



## World Vision Australia

### An ambitious online child sponsorship project pays off

World Vision is Australia's largest charitable group for overseas aid and development. It helps more than 10 million people in over 100 countries, providing relief in emergency situations and helping communities struggling in poverty to become self-sufficient.

In 2003, Australians sponsored 282 000 children in developing countries through World Vision. The support of sponsors helped to provide essentials such as enough food, clean water, education and healthcare to entire communities.

#### E-business for online child sponsorship donations

To improve the child sponsorship process, World Vision implemented an online sponsorship facility. A website was created where child sponsors could do everything online: research the issues, choose a child to sponsor, sign up, pay online and have all details automatically updated.

World Vision believes in the benefits of e-business as a way to increase income for the organisation. An online channel is a way to reach people who have not contributed via mail and telephone. It is a more flexible communication channel and one that could deliver more information with less cost.

World Vision made a strategic decision to concentrate on improving the organisation's use of ICT, through the establishment of an e-business department.

#### The website

World Vision has created the website to provide potential sponsors with all the information to help them make a decision about sponsoring a child. The website has been developed by an internal e-business team and external contractors in four stages: enabling online credit card transactions, adding children's profiles to the site, providing real-time validation of credit cards, and automatic data exchange between systems. Automatic updating between the customer database and the website is now nearing completion.

The website is hosted externally to take advantage of superior security and flexible networking capacity. Potential areas for future development include electronic procurement and supply systems.

#### Results and success factors

With the launch of the new service in September 2001, World Vision developed a cross-media campaign to recruit new sponsors through all sponsorship channels. The results far exceeded its expectations.



In the first week when child sponsors were able to sign up and submit credit card payments online, there was an almost tenfold increase in the number of sponsors, and the cost of the investment was returned almost immediately. Response from sponsors remained at a high level for the first month, before reaching equilibrium at a slightly lower figure.

There was another surge when the second stage, which allowed batch uploads from the customer database, was completed. This meant that the online sponsorship system was integrated with the database of children available for sponsoring. For the first time, potential sponsors could select the child they wanted.

This was a significant progress, because it gave potential sponsors a more concrete basis

for their emotional decision to become a sponsor. Subsequent developments in the areas of online credit card validation and the automated transfer of data between the various databases contributed to internal efficiency rather than increases in income. At present, 28 per cent of child sponsorships are registered online.

With the online sponsorship process now fully automated, World Vision also saves on processing costs and overheads when compared with other channels. The website lowers the workload on the call centre by reducing the proportion of sponsorships taken through phone calls, and by reducing the number of general enquiries. However, the public needs to be reminded that this online option exists.

Success can be credit to several factors:

- **Tie-in with marketing.** World Vision ensures that campaigns and communications strongly advertise all available sponsorship channels and that campaigns coincide with new developments.
- **Budget.** Projects must be adequately supported by resources.
- **Supportive management.** Top-level management support is important in securing adequate resources for projects, and to ensure that projects match business needs and objectives.



With the online sponsorship process now fully automated, World Vision also saves on processing costs and overheads when compared with other channels.



- **Staffing.** Staff members must have skills suited to the task.
- **Use of contractors.** It is important to work with web development consultants who understand World Vision's needs, presented in clear statements of objectives and expectations.
- **Plan.** Plan appropriately for outcomes and when necessary, implement in stages. It is essential to deliver software on time to tie in with campaigns.
- **Design.** World Vision believes in the value of good design: graphics, navigation or usability. An attractive experience will generate better results and remain with the user.
- **Provide online resources.** The online resource centre has reduced costs and made the resources available worldwide. This has helped with promotion and with the educational role of World Vision.
- **Test.** Conduct thorough testing of all new developments, but especially those in critical business areas such as income gathering and security. The reputation of the organisation is dependent on being seen to be secure when dealing with personal financial details or information relating to children in need.
- **Communicate with peers.** An international Internet group communicates regularly to agree on principles and standards for the organisation, and acts as a forum for the exchange of ideas, developments, strategies and even computer code.

## Barriers

The main barrier has been the inability to keep pace with the range of project ideas generated by the organisation, due to resource limitations. This issue can be seen from two perspectives.



The main barrier has been the inability to keep pace with the range of project ideas generated by the organisation, due to resource limitations.

Firstly, it can dampen the enthusiasm for web-based solutions and affect the positive goodwill that results from successful projects, leading to lower expectations in the future. Secondly, it provides the temptation to attempt more than is reasonable and to bypass standard business processes.

To be successful, the e-business department needs to be able to concentrate on what is realistic and practical, then communicate that to the internal clients, so expectations can be aligned with what is achievable.



## Key lesson

World Vision can achieve significant returns on its investment in ICT with a clear objective, sound planning and effective use of communication channels.

## References

World Vision Australia [www.worldvision.com.au](http://www.worldvision.com.au)

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

## More information

In these case studies, communities, nonprofit organisations and groups share their experiences and lessons they have learnt using ICT: enhancing capability and service delivery; supporting and building communities, networks and connections; and overcoming barriers and challenges.

*Australia's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004–2006* emphasises the need to ensure that all Australians can participate in the benefits of the information economy.

Key strategies in 2004–06 will be to strengthen collaboration and capabilities in nonprofit organisations, facilitate the creative use of ICT for building stronger communities and social cohesion, and develop networks, capabilities and tools to enable participation by people who are facing economic, geographic or social barriers.

**For more information visit the DCITA website [www.dcita.gov.au](http://www.dcita.gov.au) or email [community.connectivity@dcita.gov.au](mailto:community.connectivity@dcita.gov.au).**

**Disclaimer:** Some of the information in this publication was provided by third parties. The Commonwealth has not independently verified such information, and will not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage suffered by any person arising from the information itself or reliance on the information. This publication should not be taken as endorsement by the Commonwealth of any person, organisation, company, product or service.



Australian Government

Department of Communications,  
Information Technology and the Arts