

A race online

Why digital inclusion should be a key concern for every business contributing to the UK's digital economy



By Stuart Aitken

“It has been over a year since I took up the challenge of championing ‘the use of technology to improve the life chances of those who are most disadvantaged.’ One of my first aims was to get the issue out into the wider public while making sure I kept true to exactly what I had been asked to do - to look at how the government, private and charitable sectors can work together to close the digital divide.

“After a horrific car accident a few years back, I nearly died: I crawled back out into life by using the web. It is clearer to me now more than ever, that there is a social and moral case for us to work towards ensuring that everybody has easy and affordable access to the internet in the same way that we can access water, electricity or gas.

“The Race Online 2012 Campaign works with a huge range of partner organisations and individual advocates to help reach the 10 million UK adults who have never been online. There are many ways you can help: you could pledge to train your staff, hold an event, raise the awareness of the benefits of the internet through your comms channels or even better, you could pledge to create solutions to the barriers people face trying to get online.

“By becoming a Race Online 2012 partner, not only will you be doing wonders for your CSR, internal communications, advertising budgets and potential market share – you will also be responsible for helping transform society to create a 100% networked nation – benefiting the economy by an estimated £22bn and giving UK plc a competitive advantage in the global knowledge economy. It’s quick and easy to get involved, just visit <http://www.raceonline2012.org>”

Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion

The case for inclusion



Stuart Aitken
Editorial Manager, Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) UK

The world is getting smaller. As technology increases our ability to communicate and share experiences, this trend is unavoidable. The internet is of course a key driver in this, allowing us enormous freedoms to cross boundaries and time zones, opening up new channels of communication and giving us access to a world of new content. However, as old barriers are torn down, so new ones are constructed.

Not everyone has been invited to join the internet revolution. Indeed an astonishing 20 per cent of the UK adult population – 10 million people – have still never used the internet. Worryingly, four million of these people are among the most disadvantaged in society with 39% aged over 65 and 38% unemployed. What's more, 47% of those living in households earning less than £11,500 do not use the internet compared to only 4% of those with an income of over £30,000, while 48% of disabled people are offline.

Data from the National Readership Survey (NRS) further highlights the digital inequalities currently at play in the UK. Chart 1 (below) looks specifically at online audiences by age group. Here we see a healthy representation of 15-24 year-olds online. This age group makes up 16.1 per cent of the population but 20.8 per cent of the online population. The 25-34 year-old and 35-44 year-old age groups are similarly well represented online. However the picture changes the further up the scale we move until we reach the most excluded sector of society, the 65+ age group, with just 7.9 per cent online compared to a potential total of 19.9 per cent.

