



ADMINISTRATION IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

1. Communications admin

Telecom advice is an independent website for small businesses who need to know about using telecoms and the Internet.

Handling phone volume surges while there are quite a lot of call centre services around, not all will understand enough about the sector to provide appropriate handling of awareness campaigns, good or bad publicity surges and the like. Those involved with fundraising or membership processing may be well placed, see Membership Services. Otherwise, try BSS a registered charity which runs BSS Linklines: telephone 0161 455 1206, e-mail: debra.garnett@bss.org

Online Directory Enquiries from BT gives 10 free searches daily, more if you register (free). If you have name and area, and perhaps part of the address, try this facility.

Telephone and Fax Preference Services Online look-up Data Protection regulations now make it illegal to carry out direct marketing via phone calls (or fax) to individuals who have opted out. From June 04, there is a corporate TPS where organisations can register to avoid getting cold calls. Those undertaking direct marketing must check against these lists.

Postcodes and address validation to find a postcode for an address, or look up a postcode, see the Royal Mail.

Other online address or phone number databases. There are various online business search sites.

Telephone Conferencing

Community Network provides such a service for charities and other not for profit agencies. No special equipment required. Charges are dependant on turnover and type of use. Telephone: 020 7359 4594.

BT Conferencing has various options, including Conference Call Presence, which puts conference phone calls alongside web meeting facilities (for up to 20), so you can share documents, 'whiteboard' presentations etc as you talk (you will need to have internet access separate from your voice phone line). No set up costs, but 50p per participant per minute. Telephone 0800 800 778, e-mail presence@conferencing.bt.com

2. Building management

A greatly neglected area but a well-managed building (whether an office, community centre or whatever) can make a lot of difference in the motivation of staff and how efficiently the organisation runs. On the downside, problems can create a lot of friction and be very time consuming to resolve.

Community Matters is the place to go if you are involved with a community building, as they have specific expertise and provide training in managing these. 8/9 Upper Street, London, N1 0PQ, telephone 020 7226 0189, e-mail communitymatters@communitymatters.org.uk

The Carbon Trust has taken on much of the energy saving services from Action Energy, including Design Advice, which allows community groups, architects etc. with proposed new or existing buildings (including housing) of over 500 square metres of floor area to get free consultancy on environmental and energy efficiency aspects. This can range from adequate day lighting to the use of photovoltaic panels.

Areas to check out:

Insurance

See Fact Sheet on Insurance.

Rates

National Non-Domestic Rates are applicable in England and Wales on all non-residential properties. Apply for mandatory charity 80% relief as soon as you receive an assessment, if not before, and see whether you can apply for the remaining discretionary 20%. Voluntary organisations which are not registered charities will have to check out the local council's policy on extending this to them.

Security

If you are going to install an alarm, how many people do you need to act as keyholders for call out's? Can they actually get there out of hours (safety)? The less people operating the system, the fewer false alarms you are likely to get, Police cover is usually removed if there are many of these in a given period (at the time of writing, 7 in a year in Met Police area, or 4 if cover has previously been withdrawn). In urban area, you can probably pay for a 'keyholding' service, which will answer call-outs and re-set the system for you, but make sure you are clear what each call-out costs.

Trading Company

Charities often set up trading companies to carry out 'non-charitable' aspects of their work, whether its selling merchandise or commercial sponsorship deals. Smaller organisations will not have separate staff and 'just' apportion costs appropriately. Where the parent is a registered charity, care should be taken over charging a trading subsidiary a proper market rent, as subsidy is not allowed under charity law.

TV Licence

Businesses (which includes most voluntary organisations) need a licence to cover each premises they occupy. As well as television set, do not forget this includes video recorders and TV enabled PCs. Multiple premises can be listed on one licence by arrangement. Concessionary rate for 'Accommodation for Residential Care', telephone 0870 240 1291 for information also see website, TV Licensing, Bristol, BS98 1TL.

Access

Disabled access to services has implications for premises. From 1 October 2004 service providers will have to take reasonable steps to alter premises or other physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service. If you manage premises intended for public use, an access audit would be in order – identifying what the problems are, how to eliminate them, budget costs and a prioritised action plan to use for fundraising. See Equal Opportunities section on VolResource for more links on disability issues (in service provision and employment).

Can VolResource help you further? They can provide consultancy and interim management services.

3. Administration resources

Institute for Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) – Charity Secretaries Group (launched July 1998). Open to chartered secretaries and others taking on a company secretarial role in voluntary organisations. Contact ICSA, 16 Park Crescent, London, W1N 4AH, Telephone 020 7612 7040, e-mail lsiveter@icsa.co.uk.

The Stationery Office is the key source for all statutory publications and clicktso.com extends this to a wide range of official and business publications.

Handbooks and manuals

There are a number of publishers of manuals on such things as Health and Safety, Company Administration, Payroll and the like – Trolley, Jordans and Croners are listed on the Publishers page as they also do some specific to the voluntary sector. Also see Book Review – Management for more information on Croner's manual.

Another publisher in the field is Gee, who have an online Business Network resource. Telephone: 020 7393 7400.

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