

# Technology in human services organizations

Psychology



Technology in Human Service Organizations Here s Here Technology in Human Service Organizations The role of technology in modern society cannot be understated. The influence of scientific advancements on virtually all aspects of life is extremely visible, especially when it comes to the computerization of personal devices (phones, e-readers, mp3 players) and service systems (telephone customer service trees, online services, supermarket checkouts). There are arguments for and against the rapidly increasing growth of technology, ranging from complete resistance due to job losses, to total acceptance of the simplification and/or elimination of tasks. We will adopt a moderate approach to technological value as we examine the influence of applied scientific advances (in the form of technology) on the operation of a selected human service organization. The Salvation Army is a nonprofit human service organization born out of Christian Protestantism (it is technically a Protestant church in itself) that provides a variety of services to a wide range of people in need. Some of these services include disaster relief, thrift shop operations, food charity, and family tracing assistance (to find lost relatives who may be able to help those in need). Membership in the church is not a requirement to receive help from the Salvation Army, and the organization operates in a large number of countries (most notably in the Western world). The sheer size of this human service organization lends appeal to the potential application of advanced technology in its operation. Three possible uses of technology within the Salvation Army would be to improve the co-ordination of services throughout the organization with information technology, to maximize potential donations using ecommerce, and to increase the variety of services that are offered using cheaply available computing and networking. We will examine <https://assignbuster.com/technology-in-human-services-organizations/>

each area of application for potential benefits to the Salvation Army, while also considering limitations that may be associated with these technological advancements. Information technology advances have led to the availability of practically any informational resource at nearly instantaneous speeds. These improvements allow for highly coordinated operations in several areas, but perhaps most critically in disaster services. When a natural (or other) disaster occurs, it is imperative that supporting organizations are adequately informed of the needs of the population. Troy, Carson, Vanderbeek, and Hutton (2008) examined the role of technology in enhancing disaster preparedness. A database was used that provided critical information about the community to service organizations like the Red Cross, and it was found that this database did lead to the improvement of these services. The same process could likely strengthen the flow of services from the Salvation Army in times of disaster, as well as during other times of high need such as the holiday season. While there are plenty of potential benefits associated with implementing information technology systems in human service organizations, there are also limitations of the technology that may pose a risk to the delivery of services. Technology is fallible, especially as related to the consistency of network connections. There are several methods that are used to send digital information over large distances (fiber optics, satellite) and all are prone to failure in one form or another (breaking cables, solar flares). Furthermore, computer databases must be backed up regularly and receive continual maintenance due to the possibility of corruption. These issues result in a technology that cannot be completely relied upon to sustain the storage and availability of a large quantity of information in a time of disaster. Ecommerce refers to the entire process of <https://assignbuster.com/technology-in-human-services-organizations/>

the development and execution of buying and selling products and services over the Internet and usually includes the use of specialized software and services that process monetary transactions. This advancement has resulted in the reshaping of markets, businesses, and the economy in general.

Ecommerce and related services are also available to nonprofit organizations as a way to expand donation collection to the online domain. Websites (part of the ecommerce strategy) also provide an avenue for the marketing of the organization's services (Abuhamdieh, Kendall, & Kendall, 2002) and to reach more clients that may be in need through increased visibility (the Internet is free through the public institutions of many countries). However, ecommerce can be expensive to implement, and will normally require the forfeit of a percentage of all transactions to intermediate service providers (like PayPal).

This could be interpreted as a misuse of contributions, though the trade-off in donation rates may be a point to counteract this concern. The Salvation Army offers many services as we discussed above, but there are areas of need that they may better address to offer a more holistic approach to human services. Technological advances have made computers and Internet access extremely affordable in many nations. Old computer systems could be used to provide access to job searches (Stevenson, 2009) and other resources (finding contacts, online support groups, skills training) for clients in need. These services would need to be supported by donations, and obtaining space to house the computer systems may be difficult and expensive. Expanding services in this manner may also lead to overextension of resources and attention, leading to a decrease in the quality of help offered by the organization. It would appear that several types of technology could potentially provide additional support for the Salvation

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Army and its clients. However, all technology comes with limitations and possibly negative implications that must be taken into consideration prior to implementation. References Abuhamdieh, A., Kendall, J. E., & Kendall, K. E. (eds.). (2002). An evaluation of the web presence of a nonprofit organization. In *Information technology for our times: Ideas, research, and application in an inclusive world*. (pp. 209-222). New York: Kluwer. Stevenson, B. (2009). The internet and job search. In D. H. Autor (ed.), *Studies of labor market intermediation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Troy, D., Carson, A., Vanderbeek, J., & Hutton, A. (2008). Enhancing community-based disaster preparedness with information technology. *Disasters*, 32(1), 149-165.