

The New York Times

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2002

Name Change and Revamping For Consultant to Nonprofits

By STEPHANIE STROM

Susan Packard Orr, daughter of the late David Packard, a co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, is revamping and renaming the Technology Resource Assistance Center, the company she founded to help nonprofits with their technology needs.

Ms. Orr has renamed the company Telosa Software to better reflect its metamorphosis into a software and services provider from a consulting firm. The company, based in Palo Alto, Calif., has doubled its employees, to 30, in the last year, in part because it has added a team of sales representatives around the country.

The name change coincides with the release of the latest version of the company's signature product, Exceed, which is designed to help nonprofits better manage their records, increase efficiency and build relationships with donors and volunteers by aggregating them by households rather than by last names or addresses.

"The old name reflected that we were local, a place where people could come for consulting and assistance," Ms. Orr said in a telephone interview. "We haven't been local for a long time, and deploying a sales force across the country, we will have our feet on the street."

Technology is the Achilles' heel of the nonprofit world, despite much promotion of Web sites that assist in fund-raising and perform other functions.

Donors typically do not like to underwrite investments in office equipment, so nonprofits often assemble their technology in a piecemeal fashion, buying off-the-shelf software and relying on volunteers to design and set up computer systems.

In a recent survey from Independent Sector, 75 percent of 203 nonprofit human services organizations surveyed said they would benefit from some investment in information technology. But less than 40 percent had a budget for it, and less than 30 percent had a strategic plan for technology.

"They really view it as a one-time investment, like buying furniture - and they often buy furniture secondhand," Ms. Orr said. "It needs to be built into the regular operating budget."

Good technology can pay off in unexpected ways for nonprofits. Ms. Orr said she had chided the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for tracking all its donations going back 40 or 50 years.



Susan Packard Orr - Founder, Telosa Software

One donor had been sending a \$5 check each year to the organization, hardly a bonanza, and tracking that history had seemed a waste of effort to Ms. Orr. But, Ms. Orr said, "When that woman died, she left her house in San Francisco to the S.P.C.A. Which goes to show what using technology to keep information that keeps a relationship alive through the years can do for you. I bet that house was worth a million dollars."

Telosa's other clients include the Ronald McDonald House, the American Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity. It does not serve any of the Packard family's philanthropic institutions.

Although Ms. Orr is an heir to a rather large fortune and a well-known philanthropist, Telosa is a business, not a philanthropic venture.

"I couldn't have nearly the reach if I funded this activity personally," she said. "And if I had to seek funding from nonprofits to build it, that would be a diversion. It's a much better model to have the marketplace fund this so it can be self-sustaining."

Ms. Orr declined to discuss the Packard and Hewlett families' opposition to the merger of Hewlett-Packard and Compaq Computer.