

CRM AND MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT FOR NFPS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE



CRM AND MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT FOR NFPS - A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Follow these expert tips for NFPs and discover how CRM could open up a new world of business benefits.

Many Not-for-Profit (NFP) organisations are taking a leaf out of the commercial sector's book and replacing their traditional membership databases with CRM systems that can help them manage their donor and partner relationships more productively and efficiently.

ARE YOU ABOUT TO INVEST IN CRM?

Being an NFP does not prevent you from encountering the same pitfalls and problems with CRM implementation as your enterprise counterparts. These difficulties often arise because the stakeholders and CRM project leaders in the organisation don't spend enough time defining what they actually want from CRM – or even what CRM means – let alone the benefits that a properly implemented system can bring to the business.

20%

30%

50%

As [Databases for Charities](#) points out, successful database projects are only 20% about the technology. Without the processes (30%) to define and frame the implementation, and the people (50%) to provide the knowledge and use the system, the investment will lack the focus it needs to deliver a comprehensive set of benefits that meet NFP requirements.



STEP 1.

DECIDE WHAT CRM MEANS FOR YOU

It is vital that you find the right combination of CRM and membership management features for your needs – but have you actually defined what CRM means to your organisation?

There are many informed and independent definitions out there. Most of them will tell you that CRM is simply a way to keep track of contact information for your donors, partners and members. But there is more to it than that.

A CRM system will also give you the tools to track and log all your communications, including phone calls and emails, creating an audit trail of every single interaction. Today, these tools will usually include social media feeds, reflecting the growing importance of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in donor, member and partner relationships.

Perhaps most important of all, the arrival of Cloud computing means that CRM systems can now be provided in flexible configurations via the Internet, on a monthly subscription basis. Of course there will always be initial set-up costs, but the days of CRM being a big-ticket, high maintenance investment that runs on a heavy-duty IT infrastructure are long gone.



STEP 2.

CONSIDER THE BENEFITS

There are many benefits of CRM for the NFP organisation, not least in the increased productivity of employees who are free to concentrate on fund-raising and awareness campaigns without having to rely on disparate information sources which are likely to exist in a complicated mixture of digital and physical media.

The shift from a conventional membership management database to a comprehensive CRM solution means no more manual storage and much easier data input – making it simpler to keep your information up to date, and therefore more reliable.

A CRM system can handle all the tasks you previously required of your membership database, while providing much deeper levels of tools and applications that will help you make your campaigns and communications more focused and targeted – and more attractive to your donor, member and partner networks.

If you realise this and have a clear idea of your objectives, you won't make the error committed by so many small businesses and organisations, of failing to understand the CRM systems they eventually buy.



STEP 3.

BUILD A LIST OF YOUR REQUIREMENTS

What do you need your CRM and membership management to do? Draw up a list of requirements that will inform your market research and invitation to tender. Here are some possibilities:

- 1 Membership and contact management.
- 2 Subscription management and automation.
- 3 Member 'Self-Service' via your website.
- 4 Integration with core business systems, including your email system, email marketing tool or accounts package.
- 5 Payment and transactional features.
- 6 Management of member enquiries and support cases.
- 7 Tracking commercial activities such as advertising, sponsorships and events.
- 8 Email Marketing and Campaign Management.



STEP 4.

FIND A CRM PARTNER WHO UNDERSTANDS THE NEEDS OF NFP ORGANISATIONS

Having identified your need for CRM, you need to identify the system – and supplier – with the qualities to meet that need.

The history of CRM is littered with failed or incomplete projects. According to the New York Times, many organisations find themselves going through several CRM suppliers before they finally find a system with which they feel comfortable. That's an expense – and a frustration – that it should be easy to avoid by asking your shortlisted suppliers some basic questions:



HOW USER-FRIENDLY IS YOUR CRM SYSTEM INTERFACE?

You need to be confident that you are buying a system that will be intuitive and trouble-free for your employees to use – and that you can customise to suit different levels of user.



DO YOU HAVE THE TOOLS TO MEET MY SPECIFIC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

Successful CRM implementation is all about providing different types of user with easy access to the right information. A CRM vendor who understands how important this is to you, as an NFP, will be able to demonstrate a range of report templates for all your purposes.



CAN YOUR CRM SYSTEM INTEGRATE WITH MY CORE BUSINESS SYSTEMS?

If you engage in transactional communications with your donors and supporters, it is vital that the CRM system is easy to integrate with your critical back office applications – particularly financials and accounting. If this can be done successfully, you should realise a good, rapid return on your investment – and achieve excellent visibility across all your customer and business relationships.



CAN YOUR CRM SYSTEM INTEGRATE WITH MY WEBSITE?

Integrating your CRM with your website will give you the possibility to create a membership portal so that your members can update their details, pay their subscription, make a donation or request information directly from a webpage, with all the information feeding back into your CRM.



WHO USES YOUR SYSTEM?

Don't just ask for references. Take them up, go and see how NFP organisations like yours are actually using the CRM system. Ask their IT team about the impact on the organisation's infrastructure.



HOW WILL I FIT IN?

You should get a strong sense of the importance of your business to your prospective supplier. If you are going to be one of thousands of other small customers, make sure that they include similar organisations in their list of references – and that they are happy with the performance of the system and the supplier.



WHAT ON-GOING SUPPORT WILL YOU OFFER?

CRM projects come unstuck because people forget to take the long-term view – and that goes for maintenance, support and the development of the system in which you are investing. Make sure that maintenance is included in the cost, and that SLAs will meet your expectations.



WHERE'S THE EVIDENCE?

Insist on seeing examples of successful implementations in your field – and ask your potential supplier how they think they will be able to contribute to your business processes in the months and years ahead.

Download your free eGuide now:
**CALCULATING THE ROI
OF CRM - A BUSINESS
LEADER'S GUIDE**

Download Now!

