January* (info out soon on the website as to date and venue) and is kindly sponsored by Virtual Riders (more about them later).

STRATEGIC ICT FOR CEOS & TRUSTEES

NCVO is holding a free training day in York on 14 Jan aimed at helping CEOs and Trustees understand how technology can help them strategically in these difficult times. We'll be attending & feeding back to you, but if you are part of the team running your organisation then you might find the session useful. Limited places, book soon. Info at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/ictfortrustees.org.uk

IT TRAINING FOR STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Are the staff & volunteers in your organisation ok with their computer skills? Could anyone do with training in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access or even the basics of how to navigate around the PC? We've previously run several programmes of half-day IT training courses which have reached nearly 100 people and have had great feedback. We're again offering these courses from the New Year and each course will cost just £20 per person. In the past we've managed to offer the training fully subsidised through funding, but this time we're unfunded but the courses are still possible at a very low price.

We're not fixing dates for the courses. Instead, we're taking bookings and as soon as we have enough names to run a group we'll schedule a course date to best suit

the majority of interested attendees. Our course options are: **Word** (beginners or next steps), **Excel** (again beginners or next steps), **PowerPoint** for beginners, Access (introductory or advanced), or **IT for beginners** (a full overview of PCs and Office software) or **IT for improvers** (for those with basic knowledge needing more support).

So if your staff or volunteers need this training let us know what is needed and we'll help make some arrangements to suit you.

WINDOWS & OFFICE SOFTWARE FOR FREE?

If your organisation is a registered charity then you should be entitled to nearly FREE SOFTWARE. Have you checked or taken advantage of this?

Charity Technology Exchange (CTX) distributes software to UK charities, and the only charge is a 'contribution'. And this is proper software – Microsoft products (Windows 7, Office 2010 for example), anti-virus and lots more.

All that is required is that you register with CTX, get approved, and you can then start purchasing your software.

There are rules of course – you have order products in batches, up to a limit and only a certain amount year on year. So you can't just go shopping when you need your next bit of software – you'll have to plan this into a strategy, know what you need now and in the future and order accordingly.

But if you do, you'll save a fortune. VANEL is investing in upgrading all of our PCs to Windows 7. The cost? £8+VAT per licence! And Office 2007 Professional costs us £16+VAT per PC.

Software costs can be a barrier for many voluntary and community organisations. But if you're a registered charity then they need not be, CTX may be the answer.

www.ctxchange.org

WEBSITES - GETTING THE RECIPIE RIGHT

Many voluntary and community organisations in our area have websites that don't do themselves justice or serve them well. Many have no website at all and can be essentially 'invisible' to others. Many have websites 'built by a friend' that they can't effectively support and grow. Not everything an organisation does needs a website, but the potentials of websites are being missed out on in many circumstances. But building a new website or getting an existing site rebuilt or better supported is not easy. Getting a decent website together involves no less effort than opening a new, well appointed and successful retail shop would. But a website can be cheap, easy and simple if necessary. But at all times it needs to be thought through and tackled appropriately.

There are a number of organisations in our area who can help your group get online or improve your online presence. We're building a directory on our IT Supporters Network website, so if you support others with websites please let us know so we can list you. If you're looking for support then please take a look online.

As well as this, the Network is offering a number of other ways to help you get your organisation on the web.

"Cooking up a website" TRAINING

Free briefing/training sessions to help explain the basic ingredients of a website and simple and cheap recipes for getting an online presence. Non-technical, easy language to help any voluntary or community organisation understand what to do to get a web presence.

These sessions will be run in the IT suite at VANEL and delivered by Karl Elliott, Hub Manger at VANEL.

Next session : **Mon 10 Jan 2011**
2pm – 4pm. Free for any VolCom organisations. Limited places, please contact us to book. More details soon on ITnet website.

WORDPRESS TRAINING

Wordpress is a free blogging tool that can be used to build an entire websites quickly and easily. (Most of the VANEL/Third Sector Hub websites are based on Wordpress).

This is an all morning training course to explain about websites & how to build them in Wordpress in particular. When we ran this course the last two times, each of the attendees then stayed on for the afternoon too to actually get hands-on experience of Wordpress and to start on editing or developing their own websites.

If you're willing to 'get your hands dirty' but don't want to learn html or other more complex ways of building a website, then this course could prove helpful.

£25 per person for the day. Very limited places. Dates coming up in January & February so please contact us if you would like to reserve a place. (Again, we'll schedule the session for a date most convenient for those who are interested).

UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL WORLD

Do your staff & volunteers understand all the new technological terminology out there? Do they know what wifi, facebook, blackberries, twitters, blogs, operating systems and broadband all mean? Can they understand it enough to help guide those who interact with your organisation through the digital world?

We're again offering free briefings to your staff & volunteers. The session is ideally 2 hours but can be adjusted to your needs. You provide the venue (& refreshments if you want) and you supply the attendees (minimum of 6). More details of the session on the ITnet website.

So get your volunteers together and we'll help you to give them a bit more knowledge.

Check the website for more details.

DIGITAL MEDIA REPORT

Via the Change Programme, NELC commissioned a report in 2010 entitled the “**Digital Media Feasibility Study**”. Published a few months back the report details the status of digital, creative and media issues in our borough and outlines a number of recommendations.

In light of national agendas to rollout ultra-fast broadband UKwide and to engage more people via the internet (for example RaceOnline 2012), it’s more important than ever to ensure our community based organisations are able to assist our communities and beneficiaries with IT and online skills and knowledge.

The report makes interesting reading. Download it from the NEL Third Sector Partnership Regeneration Group website here: neltsp.org.uk/regen/2010/11/digital

It would be interesting to have feedback on the report.

RESOURCES

A reminder of the IT resources you and your organisation can tap into.

Common Treasury has distributed various laptops & media equipment around groups in North East Lincolnshire. VANEL also holds some of this equipment. So need a laptop or projector for some work or a presentation? Contact VANEL to see what you can borrow (or check www.vanel.org.uk/treasury).

VANEL has an 10 PC **IT suite** in Grimsby that your organisation can hire. Run a training course, or try out Windows 7, Office 2007 or 2010 before you buy...

The IT suite can also now be used as a **WEBLAB**. If you’re putting a website together why not use the PCs to get online. We’ve Artisteer software to help design themes for many popular webtools. We’ve a scanner to get your images in. We’ve also got PhotoShop and image and video editing software.

So if you need IT equipment – from laptops, projectors, netbook or software, contact VANEL to see what’s available.

(There are very small charges for some items – often free for VANEL members).

VIRTUAL RIDERS

Virtual Riders (VR) is a Hull based, Big Lottery funded (BASIS) IT support organisation operating across the Humber sub-region – including North East Lincolnshire. They provide technical assistance and development work to voluntary and community organisations.

VR can help you understand your technology issues and come up with solutions. VR are currently supporting VANELs IT Network through sponsorship of our Quarterly Networking meetings (thanks!), and through leading each of the Technical Surgeries we hold.

virtualriders.org.uk

Next time...

We’re starting a new experiment in IT support working with a group in the East Marsh. We’re helping them to develop their own IT systems & support whilst at the same time empowering the community they interact with. More information in the New Year.

Social Media lunch clubs starting Jan.

PC recycling – what does your group need?

More information...

More information about almost anything mentioned here should be on the IT Network website at:

thirdsectorhub.org.uk/itnet

For anything related to the IT Network or this bulletin, please contact me – **Karl Elliott**, Third Sector Hub Manager at VANEL on 01472 231123 or email karl@vanel.org.uk

Links...

Third Sector Hub : thirdsectorhub.org.uk
VANEL : vanel.org.uk