**IT Think Papers – The Tech Catalogue**

One of the National Society (NS) strengthening services we can provide is an on-line catalogue of technologies we assemble from a variety of sources that provide "standards and choices" for smaller NS who lack IT tools and capacity. Think of this as an "amazon.com" of rated products for the Federation, from which NSs can select solutions that meet their current needs and capacities, and encourage growth. The catalogue could contain choices that are appropriate to NS size and capacity, offering a "bronze, silver and gold" level of applications and services. We could offer a certification process, whereby we ensure an application represents a converging set of technologies that work well together and in a sometimes-connected world.

As we imagine the possibilities for a tech catalogue for National Societies we can envision a number of ways technologies can be included:

1. The results of our "discover and harvest" approach, which will find promising applications already in use among smaller NSs that can be polished, supported and taken to scale by the NS or the Secretariat. (The Qatar Volunteer Application may be an example.)
2. Finding de facto standards of vendor applications, for which we can broker a group price plus donations, and make it available for all. Also, we could add an on-line user forums across NS’s for peer support. (NAVision for finance management may be a primary example.)
3. Investing in a PNS application project so that the application can incorporate broader features (and a contract) which and permits and encourages sharing. (The British RC IPMS project would be an example.)
4. Redefining a Secretariat department project so that it can also serve a NS audience.

This approach challenges our historical ways of approaching technologies, where we often seek to build applications that meet requirements (the "assess and build" approach). The “discover and harvest” approach has the humility to recognize that some local applications are already meeting needs and are "good enough" for others to use. Our role is to shine the spotlight on them—playing the role of “Chief Amplifier,” and encourage broader use and sharing, even if among a few societies in one part of the world.[[1]](#footnote-1) This is a potential new wave of partnering where we help the smaller organizations help themselves, much as cooperatives have done for the past few centuries.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Success does not need to be global and ultimate; success can be local and good enough. Think early cell phones; they never achieved the quality of twisted-pair landlines in developed countries, yet they've surpassed traditional phones in the market, and have grown in coverage and converging standards at much higher levels than PC's and other technologies.

1. For the conceptual background to this approach, and the role of “Chief Amplifier,” see Richard Tanner Pascale and Jerry Sternin, “Your Company’s Secret Change Agents,” *Harvard Business Review,* May, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the history of the “Rochdale Principles,” on Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochdale_principles>) last accessed 31 Aug 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)