

Online Constituent Relationship Management: Examining the Children's Nonprofit Sector in Ireland

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Developing constituent relationships is crucial to the long-term success of nonprofit organisations and their achievement of goals and missions. From mid-1993, the introduction of the World Wide Web made the Internet a viable option as a channel of communication and as a strategy for constituent relationship management (CRM) for nonprofit organisations. The Internet as an online CRM channel provides powerful tools to initiate and develop quasi-personal, customised communications with constituents and to interact with them in a meaningful, relevant manner.

Internet technologies, strategies, and tactics for CRM purposes are still relatively new and evolving in their implementation. Because many of the characteristics of the Internet (for example, interactivity, lack of geographic and time barriers, richness of video and sound) differ dramatically from traditional CRM channels, organisations need to use eCRM in ways that exploit the strengths of the medium and technologies. It is vital that nonprofits consider the most appropriate and beneficial way for their organisations to embrace and profit from online CRM.

To examine this topic, this research observed and analyzed how eight nonprofit organisations in the children's sector in Ireland are using online technologies to develop and foster constituent relationships compared to best practices. The study took the perspective of the constituent and their experience with the nonprofit organisation. While the study looks at children's welfare organisations, the analysis provides a template for other sectors so that they may be able to compare and contrast their own online CRM tactics.

Because of the lack of research on eCRM for nonprofits in Ireland, the study aimed for an exploratory approach using a pilot study to begin to examine the current use and implementation of online relationship management with the goal of opening the subject to future inspection and debate.