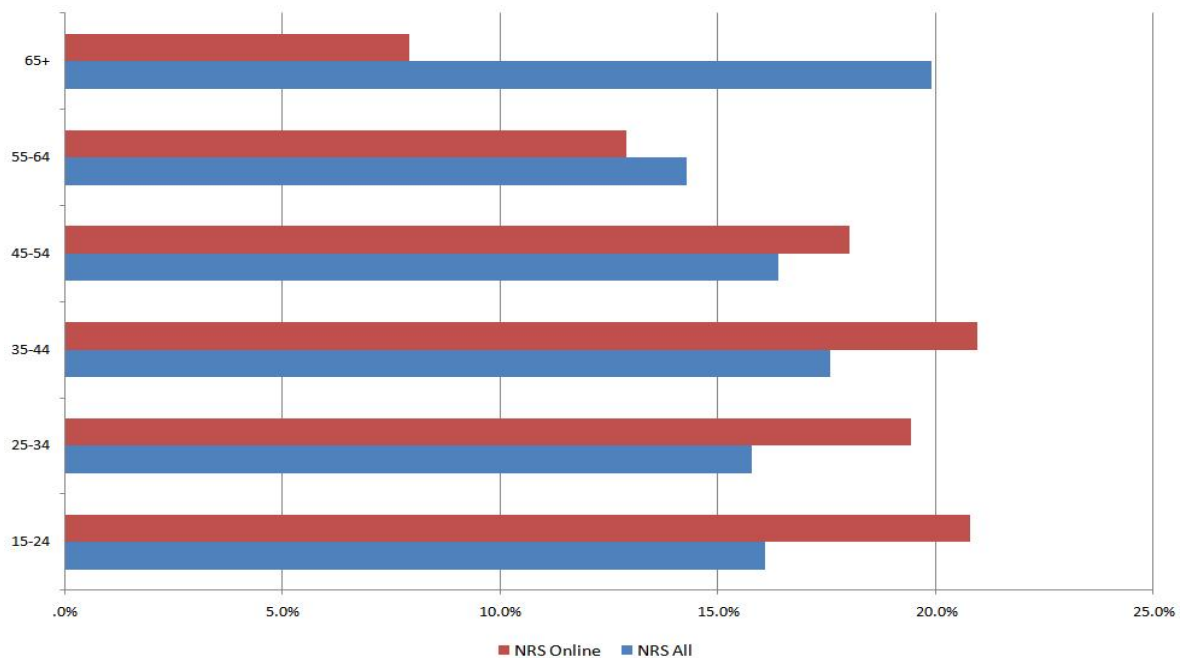


Chart 1

Looking specifically at social class reveals equally alarming trends. Chart 2 shows A, B and C1 categories well represented online. The picture changes by the time we reach the C2, D and E groups. Indeed in the lowest social grade, E, only 5.1 per cent are online, compared to a possible 8.1 per cent.

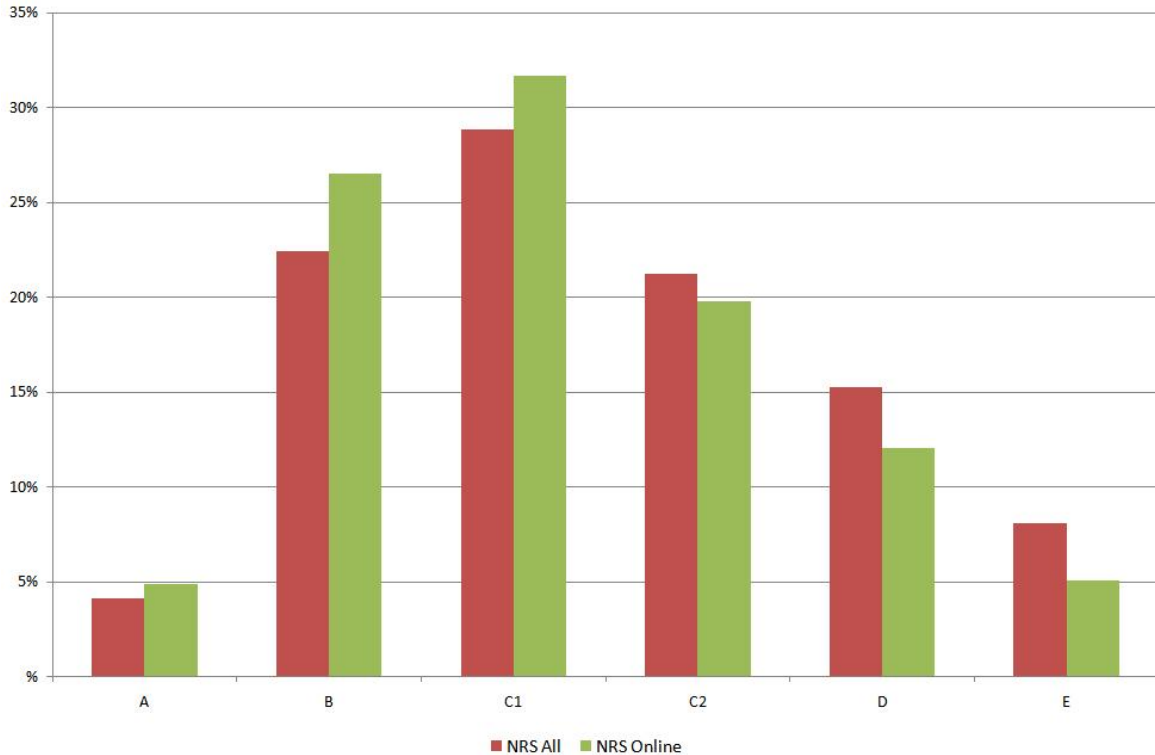


Chart 2

Serial entrepreneur and founder of Lastminute.com, Martha Lane Fox is responsible for changing this. As the UK's Digital Champion and the founder of Race Online 2012, the challenge of connecting these 10 million people falls on her.

But why should we care?

As Lane Fox points out in the quotation that begins this paper, a car crash changed the focus of her life. "I crawled back out into life by using the web," says Lane Fox of the period following her well-publicised car accident.

