Help - I’m implementing a CRM database!

A Guide for CRM Implementation Success in Not-for-Profit Organisations
Introduction

This white paper highlights the key areas that a not-for-profit organisation should consider when embarking on a new database (CRM or Fundraising) system implementation. It summarises the key themes and drivers that have a large impact on the success of a database project in the third sector and how a project relates to other initiatives and aspects of an organisation. It highlights areas that are sometimes neglected or not considered when the decision to purchase a new fundraising or CRM database is made.

The paper has been authored by Rick Benfield from bb1*, drawing on the knowledge of fellow consultants in Blackbaud with a combined experience of over 50 years implementing CRM software. It also references various external publications supporting the points made by the author.

The areas for consideration outlined in this document are not specific to Blackbaud software – they apply across all fundraising and CRM software implementations, regardless of the supplier the not-for-profit chooses to work with. The points are also applicable for all sizes of organisation, although the way in which the points are addressed may vary depending on an organisation’s size.

This paper does not set out guidelines for software selection or steps required for the technical implementation of a new system, rather the focus is on areas that impact (directly or indirectly) on the success of a CRM software implementation and helps to ensure organisations are fully aware and prepared for all aspects of a project.

Ultimately it is hoped this guide will help to facilitate the successful implementation of an organisation’s chosen software by ensuring the stakeholders involved think beyond the technical installation of an IT system.

About the Author

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*About bb1

Bb1 is a Blackbaud company. It is a dynamic and innovative consultancy that provides not-for-profit organisations with ways to improve their digital presence, operational efficiency and strategy. See www.bb-1.co.uk for further details.
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Executive Summary

The first decision to make as an organisation, before you consider drafting an ITT, booking a demo or shortlisting database suppliers, is that you want to change the way you manage your supporters. You may wish to improve fundraising income, deepen relationships with supporters, reduce marketing costs, develop a collaborative working environment or improve internal operations. But the theme is the same - you want to change for the better.

Once the decision to improve has been made, you can then assess how this change is going to be brought about and whether you have the correct tools in place to do it. One of the tools that can support and underpin a positive change in supporter management is a new fundraising or CRM database. A new database can consolidate disparate IT systems, reduce maintenance costs, automate processes and improve your knowledge of your supporters. It is an important tool. But it is only a tool. On its own a new database will not bring about positive change within your organisation.

“The objective of the project should not be simply to implement a new database, but to further the mission, aims, priorities and objectives of the organisation. It is not just a case of replacing system x with system y, but an investment for the whole organisation which will create a foundation for future improvements and enable more effective ways of working for many years to come.”

(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

The programme of change must be driven by the senior management in the organisation, not the database or IT team. It should not be viewed as an IT project, but as an initiative to improve the organisation, with the implementation of a new database being one aspect of the project.

The six areas that must be addressed to achieve a successful CRM implementation are:

- **Strategic** - CRM starts with a strategy, a strong business case and support from the senior leadership team
- **Organisation** - Changes to organisational culture and structure are often required to become a ‘CRM’ organisation, whilst robust project governance is a must from the outset
- **Operations** - re-designing your processes and effective knowledge management are the route to operational efficiency - this is how the change is translated into everyday working practices
- **Data** - the successful transition from legacy systems, data accuracy and resolving information ownership issues are all huge factors that influence how the new system is perceived in the organisation
- **Resources** - having the right people involved and leading the project is vital to ensure the new system meets the needs of the organisation
- **The Project** - clear success criteria, effective change management, competent planning and the management of expectations can often make the difference between a failed or successful CRM database implementation

There is a lot to consider, but when you are spending a significant amount of your supporters’ money on a new database system it is imperative that you do all that you can to ensure the benefits you seek are realised. Remember, you are entering a partnership with the supplier of the database; the success (or failure) of the project is down to both of you, not just the supplier of the software.

If all else is forgotten after reading this document, then remember this:

*A CRM database system is just a tool – it is the ‘means’, not an ‘end’ in itself.*
Strategic

CRM starts with a strategy, a strong business case and support from the senior leadership team.

CRM Strategy

CRM is not an IT system. CRM, or Customer Relationship Management, is first and foremost a strategy. It is a deliberate and systemic approach to implement supporter facing processes to serve supporters, continually develop relationships and increase fundraising revenues. You must develop a CRM strategy first, before selecting a CRM system that will integrate with, and support the strategy.

