

Get Online Week - how your charity can benefit from Workplace Digital Champions

This Get Online Week (14-20 October) our Chief Executive, Emma Weston OBE talked to [Charity Digital News](#) about how Digital Champions in the workplace can support organisations with digital transformation.

The full article is below.

It's Get Online Week (14 – 20 October), a national campaign where thousands of community events will be held to help people 'get more out of life online'. With half of charities (53%) citing digital skills as a main barrier to them getting the most from digital^[1], why not use this week to focus your support on 'life online' in your workplaces, with your people!

Digital skills drive digital transformation by embedding knowledge and confidence across the workplace. Staff (and volunteer workers) benefit, the organisation benefits. Digital capability correlates to digital self-confidence; nearly 90% of those who report as 'Digital First' are self-motivated and proactive^[2] – they keep learning.

Digital skills also support inclusion and well-being in the workplace.^[3] They help to reduce staff turnover and staff feel more confident to take on more and different work.

The digital skills landscape in the charity sector

Thanks to the excellent annual [Charity Digital Skills Report](#) we know a lot about digital skills within the charity sector in 2019. We know that charities believe having digital skills would help them save time and money (72%), deliver better services (62%), and increase fundraising (68%). Yet 52% rate their capacity to exploit 'digital knowledge' as fair or low.

How do you give your team the knowledge and skills to make digital 'work' for them and the confidence and strategies to apply them? And, critically, how do you do it sustainably and impactfully ensuring that skills development can be maintained and grown into the future?

Although only 41% see the development of their colleagues' skills as a key priority this year we know that Digital Champion models – that harness peer to peer skills development - can deliver widespread digital skills benefit, and cost effectively too.

Workplace Digital Champions make a difference

Our [Digital Champions Network \(DCN\)](#) has trained and supported 6,000 Digital Champions to date. The DCN is an online learning and project management platform that enables organisations to design, deliver and monitor their own embedded Digital Champion networks.

In the last 18 months we have seen a huge surge in organisations training staff members to be Champions. In response, we developed [new accredited learning](#) to support Workplace Digital Champions.

A recent survey of Digital Champions including from charities such as Age UK, Citizens Advice, Turning Point Scotland and Victim Support analysed the impact they were making.

Our survey found that:

- 82% made a difference to their colleagues, usually at their desk and on an ad hoc basis.

- 70% felt good championing
- 64% said their learners were more positive and confident.

It's clear Workplace Digital Champions have huge potential.

A Women's Aid Worker at North Ayrshire Women's Aid, Amy is a DCN Champion. She runs an IT and digital group for women within her service helping to create universal credit accounts.

This led Amy to help colleagues and senior managers with digital skills. The charity is moving to a paperless approach with new online systems and the team was struggling to adapt. Amy started to help them save files and create online storage folders. Her role as a Workplace Digital Champion began!

Amy says "I really enjoy being able to share my skills with my colleagues and I like to learn as well. I mainly help them with Microsoft Office and usually on an 'as and when' basis. It can be hard to predict what they're going to need to know so having a bank of up to date resources to fall back on is very helpful. I've learnt to keep it simple [...], enabling them to do it themselves is so important. Being a Workplace Digital Champion has definitely helped make my relationship with colleagues even stronger - they know there is someone there they can ask, and they know that I will help them work it out."

Champion the people power

Like Amy, many Workplace Digital Champions feel confident about their capacity to help their colleagues. What they needed to properly fulfil their role were aspects such as;

- clarity and recognition about their role as a Digital Champion within the organisation,
- ideas on how to manage time and learners
- training and resources 'because they're often expected to know everything'
- a network of fellow Champions for peer support

So, this Get Online Week, consider how your charity could benefit from developing Workplace Digital Champions. The potential is in your people – [digital] Champion them!

[1] Charity Digital Skills Report 2019

[2] Lloyds Digital Skills Index 2019

[3] <https://digitalworkresearch.com/>