Her belief in the transformative power of the internet is echoed by the experiences of [Race Online 2012's People's Taskforce](#), a group of individuals who have been chosen to represent the four million people in the UK who are least likely to embrace the information revolution. Each one of them has a story to tell about how the internet has changed their lives for the better.

Martha Lane Fox's CV

Education

91-94 Magdalen College,
BA Oxford Ancient and Modern History

Employment

94-97 Spectrum Strategy Consultants
96-98 Head of Business Development
for Carlton TV Digital Channels
98-04 Co-founder of Lastminute.com
00 Founding trustee of Reprieve
04-06 In hospital (Oxford and London)
recuperating from accident
06 Co-founder and Chair of Lucky Voice
06 Joined board of Channel 4
07 Founded Antigone.org.uk
07 Joined board of Marks and Spencer
07 Joined board of Mydeco.com
09 Appointed UK Digital Champion and
established Race Online 2012 campaign

Beyond this though, there are also hard economic reasons why Race Online 2012 is an important initiative. Research carried out by PwC estimates that the total economic benefits from getting everyone in the UK online is in excess of £22bn. Stand outs include the fact that offline households are missing out on average consumer savings of £560 per year and people with good ICT skills earn between 3% and 10% more than people without such skills. It is also estimated that 77 per cent of all jobs require computer skills.

Successive governments have championed the digital economy and pointed to its importance to the UK economy as a whole. While it would be difficult to estimate the total worth of the digital economy, IMRG figures show that the ecommerce sector alone was worth £48.7 billion in 2009, while IAB figures show that internet advertising was worth £3.5 billion in 2009 – having grown a staggering 2,200% during the noughties.

Alongside the moral arguments for inclusion then there are strong financial reasons to nurture the digital economy. Encouraging more of the population online is of course one way of doing this. This is why the IAB is a partner of Race Online 2012 and why we'd encourage our members to join the 600+ companies who have already taken the initiative to commit to working towards a 100 per cent networked nation.

So what are companies already doing to help?

“Fundamentally it makes a difference” – Microsoft

As Clare Riley, group manager, education relations at Microsoft points out, when Bill Gates founded Microsoft his vision was of a computer on every desk and in every home. Marking its desire to achieve this goal, Microsoft runs a number of inclusion projects including Partners in Learning, a global initiative to increase access to technology, and the Britain Works campaign which allows people to take advantage of free and low-cost resources allowing them to earn the skills to be workforce ready.

Looking specifically at Race Online 2012, Microsoft is a key partner. “We buy into the über principles of Race Online,” explains Riley. “The argument that if you can get kids online they will have better chances in life: they'll do better in education and be more employable. If people can pay bills more cheaply online, have access to shopping offers online all this will contribute to making happier citizens. We believe fundamentally it makes a difference. I have endless stories from people who tell these beautiful stories about how technology has changed their lives. It is vitally important.”

According to Riley, Race Online's Pass It On campaign has great potential as there are half a million workers in Microsoft's partners network in the UK. The company is currently encouraging members of this community to take an active part in helping individuals to get online. Microsoft will also be supporting Get Online Week by mobilizing its significant volunteer force.

Looking to other options, Riley is confident that there is something that can be done through Microsoft's current network of users on Hotmail, Messenger, Bing and Xbox. “That's a huge network and a fantastic lever,” says Riley. “There are all sorts of natural partnerships we can explore through this for example by encouraging grandchildren to reach out to help grandparents.”



Alongside the social and cultural reasons to encourage inclusion, Riley is keen to flag up the business reasons which may help to persuade even the most hard headed business person that getting involved with Race Online 2012 is a good idea.

“The tech sector is growing faster than any other sector in the UK economy,” explains Riley. “However we are facing a tremendous skills shortage. We need to broaden the base of experts in the tech field or we will all suffer. A vibrant sector depends on a high quality workforce which will ensure that the UK can stay competitive globally.”

“The right thing to do” – Google

Ben Wallace, associate product marketing manager at Google, manages the company’s day-to-day work with Race Online 2012. He explains that working with Lane Fox’s organisation is an easy fit for Google. “This is an issue that’s very important in the UK and something we have the power to help with. We believe in the idea of a connected nation. It fits with our beliefs and the products we create designed to promote an enjoyable user experience.”

