

Why the internet and non-profits need to become friends

 By [Andy Hadfield](#)

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From crowdfunding and instant mobile payments for emergency relief to virtual volunteering platforms, technology has changed the way we give. Previously the domain of big business, giving is now in the hands of everyone - and we're talking serious money.



Over a period of six months, more than \$350m was raised in relief aid for Hurricane Harvey through online platforms such as www.YouCaring.com. Driven through social media, emotive pictures and stories of loss going viral, you could get involved and not even build up a sweat while doing it. Instant generosity at the click of a button.

Another example - in a world before drought – the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge - who hasn't heard of the ice bucket challenge? Anyone know what ALS is? Guess that's not the point. Thanks to technology, the idea went global, with the likes of Oprah, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and even Obama taking part. Over a six-week period, more than \$115m was raised and August officially became ALS Awareness Month. Maximum impact – driven entirely by the internet.

Closer to home (and a long way off from international disaster relief), social media has started to galvanise the masses – xenophobia, political activism, the Imizama Yethu fires in Hout Bay and the Knysna fires being prime examples. The bottom line, whether you're for or against clicktivism, technology brings scale to social problems.

How non-profits can start their technology journey

Technology is continuing to open up new revenue opportunities for both business and the non-profit sector. Put simply, if you're not leveraging technology, if you're not open to technology as an acquisition, engagement and operational channel, then you really will be left behind. This is no more apparent than in the non-profit sector – and in the developing world.

We can see the technology trend reflected back to us in the data on www.forgood.co.za (a technology platform empowering non-profits). Looking at a sample of 6,833 actions across the country and our 12 corporate volunteering programmes, 1,57 of those actions were linked to technology. That's 26%, or one in four tech-related requests and interventions – a significant number. From savvy millennials to retirees who have time and a wealth of knowledge under their belt, the way we give is increasingly becoming digital.

The advent of global tech products being adopted into enterprises has also opened the door for non-profits to utilise those very same products – but for free. For example, the Google Ad Grants programme, which offers non-profits R130,000 per month in **free** advertising. Use it to attract donors, tell your story and raise awareness – it's almost criminal if you're an active non-profit (hopefully with a profile on forgood.co.za) and you aren't leveraging this.

Another example, Google Apps for Business (email, calendar and online storage, all on your own domain name), you guessed it... **free** for non-profits. Forget fancy internal servers and complicated software providers. Google wants to be your friend.

Creating more sustainable business models

As we move to the age of the 'social enterprise', non-profits are trying to lower their reliance on donor funding by creating more sustainable business models. One of the products helping to drive this trend is Shopify. Now with local representation in South Africa and deep integration into UAfrica (and others) for delivery options, any non-profit (or small business for that matter), can have a fully functional online shop, beautifully designed with point-and-click pay / deliver features, for less than R1,000 per month. It'll take you a few hours to set up a basic Shopify e-commerce shop. When done properly off a low-cost base, an online shop is a lot more scalable than a cake sale.

We're not saying ditch the 'offline' events that non-profits have become masters at (who doesn't like cake!) – just make sure you've got an instant payment portal such as SnapScan at your event – cash is no longer king. And don't forget to promote and manage the event on your social media platforms - a small ad investment to a targeted audience could yield some serious donor cash and audience engagement.

Think about the exponential impact your organisation could achieve if you started thinking with a digital mindset. Technology is not going away. It's changed how we do business, how we interact with each other and how we give. If you want to be a part of it, jump on.

ABOUT ANDY HADFIELD

Andy Hadfield is the CEO of volunteering platform and CSI management tool [forgood](http://forgood.co.za). He launched his first startup aged 19 before going on to hone his skills in a number of tech ventures, sales apps and one of the first digital engagement programmes in the country, The Deloitte Way. In 2015, he joined [forgood](http://forgood.co.za), heading up the team that are rolling out the most advanced large-scale employee volunteering and CSI management tool in the country.

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