

## Making Better Use of Charity Shops

Charity Shops have their place on the high street and now they must work to keep it and develop their position as a point of presence for service delivery.

Recently, people have been questioning whether or not charities are still playing their once obvious role or if they are now stealing custom from high street chains. Latest reports from the government have been scrutinizing the generous grants charities receive and whether they should still be receiving such heavily discounted business rates.<sup>1</sup>



Charities must respond to this challenge by providing expanded services on the high street thereby directly benefitting the community from which they gain support. The particulars of this response depend upon the nature of each charity and should reflect their purpose. In general delivering omni presence from web site to shop, enhancing engagement of staff, volunteers and community, contributing to the high street community and optimising profit margin is a virtuous circle.<sup>2</sup> The alternative is to do the 'same old same old' which will eventually denude the high street, reduce foot fall and with it community support. The discussion re reduction of business rate discount to charity shops is a clear indication that charities must respond to host community concerns.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/analysis-charities-business-rate-relief/finance/article/1115543>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15473506>

Charities have already lost £3.8bn in grants from the government, bringing the current total down to just £2.2bn. If the cuts to charity grants continue at the same rate, there will be no more grants for charities by 2020.<sup>3</sup>

With the moral imperative to contribute to the host community aligning with financial goals, developing the high street charity shop as a point of presence and an agent of change within the community becomes a task worthy of zeal.

How is this to be done? Each charity must look to its *raison d'être* and reflect this in the in their instore services. Mechanics of logistics such as omni presence (order online pickup in shop), shop collections, delivery to shops and product cascade is common to all. Facilitating both services and goods requires effective communication, coordination and collaboration with staff, volunteers and supporting community. IT in the form of FreightVista provides this service. FreightVista is delivered as a fully managed cloud based computing service that can be securely used by shop staff via a simple web interface, by drivers using a smartphone app, by distribution and regional sales management via web interfaced control consoles. The simple act of providing coordinated easy to use communication empowers both staff and volunteers to collaborate productively raising mutual esteem, productivity and profitability. With improved communication, coordination and collaboration staff and volunteers can spend more time building a rapport with the customers and delivering services to the community.

FreightVista provides for secure data input and access in the form that is required, at the time it is required and in the format that it is required. The need for phone calls and emails is reduced and the capacity to intelligently link services and analyse performance is greatly enhanced.

As a cloud computing service FreightVista has no capital costs to the users and the service includes security, resilience, auto backup and comprehensive technical support.

FreightVista is provided in two forms:

- FreightVista Free to Use, a stand alone service for charities.
- FreightVista Pro, that can intelligently link charity systems and services.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact our team via email at [info@keyfort.co.uk](mailto:info@keyfort.co.uk), or via phone on 0844 801 4580, or you can view our webpage <http://keyfort.co.uk/solutions/cloud/saas/freightvista/>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2016/feb/11/grants-local-charities-campaign-appeal-government-cuts>