

**BULLETIN No. 96: FEBRUARY 2011**



*This is a monthly bulletin going out to around 10,000 clients, contacts, friends, friends of friends so forth, to keep them in touch with what's going on in the world of charities. Tip: if like me you have a low attention span or this came to you by mistake, scroll down to the ...And Finally.*

*Daryl Martin*

**DEFAULT RETIREMENT AGE**

From October 1st the default retirement age is abolished. Dismissal of older workers will be managed by discussion or formal performance management procedures (sounds ominous). But if medical insurance is in place and the premiums start to get ruinously expensive there will be some sort of dispensation. I don't have a retirement age, and I'm safe enough all the time I can pull the wool over the eyes of my fellow directors. There will come a time, but not yet. Thanks to Daniel Barnett for this one)

**PENSIONS**

From next year you only have to offer a stakeholder pension this year (if you have 5 or more employees), next year you have to operate a scheme for every employee. About 50% of charities polled seem to be aware of this. If you are in the wrong half it might be time to start to look at it, get some advice from a decent FSA and look at the budget implications for next year. Pensions are not my field, so I haven't researched this subject. From what I can tell the scheme will be phased in over 3 years starting with the biggest. Every employer will be written to 12 months and 3 months before their enrolment date to tell them what they need to do. No need to panic just yet.

**BUSINESS LEVELS**

Noting about panic, it's clear that the downturn is beginning to impact charities across the UK. In many cases donations are falling away as people fear for their jobs and retrench on non-discretionary spending. We are getting calls from charities with the sad news that they are closing down. Others are asking us how we can work with us to get their fees reduced: fair question which we take seriously. If you switch to us we have a monthly payment option at no extra cost. If you are already with us we will talk to you. (I'm taking a risk even saying this!)

**DON'T GIVE FOLK AN EXCUSE NOT TO GIVE**

If you read my blog, (and if you don't why not? I can find out where you live) the



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...ent one on fundraising tells a winsome story about how the beggars of Calcutta  
...ped up to the plate when help was needed. My point is that we can all give; we  
...ldn't let one another off the hook just because the world is crashing around  
...ears. Some of us may have to cut back but others should be giving more right  
... . When you are asking for donations paint the vision, make the challenge;  
...t major on the financial crisis. My last blog is about when to quit and when to  
...g in. If you are hanging in, this is your year to lean into the dip, embrace it,  
...make the downturn work for you.

### **BIG SOCIETY**

...travel round I'm beginning to be asked what I think this. Opinions vary and  
...e are so many slants on this I hesitate to add to the debate at this stage. I've  
...a watching Nat Wei's blog. He's the guy tasked by the government to steer it  
...ugh. He's got some good ideas. What I will be doing is to offer up snippets  
...h might make a difference to you. Here's one: Greg Clark, the minister for  
...ntralisation, has written to all council leaders asking them to reveal their  
...ntary sector spending, publishing all grants, payments, contracts, tenders to  
... Society Organisations (you are one of these). He's looking for increased  
...sparency. Information is always good. I do love transparency when it's for  
...thy reasons. If you are involved in the local community make this work to your  
...antage. A local council may not look so good if they are niggardly with local  
...ities providing good services.

### **CHARITY COMMISSION**

...ve been a bit critical of the CC (only a bit mind), but I had my knuckles gently  
...ed by someone last month over the bad press I have been giving them. OK, I  
...your point, Rod Liddle I ain't. The CC does many things well, but there are  
...s when they must be taken to task. I know we often get a one sided picture  
...the media, but I try to make allowances for this. (I must write a blog on  
...sparency soon.)

...month, no criticism of the CC then, but I make no promises for the future. I  
...t Saturday training a group of trustees foolish enough to give up a Saturday to  
...n to my thoughts on governance etc. The question came up as it always does;  
...ld we notify the CC or ask them about such and such? There's no simple  
...ver but often it's not always easy for them to respond to a question put to  
...n. The question as put may not even be the right question. They are not there  
...olve your problem, though they may try; they are there to tell you what the  
...lations say. So take pity on them, talk to your accountant, auditor, or even  
...us a call or an e-mail. It'll be even harder for the CC as the cutbacks take  
...ct.

### **GREEN LIGHT TO CHARITY FRAUD**

...is probably an example of the media being unduly critical of the CC. In 2005  
...CC published 79 reports on fraud. Last year it was 15. But of course fraud is  
...down 80%. The CC says it will only investigate if a certain minimum amount of  
...s is at risk. Which the media reports as giving a green light if not too much is  
...ed! This is unfair. If there is fraud in your organisation it probably means that  
...don't have proper controls in place somewhere. This makes it your  
...onsibility, not the CC's. Neither the CC nor the police at a time of cutbacks are  
...g to find it easy to make resources available to investigate white collar crime.  
...e same time Big Society will mean more money coming into charities. Make  
...your controls are sound. If you want me to come and poke around I'll try to  
...the time.



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## OUR WEBSITE

Last week I was asked to critique websites belonging to 2 organisations that were set up to attract supporters. One was clean and crisp and a joy to look at; the other was messy, fussy, busy, slow, (the fussy bits slow it down) with dull unattractive colours. Surprisingly both were created by the same designer. Tony says the secret is to grab the visitor's attention at first glance; then make your content so compelling they don't want to leave. Maybe not as simple as it sounds! If you need help, give him a call on 01243 555611.

## PROTECT YOUR WEBSITE

When talking about websites, Tony wants to pass on some tips which might help keep you out of trouble. A couple of our charities are under attack from affected former members who have bought similar domain names and are using them to post critical comments. If you want to protect your name and goodwill, you might want to try and acquire similar names and extensions (org.uk, .com) if they are available. The same applies to Facebook. His other tip is to stay out of trouble in the first place. This isn't always possible but you should do your best to stay above reproach (why should I even have to say this!). One last point: remember not to let your domain name/s expire (including domain names you are not currently using); make sure you have effective renewal arrangements in place. You may not get a reminder or it might go astray.

## AND FINALLY...

Someone is very stupid, but I can't resist it. Comes from Derek Robert who should know better. (Nice to have someone to blame!) During a visit to the local mental institution, the visitor asked what the criterion was to have a patient institutionalised.

'No', said the director, 'we fill up a bathtub, then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup or a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the tub'. 'Oh, I don't understand', came the reply, 'a normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or teacup'. 'No', said the director, 'a normal person would use the plug. Now, do you want a room with or without a view?'

**Facebook funny:** Apologising for the violence against the protesters, Egypt's prime minister said he hopes they can all still be Facebook friends.

**Question:** Why are more women than men worried about the economy? Because women are in charge of the economy.

**OUR HELP NEEDED!** We work hard to keep the subscription list at around 1000. This seems to ensure that we get a steady flow of enquiries coming in. Unfortunately the numbers have been drifting down. If you get this bulletin passed on to someone else, as many do, or if you pass it on, perhaps you get the opportunity to subscribe in their own right. Also if you could recommend this bulletin, we would all be so grateful. This item in the January bulletin drew in over 75 new subscribers. This is fantastic. Thank you. Can you have another think please to help us increase our circulation?

# SANDY ADIRONDACK

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for the voluntary sector

**Sandy Adirondack** is a freelance management consultant and trainer, working exclusively in the voluntary/not-for-profit sector. Her main specialisms are the legal aspects of voluntary sector governance and management, and helping boards become more effective.  
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