IT Manager report for BMAF AGM 2023

General
As with the previous year, the devices and platforms used remain the same. Specifically, with committee members primarily using their own Windows devices to perform word processing, spreadsheet, PowerPoint and internet activities for their roles.

Web hosts
The web host moved to last year are providing a stable platform with good level of response to technical queries. The hosts are also providing a stable email service with MS Outlook. It is intended to remain with the host for the foreseeable future in spite of generally increasing costs. An approximation of current web and software costs was given to BMAF Services around April and despite increases it remains a stable prediction.

Website
The situation of having two websites, BMAF.org.uk and mastersathletics.co.uk (originally intended for marketing) has been causing confusion for some time and means additional administration. A decision was taken to merge the two into BMAF.org.uk was made, and use mastersathletics.co.uk as a redirect for the foreseeable future. Adrian Essex completed this early summertime and at the same time the BMAF website was given a new look. Age group records are still being maintained by Courtney Gunn who makes them available via the website.

Facebook
There is some confusion about BMAF on Facebook with multiple groups and channels. BMAF on Facebook is not under BMAF control. Hence MastersAthletics on Facebook has current and ongoing BMAF and championship posts. Should BMAF change its name in the future it would provide a perfect opportunity for a totally new Page. Adrian Essex has also created a social media entity #mastersathleticsuk which has a presence across a number of social media.

A point of note - Facebook pages have been appearing specifically for international championships, again these are not under the control of BMAF. On these sites there are frequent questions, e.g. How do I enter? All of these questions could be answered if they used the BMAF website Fixtures page.

Twitter/X
BMAF has a presence on Twitter/X which is less active in terms of BMAF than Facebook MastersAthletics and more diverse in posts.

YouTube
BMAF also has a YouTube presence with 45 videos.

Storage
The intended move of BMAF documents from Dropbox to One drive has taken longer than expected and still in progress.

Communications and Marketing
BMAF continues to use Getresponse to communicate with its members/athletes. It is has been used for several large email shots including this AGM notice. We have increased our email license limit from 5,000 to 10,000 along with an increase in user accounts, this has had an associated increase in cost. This is in anticipation of increasing membership and future marketing of masters athletics. It has been noted that email delivery failures will occur, but there have been occasions where the percentage of failures was well above that expected, alternatives will be looked at if this continues.

OpenTrack

Membership details for members are held via OpenTrack. Constant reviewing of membership details is performed by John Fenton. This is to ensure that when athletes enter competitions, their data provides the required detail for the meeting organiser, and also ensures accurate profiling for statistical analysis and reports.

BMAF continues to heavily use OpenTrack for most championship entries. There are ongoing outsourcing developments with OpenTrack to create some new and enhance existing functionality. These are intended to remove heavy lifting work for competitions.

Payment System

A large number of national and area club championship entries are made through OpenTrack. The payment method is the Stripe payment system where payments are handled automatically. Stripe's area club management payments are being passed back for their administration. BMAF and OpenTrack have oversight of each area clubs payments should any major problems occur.

IT Hardware

Three BMAF laptops were recovered from the previous Track and Field secretary which had been primarily used at track and field championship meetings. These were brought up to the latest OS level but have been rarely used as indicated above with personal devices being used. These laptops are over 10 years old and have slow performance due to the changes in software advances. The printer also retrieved was also found to be faulty.

After discussion, a decision was made to retire the three laptops. A new Windows laptop has been purchased to establish a suitable level of performance and this has been found satisfactory. Further laptops will return the complement to three. A new printer is also being purchased. These new purchases were not an expected or predicted cost and were probably due prior to covid. They would also be required to change in a few years to meet new online security requirements.

Similarly there were also three ipads also recovered in addition to one held by the committee. One had a split case due to a burst battery which has been dismantled and disposed of. There are no current plans to replace it and no plans to change the remaining three.

Others

BMAF Services provided a basic mobile phone so that athletes could contact team managers at the Championships in Pescara with negligible cost. However, while the previous long standing international team manager found such a device suitable, the LOC and athletes have moved on with the mobile being barely used. The LOC preferred WhatsApp and Facebook as the methods of communication. General athlete posting was via a non BMAF Facebook page as indicated above, and BMAF's twitter/X feed. With BMAF choosing to continue to fund the international team managers, a smartphone should replace the basic mobile.

Summary

BMAF still needs to identify users to fully utilise the likes of Getresponse through marketing and communication, and identify somebody who can co-ordinate the use of social media and cross posting. Hardware and software cost are low relative to the overall finances of BMAF but the outsourcing of competition administration, due to the lack of people to fill roles, is a big unknown.

Glen Reddington
BMAF IT manager