

BULLETIN SEPTEMBER 2010



This is a bulletin which I send out regularly to around 10,000 clients, contacts, friends, friends of friend's 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, scroll down to the...And finally, which hopefully won't disappoint?

Daryl Martin

AUD

This item in the August bulletin touched a chord and it took me a morning to respond to everyone who wrote in. Click on the link below to see some of the useful comments which have added to the debate.

[Fraud - Feedback Link](#)

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Last month I reminded readers that trustees are required to make sure that their charity meets the public benefit requirements. We prepared a briefing on this some months ago. If it will help your own situation you can download a copy from our website. [pd_guidance.pdf](#)

RATE RELIEF

There have been concerns that some local authorities are using the financial crisis as a reason to reduce, or even revoke, the rate relief that charities enjoy. 1989 regulations require local authorities to give at least 12 months notice if they wish to do this. (Thanks again to Sandy Adironack)

YOUR WEBSITE FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Before I visit a client to bring training or whatever, I check out their website. Sometimes it's a good site: clean, speedy, giving off a good impression. Too often it's something that simply doesn't work. You must know by now just how important your site is. It's often an early point of contact particularly if you rely on voluntary support, and first impressions are so important. I saw one today; a charity struggling to raise funds. Its website was mostly 'under construction!' This isn't good enough. Tony our IT director offers you a free website evaluation. He

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shows what good looks like. Just click on the link, fill in the form, and leave the rest to him.

[Free Website Review Link](#)

CHARITIES ARE NOT REPORTING FRAUD

A senior accountant from Zolfo Cooper calculated that well under two serious frauds in every thousand are reported to the Charity Commission. This seems rather pessimistic to me, but the Charity Commission believes there is serious under-reporting. If you do discover serious fraud you are under a duty to report it and failure could lead to action being taken against you (Regulatory action whatever that is).

WORDY WEBSITES

As might be well rant on; a scientist did a study of charity websites. He found that people would need a reading age of an educated 11 to 17 year old to understand the sites. The average reading age in the UK was equivalent to an educated 9 year old. Now let's not get into an argument over statistics which can be made to prove anything. If your website is targeted to a Telegraph reader you are making a big stake. Why does the Sun massively outsell all other daily papers. Not for the reason you might think (though their football pages are remarkable); they know the importance of brevity and clarity.

TRAINING

I had several responses to the item in my last bulletin; I'm looking at the feasibility of organising local training sessions. There is interest from Leicester, Devon, Leeds and Huddersfield. If you are within shouting distance from any of these locations, you would be interested in getting along to a seminar, please [e-mail](#) me; if you're not somewhere else and write in, I will put it onto the list. I only need 6 people to make it viable. What's on offer is training for trustees and administrators, (governance and accountabilities etc) and independent examiners/ charity bookkeepers wanting to know more about yearend account prep.

MEDIATION

Why is it such a dirty word? When the Pituitary Foundation referred to one of its supporters as a 'dreadfully sad gentleman', and he asked the CC to look into it for them, they found it was a 'personal matter' and they would not intervene. They did however advise the charity to go to mediation. Doesn't seem very professional of the CC to act in this way; mediation will find out the truth and bring resolution, and both parties win. Meantime the charity's reputation is stained, which won't help its fundraising and Jon Danzig is rightfully or wrongfully aggrieved. Only those with things to hide need to be afraid of mediation. We have access to professional mediators ready to mediate without fear or favour. CC: in my training I tell people what sharp teeth you have. Now don't go all toothless on us; we need you to growl occasionally. Oh, by the way, ACAS and the TUC recently launched a couple of guides on workplace mediation, one geared to staff the other employers; both contain useful information.

TRAINING TRUSTEES

Trustee training has always been a thorny issue, causing a lot of problems. Andrew Hind

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

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Recently said there is increasingly a case for charity boards to have paid trustees. The vast majority of trustees he said are over 55, retired with pensions; they are often the only people who can afford to give big chunks of unpaid time. His remarks are encouraging, particularly as other people who should know better are coming out against this. Clearly there need to be controls against abuse, but it's good to know that the CC will be sympathetic where there's a good case to be made. Don't forget your governing document must have appropriate provision: send us a copy if you need it reviewed. We have people who understand them, even the very old ones with not many full stops.

RYL'S BLOG

Recent blogs contain hints for better meetings (we all need this one), a key to making better decisions, and a farewell to a much loved friend and client. I think the numbers of readers is well into double figures so I persevere. Next blog is about rule number 6, which is a real life changer for a lot of people.

AND FINALLY... Bill Gate's High School Speech on the 11 Rules of Life:

He talks about how feel-good politically correct teaching has divorced a generation of kids from reality and sets them up for failure in the real world.

1. Life is not fair - get used to it.
2. The world won't care about your self esteem; the world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.
3. You will not make £40,000 a year right out of college, not until you've earned it.
4. If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss.
5. Stacking shelves is not beneath your dignity. Your parents had a different word for stacking shelves; they called it opportunity.
6. If you mess up it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes; learn from them.
7. Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes, listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation try cleaning your room.
8. Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.
9. Life is not divided into terms; you don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that in your own time.
10. Television bears no resemblance to real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.
11. Be nice to nerds; chances are you will end up working for one!

Actually this is not by Bill Gates. Another urban myth. It's by Charles Sykes from his book, 'Dumbing Down our Kids' which says it all really.)

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