

## Oxfam GB

Charity ensures operational availability during crisis



### About Oxfam GB

Oxfam GB is a development, relief, and campaigning organisation that works with others to find lasting solutions to poverty and suffering around the world. The organisation employs 1,700 staff in the UK - with the majority based at its UK headquarters in Oxford. It also has 23,000 volunteers nationwide and 4,700 staff working overseas. As one of the world's leading charities, it receives a high level of financial support - Oxfam GB's net income for the last financial year was £181.8 million.

### Understanding the Issues

For a number of years, Oxfam GB employed a small web hosting company. As Oxfam GB grew, the organisation began to feel restricted by the size of this supplier - mainly due to its lack of investment in the technology infrastructure and the limited services available.

"Quite simply," says Andrew Hatton, Information Systems Project Manager at Oxfam GB, "we'd outgrown our current supplier and needed to work with an organisation which could support our growth. We needed a wider range of services than a small supplier could offer and we needed a company who would invest in the technology infrastructure and provide reliable and secure 24/7 services."

Oxfam GB put out a formal invitation to tender and scored several suppliers against key criteria such as value for money, investment in infrastructure, flexibility and knowledge.

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**Andrew Hatton, Information Systems Project Manager, Oxfam GB**

"Star was a good fit for us in terms of size - not too big and not too small. We didn't want to get lost in a large corporate but we needed strong technical expertise, excellent technology infrastructure, a wide portfolio of services and sufficient resource to support us. We were impressed by Star's technical knowledge and by the fact they'd taken time to understand our business. Above all, they were prepared to be flexible."

### The Star Solution

In 2003, Oxfam GB appointed Star to provide managed technology services. Star hosts Oxfam GB's intranet and its website ([www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)), which gets over half a million hits per month.

Oxfam GB's e-commerce websites are also a key part of the organisation - and a vital part of its growth strategy. The Oxfam Unwrapped site, for example, Oxfam's alternative gift catalogue, has raised many millions of pounds for the charity. For Andrew, "It's critical we have true 24/7 support. The Oxfam Unwrapped site is busy every minute of the day and night at Christmas. Any downtime at all would result in us losing a lot of money. Managing an e-commerce site is very different from managing a static website.

### Star has the Expertise to do this

"One of the best examples of the benefits of Star's technology is the reliability during emergency situations. Crises like the Tsunami can never be predicted, and when the Tsunami

struck, we had ten times as much traffic as usual. While other Tsunami relief sites went down, unable to cope with the sheer volume of hits, Oxfam GB carried on taking donations and our site operated perfectly at all times.”

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Star’s remit has extended since the initial contract. The most recent additions from Star include Synthetic Transaction Investigation (STI) on Oxfam’s e-commerce sites, providing alerts if there are issues with the shopping basket and hosting Google on the Oxfam server. This allows users to conduct Google style searches on the Oxfam GB website.

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## Looking to the Future

Andrew concludes, “We have a very strong, scalable infrastructure now in place. In future, we intend to work increasingly with customers online and continue to focus on developing our e-commerce sites. Thanks to Star, we’re in a strong position to do this.”

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