IT Assist Service Spotlight

Meeting Nonprofit Needs
TechSoup IT Assist provides nonprofits with the power of a fully staffed IT team so they can stay focused on their mission rather than their technology. IT Assist includes access to a help desk that clients can call when they have questions or need technical support for their PCs or the back-end servers that power their organization.

Nonprofits can be hesitant to devote much, if any, of their budget to technology. They tend to rely on volunteers, friends, family, board members, and on-staff "accidental techies" to keep their IT up and running. According to NTEN's 9th Annual Nonprofit Technology Staffing & Investments Report, released in 2015, the median technology budget of a nonprofit is between 1 and 2.2 percent of its total operating budget.

Nonprofit Challenges
The problem is that although nonprofits should be spending more to keep their technology better maintained, often what happens is either

- the costs associated with having an in-house technology team is financially out of reach, or
- the in-house IT staff members may not have all the knowledge they need to maintain a diverse technology infrastructure.

Each additional in-house IT staff member means more funds being devoted to salaries, benefits, vacation, and sick days. It's already expensive to maintain a staff in addition to the costs of upgrading and maintaining the organization's existing technology.

In fact, the average national salary for an IT professional is $85,460, based on a comparison of 252 salaries for IT professionals by Glassdoor with an average minimum salary of $46,000 and maximum of $121,000. So it's understandable that many nonprofits rely on volunteers, friends, and family to keep their IT services up and running.

However, not having a dedicated technology team can cripple an organization's operations and lead to unexpected expenses associated with repairing the damage.
Case Study: Community Integrated Services
*Helping People with Disabilities to Create Individualized Employment Opportunities*

Community Integrated Services (CIS) originally hosted its email, data, and even desktops with a third-party vendor. This service was extraordinarily expensive, wasn't a great user experience, and when things broke, it often took over a week to fix.

CIS migrated to Office 365, available as a donation from Microsoft, which significantly increased its system reliability while reducing costs. The organization moved its email to Office 365's Exchange Online service and all of its files to SharePoint. IT Assist connected CIS staff with the IT Assist help desk and a guaranteed two-hour response time on all issues. This solution provided huge savings to CIS because it was able to drop its hosted environment and gain a team of tech experts.

When CIS moved locations, it also moved its phone system and wiring. The IT Assist team was able to find a third-party wiring vendor who quoted the best price available. CIS also moved to a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone solution that IT Assist recommended, which now saves CIS approximately $3,000 per month in communication bills.

As a nonprofit organization, TechSoup only recommends products and services that organizations need and are within their budget. Our focus is on our clients, and our mission is to provide them with affordable resources that will help them stay focused on doing the good work that they do.

**Benefits of IT Assist**

The nonprofits we work with love being able to call an expert to help with any technology issue or question. After we close a case, we always ask them to review our service. We respond immediately to any issue, no matter the size, and take action when necessary to improve the level and quality of service we provide to each organization. The survey responses place TechSoup's customer satisfaction at more than 90 percent, and we attribute this to the IT Assist team members' level of attentiveness for each organization they support.
We also schedule regular meetings with each client based on their schedule. We review opened and closed cases as well as back-end maintenance such as backups, and check in on the organization's future technology needs. Organizations benefit from having someone to discuss any necessary and new technology. Our team is always on the lookout for potential issues that could crop up — not just the issues our clients bring to us. For example, several staff members from the same nonprofit may call with questions about Excel, and we can recommend one of our Excel training sessions.

The IT Assist team works closely with each organization near the end of each fiscal year to create a technology budget for the next fiscal year. We take into consideration any existing technology and service costs and the organization's future technology plans to give them realistic numbers that inspire confidence.