For its part, the company has decided to focus its efforts on the over 55 market. Work began by creating two focus groups made up of over 55s not online and internet evangelists from Lane Fox’s People’s Taskforce. As a result of these early discussions it was decided that the best way to reach their audience was through motivational educational material.

This work is nearly complete with the educational guides almost ready for printing and distribution through a range of partners including libraries and community centres.

Wallace recognizes that there are business reasons for getting involved with Race Online 2012, but believes the issue of digital inclusion transcends economic factors. “Of course inclusion is important in terms of our user base and building our business,” says Wallace. “But we believe this really is the right thing to do.”

“We should all be doing our bit” – Three

Marc Allera, sales and marketing director at Three, explains that as part of the mobile operator’s pledge to support Race Online 2012, they are committed to provide the opportunity for 100,000 people who are currently not online to discover the internet. To this end, at the beginning of August, Three launched the ‘Mobile Broadband Bus’ which will provide several ‘Mobile Get Online Days’ run by trainers from UK Online Centres to help people discover the benefits of the internet.



Meanwhile Three’s ‘Community Network Project’ will also provide free mobile broadband connectivity to organisations and individuals who are likely to work with or provide services to individuals who may not currently be online.

“We think that everyone in the digital and mobile industries can support Race Online 2012,” says Allera. “Whilst we tend to take the internet for granted as part of our professional and personal lives, there are millions of people out there who either don’t want to or aren’t

able to get online. Increasing the UK’s online audience will bring huge social benefits to those individuals, save the Government money at a time of austerity, help the country’s economy, bring commercial benefits and increase the UK’s overall competitiveness.”

Allera also believes that this is an initiative that all IAB members should embrace. "With IAB members playing important roles in the online space, we should all be doing our bit to help Race Online 2012 reach its target of getting the UK's 10m unconnected people, connected."

"You should get involved" – Mirror Group Newspapers

According to Paul Hood, head of digital at Mirror Group Newspapers, the Mirror Group knew about the Race Online 2012 campaign "early doors". A key motivation for them to get involved was research they had carried out into their readership which looked particularly at the over 55 demographic.

"A recent IAB survey showed that this is the fastest growing demographic online, so we surveyed our own readerbase to get further insight into this group. The overwhelming majority of feedback showed that the internet had significantly enriched the lives of those who had previously had internet access.

"Another key finding was that many of these internet 'newbies' experienced difficulty in finding their way around. Many expressed a wish for a simple 'guide to the internet' written in plain English. That's one of the things the Daily Mirror can help its readers with; being an enabler."

Hood recognises the clear potential economic benefit as a result of an increase in numbers online, but reckons that the social benefits outweigh the economic – and should be enough to persuade anyone involved in the digital industry to play their part.



"For most of us it's inconceivable to imagine life without the internet. We use it in all aspects of our work and social lives, and overwhelmingly it is a positive enabler. The potential economic benefit of getting 10 million people online is astonishing. But the key thing here is if you believe in the overall benefits of this campaign to the lives of those people who are currently not online, then you should get involved."

"Bringing the benefits of digital into UK homes" – Sky

Delia Bushell, Sky's director of broadband and telephony, explains that as part of their commitment to Race Online 2012, the company aims to encourage up to 100,000 customers online for the first time.

In order to achieve this commitment, Sky has a number of initiatives planned. It will incorporate Race Online 2012 into Sky's customer communications, create 'Digital Inclusion Champions' among Sky staff and host interactive sessions where Sky staff can invite their friends, family and local communities to experience the benefits of the internet.

The company has also promised to ensure that all Sky customers who are entitled to free broadband are made aware and provided with the necessary support to allow them to take full advantage of the opportunity. They will also be using Sky.com to host a range of information and practical advice which customers and Sky staff can use to 'Pass IT On' to those who will benefit.

“We are proud of the role we’ve played in bringing the benefits of digital into UK homes,” says Bushell. “However, we recognise that there are still many more homes yet to realise the benefits of the internet. To help address this, we will use our relationship with one in three UK homes, our broadband service, and the commitment and passion of our employees to help support more UK homes embrace the internet.”

“Any company that uses the internet should embrace the campaign” – Honest Creative

Crucially though, Race Online 2012 partners are not just large multi-national media corporations. Small digital agencies are also on board with the initiative. Ben Carnes is media director at Honest Creative, a creative media consultancy trained by former directors of M&C Saatchi, which offers a range of services from traditional ad campaigns through to social media management, media production and brand building and helps a diverse client list from sole traders, to flourishing start-ups and more established businesses.



