Considerations When Choosing Fund Development Software

In order to make informed decisions and realistic plans about your fund development program, you need to have current, useful and specific donor and prospect information. Selecting the proper fund development and/or CRM (customer relationship management) software to enable your organization to do this is very important. Along with thinking through your budget, the vendor's history and reputation, technical and training support provided as well as data security, it's also important to know exactly what you need for the software to do for you. Listed below are some ideas to get you started.

Then, figure out your "deal killer" requirements, check with your colleagues about what they are using and whether they like the product, research vendors, and create a vendor comparison scorecard. Once you have determined the top vendors that seem a good match (3-5?), arrange for demos of the product. Make sure the demo includes those features that you feel are essential to you. Check references.

Constituent names

- ✓ Access by first and last names
- ✓ Able to recognize and keep together husband and wife who have different names
- ✓ Able to recognize and keep separate individual gifts made by either the husband or the wife, especially where gifts are usually made by both together
- ✓ Able to store large of amounts of data: multiple addresses/phones/email, children/grandchildren's names and ages, employment, relationships, formal and informal salutation, maiden names, other agency involvements, college degrees, etc.
- ✓ Assigned solicitors, matching gift information
- ✓ Type(s) of constituent (board member, donor, vendor, event guest, foundation, corporation, etc)
- ✓ Tracking system to note contacts, results, reminders re follow-ups, etc. (CRM)

Pledges and gifts

- ✓ Full giving history, in detail for each campaign/fund and for each year
- ✓ Must be recorded to appropriate fund (eg, annual, planned gift, special event, special project, etc.)
- ✓ Source of contribution indicated (eg, direct mail, website, personal visit, event, crowdfunding, corporate, etc.)

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- ✓ Pledge payment schedule/projection. Must be flexible, to accommodate erratic payment schedules (eg, donor pledges $1,000, pays $100 at time of pledge, wants to pay $250 in six months, $500 in three more months, $150 after six more months)
- ✓ Automatic statements, thank you's, receipts

Reports

- ✓ Automatic reports (by name, by amounts due, by amounts pledged, by dates due, by fund, etc.)
- ✓ Variable sorting criteria (eg, name, constituency type, gift range, campaign, state, those who have given, those who not given, those who have given more than once per year, zip code, age, married, single, children/no children, etc.)
- ✓ Are compatible with the needs of your accounting/finance department

Statistics/analysis reporting

- ✓ Based on variety of sort criteria (eg, for a direct mail program: number of pieces mailed, number who responded, largest gift, smallest gift, repeat donors, new donors, cost of mailing, income, cost of acquisition per new donor, etc.)
- ✓ Track grants
- ✓ Wealth screening

Campaigns

- ✓ Solicitor/assignment lists [by solicitor (which prospects have been assigned to him or her) and by prospect (which solicitor this prospect was assigned to)]
- ✓ Prospect lists by name, amount, zip code, date, etc.
- ✓ Personalization/merge for campaign letters
- ✓ Progress reporting
- ✓ Gant charts/timelines
- ✓ Email marketing

On-line Fundraising

- ✓ Manage an on-line giving program
- ✓ Capacity for personal fundraising pages
- ✓ Work in tandem with web marketing tools like Convio and ConstantContact

Flagging

- ✓ "Pop Ups" for donor/prospect birthdays and anniversaries, for invoices for pledges or membership renewals, etc.

Provides mailing labels/addresses onto envelopes/personalization/merge

- ✓ Able to segment mailings (eg, mail to these donors only quarterly; for membership acquisition, pull out donors from 2nd, 3rd, 4th repeat asks, etc.)

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Multi-user capability

Transferring/data conversion capability (to a new software program down the road)

Copy email messages, photos, videos, correspondence to donor or prospect record as desired

Cyber security

- ✓ Determine what is critical for your organization in terms of keeping your data secure and what is to be done if there are issues; for example, you may want to ask the vendor questions such as these:
  - Who is the specific person to be contacted in case of a cybersecurity issue?
  - What is your cyber disaster recovery plan?
  - Do you have a breach notification plan?
  - Have you ever had any breaches? If so, when and why?
  - Are your employees bonded?
  - How do you ensure data is exchanged in a secure manner?
  - Do you use a third party to perform security assessments of your information systems?
  - Do you perform security assessment of your suppliers, contractors and business partners?
  - Do you have an information–security officer?

(a sample of questions that appeared in the article "Cybersecurity Questions to Ask your Vendor" by Angela Struebing in NonProfit Pro 10/4/17)