What You Need to Know Before You Buy:

A Candid Conversation about Fundraising Management Systems

with panelists:

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What is a Fundraising Management System

and

Why Do I Need One?

Things to Consider Before You Buy

- Do you have a current system? What is <u>not</u> working about the one you have?

- Why are you purchasing a new system?

- Who will be managing the system?

- Who owns and is responsible for the data?

Things to Consider Before You Buy Cont.

- Are you a Mac or PC-based office?

- What is your budget?

- Do you have a website?

- Have you thought about integrating your system with other systems (website, accounting, program, etc.)

How to Select Software

- Define your system needs with involvement from all departments that will either put data into or get data out of the system.

- Create a Request for Proposal (RFP) and a <u>good</u> cover letter explaining who you are and what you do as an organization.

- Select vendors based on your needs & your budget.

How to Select Software Cont.

- Review RFP responses & select software you want to demo.

- Craft a demo agenda with specific tasks & scenarios and give to vendor prior to demo.

- Guide the vendor demo, do not let the vendor run the show.

How Much Does It **Really** Cost?

- Software

- Hardware

- Conversion/Setup

- Backup, Maintenance & Upgrades

- Training/Ongoing Training

- Staff Management & Support

What are the <u>some</u> of the software choices today?

- **In-House**
  - DonorPerfect
  - Giftworks
  - MemberTies
  - Millenium
  - PledgeMaker
  - Raiser's Edge
  - Sage FR50
  - Etc.

- **Hosted, SaaS, ASP…what's it all about?**
  - Common Ground
  - Drupal/CiviCRM
  - DonorPerfect Online
  - eTapestry
  - Neon at Z2 Systems
  - Raiser's Edge
  - Wild Apricot

Final Thoughts

- Figure out what you want or need before selecting your software.

- Please…do <u>not</u> try to design your own fundraising management system.

- Involve the end users from the beginning of the selection process.

- Define and assign a staff person's role to be the gatekeeper from the beginning.

Final Thoughts Cont.

- Provide sufficient and ongoing training for your staff which should include intermediate training as well as beginner level courses.

- Realize that everyone shares the ownership & responsibility of maintaining a system <u>equally.</u>

- Understand that the true cost of technology is the sum total of software, hardware, related services, training and staff time/support.

Glossary of Terms

- **_Client_ –** the interface or portion of the software that you interact with and enter data into.

- **_Server_ –** ideally a separate, dedicated computer, but sometimes not, that houses the database where your data resides.

- **_In-house_ software –** usually client/server software that is installed and managed by internal and/or external staff resources.

- **_Hosted_ software –** this can mean one of two things, either that the entire application and the database is hosted by another party outside of the organization or that just the database is hosted or just the application is hosted outside of the organization**.**

- **_Software as a Service (SaaS)_ –** the software and database is hosted by an external vendor and usually only requires a web browser for access. The vendor provides one product which offers the same features and functionality to all users, who then benefit from a better managed, maintained and supported solution.

- **_Application Service Provider (ASP)_ –** The software is still hosted by the vendor and paid for by the customer via a monthly fee or on an as-used basis. However, the specific feature set is unique to the user.

Glossary of Terms Cont.

- *Addressee* – the address as it appears on the outer envelope and inside address of a letter.

- *Salutation* – the Dear _____: portion of the letter.

- *Duplicate Checking* – a system feature which helps you to identify possible duplicates in your database based on name and address criteria. At minimum, it should allow you to merge duplicate records and determine which information will be kept and which information will be deleted.

- *Merge/Purge* – a process by which you compare two lists, often, your internal database and an external list and merge the contents into one unified list for mailing purposes.

- **Matching Gift** – a donor's gift which is matched by an employer's organization based on their organization's matching rules and limits. At minimum, your system should be able to track that the original gift and the matching gift "pledge" are linked and be able to pay off the pledge when the gift is received which is often many months later.

Glossary of Terms Cont.

- **Pledge –** a promise to pay a specified amount at a future date. At minimum, a system should be able to track the pledge, pledge payments made against the pledge and the payment schedule and be able to generate pledge reminders and be able to write-off a pledge if necessary.

- **Soft Credit** –a fundraising credit amount given to, usually an individual, which directed the funds from another entity, often a foundation, corporation or trust.

- **Tribute –** a gift given in honor of, in memory of, for the birthday of, etc. At minimum, a system should be able to track that it was a tribute gift and who the attributed person or organization is. Some systems, allow you to maintain the names and addresses of those who the donor wishes to be notified of the gift as well.

- **3rd Party Pledge Payment –** this is a pledge payment made by one constituent, e.g., a foundation, to pay off a pledge amount or a portion of the pledge amount on another constituent's record. Some systems handle this well. Many systems do not.

Glossary of Terms Cont.

- **Query** – a feature which allows you to ask simple and complex questions of your database and return the results, e.g., how many people live in Scarsdale, drive a BMW and attended the gala last Fall?

- **Export** – a feature which allows you to export, ideally, any data that you have stored in your database for the purposes of mailing, updates, screenings, reporting, etc.

- **Import/Update** – a feature which allows you to import external data into your database. You would use this feature for your data conversion, getting outside lists merged into your existing file. Updating existing records with new information, etc.

- **Report Writer** – a utility, sometimes, built-in to the software, oftentimes, external to the system, such as Crystal Reports, Business Objects, etc. which allows you to write your own custom reports based on your database.

- **NCOA** – National Change of Address – a database maintained by the US Postal service which tracks changes of address made when someone moves and forwards their mail. Your mailshop vendor often runs your data through a process which checks the NCOA database and replaces the bad addresses with new addresses.

Additional Resources

- **List of Software Vendors**
http://www.lyricsystems.com/listvendors

- **Idealware –** http://www.idealware.org

- **A Consumers Guide to Low Cost Donor Management Systems -**http://www.idealware.org/low_cost_donor/

- **NTEN – Nonprofit Technology Network -** http://www.nten.org

- **TechSoup -** http://home.techsoup.org

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