The agency operates from two main studios - one in Cheshire and one in Staffordshire - working remotely over the internet. “This is one reason why we’re passionate about what the online world can offer in terms of flexibility and opportunity,” says Carnes.

For Carnes there a number of reasons to support Race Online 2012. “As a follower of technology, I truly appreciate what the digital world has to offer. So the idea of helping others experience that, especially the disadvantaged, is really compelling.”

The company has committed to helping the cause in a number of ways. This will include telling clients and partners about the initiative as well as advocating the advantages of a connected society. In addition to awareness, they’ve also pledged to help as part of Get Online and the Aged UK events.

“The Internet has become a core part how as a team we collaborate and work, plus what services we can offer,” says Carnes. “Quite simply without the Internet, we’d have to travel more - which impacts on environment and time issues - plus we couldn’t reach or engage people in the same way as we can digitally. We’ve chosen to support Race Online 2012 as a payback for what the internet has allowed us to do. Ideally any company that uses the internet, especially if it’s key to their existence, should embrace the campaign and pay that homage. That way others can have the chance to share and tap into those same services and opportunities we’ve been fortunate enough to rely on.”

“Build a creative, connected, inspired and truly remarkable UK” – IAB

The IAB signed up to become a partner of Race Online 2012 in July in recognition of the importance of the initiative for the digital industry as a whole.

Commenting on the partnership, Guy Phillipson, chief executive of the IAB, said: “We believe Race Online 2012 is a vital initiative which will not only bring huge social benefits, but will help in the development of the UK’s digital economy – a crucial area of growth for this country.”

As the trade body for the online advertising industry, a key part of the IAB's remit is to further the digital industry through the dissemination of educational materials. This White Paper and the accompanying [video interview with Richard Eyre and Martha Lane Fox](#) is evidence of how strongly the IAB believes in the importance of Race Online 2012. It also marks the first stage of the IAB's commitment to educate its members on the importance of digital inclusion.

Further industry events are planned to bring this core message home to IAB members. In the meantime, Guy Phillipson concludes: "We would encourage any IAB member organization of any size to get involved to support the initiative in order to build a creative, connected, inspired and truly remarkable UK."

Benefits of digital inclusion (from Race Online 2012's [Manifesto for a Networked Nation](#))

Consumer benefits:

- Offline households are missing out on average consumer savings of £560 per year.
- 3.6 million low-income households are missing out on total savings of over £1bn a year from shopping and paying bills online.

Education benefits:

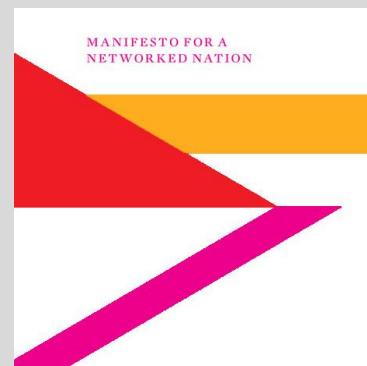
- If the 1.6 million children who live in families without the internet got online at home, it could boost their total lifetime earnings by over £10bn.

Employment benefits:

- If just 3½% of unemployed non-internet users found a job by getting online it would deliver a net economic benefit of £560m.
- People with ICT skills earn 3% - 10% more than people without such skills. If every non-internet user in employment got online, each could increase earnings by an average of over £8,300 in their lifetime and deliver between £560m and £1,680m of overall economic benefit.

Improved government efficiency:

- Each contact and transaction with government switched online could generate savings of between £3.30 and £12. There are an estimated 1.8 billion contacts with public services every year of which only about 20% are currently online.
- If all currently offline adults began using the internet and made just one online contact each month with government instead of a telephone or face-to-face contact it would save an estimated £900m per annum.



[Click here to download the Manifesto for a Networked Nation](#)

“Whatever your politics, society works best when it is more rather than less inclusive. Conversations are more meaningful when they include all valid contributors. And markets are like celebrations; they simply work better the more people are actively involved.

“So the IAB is determined to throw its weight behind the compelling moral arguments against digital inequality, also recognising that a fully connected UK is a more enticing place for innovators, investors and trade.”

Richard Eyre, Chairman, Internet Advertising Bureau

