



| Silverbear Membership

Opportunities & Challenges of the Cloud in the Not for Profit Sector

Silverbear hosted a free seminar on Wednesday 12th July in London, focused on helping [Not for Profits](#) make the most of their fundraising and membership strategies.

The seminar, titled “Opportunities and challenges of the cloud in the not for profit sector” discussed the advantages of cloud computing and how it can be used to help improve membership communication and engagement, whilst at the same time reducing costs and improving efficiency and control.

The Youth Hostel Association (YHA), a Silverbear customer, presented their story of how they’ve used [Silverbear Membership software](#) to help boost donations, increase the number of volunteers, develop account management, and enrich the member experience.

A guest speaker from Microsoft also discussed the benefits of [Microsoft Dynamics CRM](#), and their forthcoming attractive pricing strategy for Not for Profit and Charitable organisations. The new pricing option means that world-class CRM solutions are now accessible via the web, enabling organisations to take membership and fundraising management to a new level, whilst reducing costs.

The seminar tried to help Silverbear, Microsoft and delegates to really understand the challenges and opportunities that were facing Not for Profits. The key challenges were identified as:

- Reduced giving
- Reducing membership numbers
- Increased costs
- Increased customer expectations
- Online & social media
- Inflexible legacy systems and processes

With the strategic drivers for change being:

- Integrated online strategy
- Developing digital relationships
- Personalisation 3.0
- Personalised benefits statement





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Developments in Technology and Social Media

Everyone is talking about 'the cloud' but what do they actually mean? The shift from traditional software models to the Internet has steadily gained momentum over the last ten years. A key benefit of moving to cloud computing is that you eliminate the need to have to manage both hardware and software, which becomes the responsibility of the software vendor. In order to provide the highest level of service to all their stakeholders, Not for Profits need to make their business applications more mobile and collaborative.

As YHA said in their presentation, their goals were to:

- Focus on customer service
- Improve their commercial services and offerings
- Improve their levels of connectivity – starting with systems, yet ending ultimately with customers
- Become more flexible, to be able to adapt to our times

Many of these goals can be achieved by incorporating cloud computing and digital marketing. YHA spoke about how Microsoft had studied a total of 30 billion instant messages sent by over 250 million people in June of 2006, and determined that we are in fact, all linked by only 6.6 degrees of separation. Bearing in mind this study was done in June 2006, a month before Twitter was even launched and when Facebook had just 12 million users (compared to over 500 million today). So we can see how closely people are now connected and how technology and [social media](#) is enabling people to become more engaged and connected with each other, brands and Not for Profit organisations.

This level of social media connectivity is only going to become more important in the future, and a key message coming out of the seminar was that social media isn't going to go away and that associations need to recognise this and embrace it, including it in part of their long term goals and strategies. CRM (Customer Relationship Management) solutions and cloud computing will play a key role in being able to achieve this.

Cloud Computing

Hayley Bass, UK CRM Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft gave an interesting talk about Microsoft Dynamics CRM, and how it enables organisations to:

- Save money
- Gain efficiencies
- Drive innovation
- Grow their organisation





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Cloud computing means that associations can only pay for what they use. These costs are often lower and more predictable, which accelerates the time in which ROI is achieved. The nature of cloud computing also means that Not for Profits gain the benefits of a faster deployment, no maintenance issues or costs, increased software security and improved reliability and fault-tolerance. In addition, cloud computing lets associations use the latest software from any location (internet pending) and at any time, providing a superior level of flexibility and control to their staff.

She very much emphasised that there is little point in having the software unless you know what you want to achieve in your organisation. This linked back to the original goal of the seminar which was to really identify what the common issues and stumbling blocks Not for Profits are currently facing. Although, as YHA said, CRM solutions are the engine room of change where customer engagement is concerned, it's important to understand what is actually needed and how it will fit into the organisation in question.

When investing in a software solution, you must invest in a systems and solutions architecture that has a clear and integrated cloud strategy. Plan for your future and minimise your risk by making your investment with technology that is tried, tested and trusted.

