Collaboration Technology for Sustainability Groups

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Background

Preference for email	Email is widely considered the most important collaboration tool.
Information overload	Community groups typically generate a large volume of email.
Face to face meetings	Face to face meetings are seen as being extremely important for making collaboration work effectively and cementing relationships
Training and training materials	No training is typically provided for solutions currently employed in some groups. The tool is only as good as the tradie.
Importance of protocols	Importance of establishing clear protocols on how to use the technology. For example, ensuring that documents are saved in a format accessible by all team members.

Non-functional requirements

Low cost	For a low-revenue, non-profit organisation one of the most important non-functional requirements has to be cost. Both purchase cost and running costs must be kept to a minimum.
Cloud-based	Any solution should require no physical servers or IT infrastructure.
Ease of adoption	Training participants in how to use the collaboration tools adopted is important but simplicity is key. Solutions which are easy to adopt should be given preference.
Large body of knowledge	Solutions should be selected where a large body of knowledge exists so that people can self-train or, better still, already have knowledge on how to use solution.
Ease of use	An important non-functional requirement is that the technology should be easy to use and non-intrusive.
Access control	Proving access to information to the correct people and restricting access to others is important, particularly if the group may be dealing with commercially confidential

		information.

Functional requirements

Format	Function	Description
Discussion	Online discussions	Topical discussions in an online environment.
	Email list-serv	Ability to participate in online discussions via email; receiving discussions and responding using email.
Documents	Document repository	An agreed location where documents are stored. Ideally a single location and ideally accessible by all team members.
	Document collaboration	A facility which allows distant team members to collaborate on a document. This collaboration could be as simple as sharing files in a Document Repository or sophisticated as real-time on-screen collaboration by multiple team-members at the same time.
Meetings	Phone conference	Using a fixed-line or mobile telephone to join a group phone conference.
	Online audio conference	Using a computer to join an online audio conference.
	Online video conference	Using a computer to join an online video conference.
	Scheduling meetings	Determining the best time to schedule a future meeting to maximise availability and avoid existing conflicts in people's calendars.
	Meeting invitations	Inviting people to (or being invited to) a scheduled meeting. Preferably with automatic addition of the meeting into participants calendars.
Activities	Tracking tasks	Managing the allocation of tasks to individuals and tracking their progress over time.
	Activity log	A record of who has been performing what work on a particular initiative and its tasks.
Broadcast	Status updates	Broadcasting information on the status of a project.
	Upcoming meetings	A location where people can view the schedule of upcoming meetings being held by the community group.

	Directory	A location where people can find out who is involved with the community group and access contact information.
	Published information	A facility for publishing important information such as protocols, policies, position statements and instructions.

Possible Solutions

GroupSpaces provides a simple, integrated set of tools making it easier to get things done. Every group comes ready to roll with member management, events, subscription and payments, group homepage, newsletter and mailing lists, wiki etc. It does cost per month for the PRO plan but small groups can use it for free.
http://groupspaces.com/tour/

Facebook groups and pages help to share information easily between members and to a wider audience. Files and events can be shared in groups. Is free until you need to start advertising to your own members to get your message out.
www.facebook.com

Google Drive is both a cloud storage solution (like Dropbox) and also a document collaboration solution. Users can share folders, files and collaborate in real time with chat on a variety of document formats from word to presentations..
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2424384?hl=en

Basecamp is the number one online project management solution. It incorporates many of the features of existing solutions such as Asana, Wiggio and Google Groups.
https://basecamp.com/

Google Calendar is a fully featured online calendar solution. Events can be created and attendees invited and the calendar can be published, creating a schedule of upcoming events and meetings.
https://support.google.com/calendar/answer/2465776?hl=en

Bitium is an identity management solution that provides access to multiple applications via a single username and password. These applications can be shared with team members, providing a menu of applications your group uses with automated login. In this way, Bitium allows for shared access to single-user-account applications (such as GoToMeeting) without having to share credentials (or for participant having to remember these credentials).
https://www.bitium.com/site/product/

Skype is a free online meeting solution that allows you to chat or call a larger number of members allowing for teleconferences when a meeting is not possible. It also allows for sharing screens and presentations and video for groups who have one user who buys the premium version. Groups can also buy a skype number which people can call and leave messages on. You are sent an email when someone calls the number.
www.skype.com

GoToMeeting is a market leading online meeting and phone conferencing solution. It provides online audio and video conferencing as well as telephone conferencing in addition to its online meeting capabilities.
http://www.gotomeeting.com.au/fec/gotomeeting_pricing

More than 6 million people use MailChimp to create, send, and track email newsletters. Whether you're self-employed, you manage projects for clients, or you work for a Fortune 500 company, MailChimp has features and integrations that will suit your email marketing needs.
Create signup forms that match your brand's look and feel, and send your subscribers product updates, event invitations, announcements, or editorial content. Use our reports to improve your campaigns and learn more about your readers. Best of all? MailChimp is free for lists of up to 2,000 subscribers.
www.mailchimp.com