“CRM is not a software purchase. CRM is not an IT (Information Technology) application. CRM is a business strategy [...] Implementing CRM software without a corresponding CRM strategy is an uphill battle that will eventually unseat even the most successful software implementations.”
(Sanjay Rai Gupta, CRM Implementation and Strategy)

Developing an integrated CRM strategy is, however, far easier said than done. It requires asking yourself some fundamental questions:

- Who are the stakeholders our mission is serving?
- How can we best relate to them?
- How do we measure our success?
- What information, business processes and engagement practices will drive our success?

The starting point for a CRM strategy is a focus on the supporter*: how can you best serve them? This is how every organisation should start when developing their CRM strategy — with the vision, aspiration and drive to best serve its supporters. The answer to this question may actually come from your supporters — asking them what they want from the relationship or evaluating suggestions or complaints that have been received in the past.

The goals of a not-for-profit CRM strategy would typically be to identify, attract, and win new supporters, nurture and retain those the organisation already has, entice former supporters back into the fold, and reduce the costs (and/or increase the efficiency) of communications and providing service to supporters. Technology is then enlisted, and business practices developed, to provide a service that enhances the supporters experience and, in turn, better supports the mission of the organisation.

“If you are considering the procurement of a new database for your charity but you don’t have a fundraising or membership strategy, then how can you really know what you want the database to do or how you want it to support you? How can you do your needs analysis phase without such a strategy being in place? It really isn’t fair to the supplier or you or your users, if you get a new system and then find it can’t support what the strategy requires, and then you blame the poor database!”
(Ivan Wainewright, 101 tips on how to buy fundraising software and CRM systems)

*Supporter – in this paper this term is used to mean donor, customer, service user or constituent – in the context of ‘CRM’ the supporter is represented by the ‘C’ which normally stands for ‘customer’, ‘contact’ or ‘constituent’.
The CRM strategy and new database must also directly relate to and support the current and emerging strategic goals of the organisation as a whole. If it is not integrated in the core strategy of the organisation, and not seen as central in the fundraising strategy, the CRM database will simply be viewed as a very expensive data storage device.

“Our key learning as an organisation was that we should have planned our database implementation with the overall business strategy in mind so that it was seen as a means to achieving our strategy.”

(Lucy Caldicott, CLIC Sargent, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

Business Case

A solid business case should be the starting point for any project. When money is spent or effort expended, it should be in support of a specific organisational need. Deciding to invest a significant amount of money on a new IT system simply because the existing one looks a bit old or appears not to work properly are not justifiable reasons for the investment.

“The decision to invest in a new system [should be] based on a properly articulated business case, setting out a clear rationale for the investment of time and energy as well as money and – importantly – identifying the organisational benefits that are expected.”

(Iain Pritchard, Partner - Adapta Consulting, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies).

A compelling business case adequately captures both the quantifiable and unquantifiable characteristics of a proposed project. An example could be that a new software system might improve performance, but the ‘business case’ is that better performance would improve supporter satisfaction, require less task processing time and reduce system maintenance costs.

“The business case will also provide a framework to your project that your organisation can use throughout the project lifecycle, particularly when there is a suggestion of changing the scope, timescale or costs of an aspect of the project.”

(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

There are different definitions of what a Business Case is and how it should be presented, but the following are common areas that should be considered and, from this, the justification – the business case - for the project can be derived:

- the background of the project (overview of current situation and issues the project is seeking to address)
- the expected organisation benefits and outcomes (the overall aims of the project)
- analysis of each option (with reasons for rejecting or carrying forward each of them, including the option of doing nothing)
- the expected costs of the project (both financial and time)
- a gap analysis and the expected risks

Note - it is not the job of the project manager or software supplier to build the business case, this task must remain the responsibility of stakeholders in the organisation.
Leadership

Aside from a strong business case and the development of a CRM strategy the project must have the full support of the leadership team. They must have made the decision to change and improve the organisation and have been instrumental in deciding that a new database tool is required to achieve the goals of the CRM strategy.

The role of the senior leadership on a project with this level of investment should not start and end with the signing of invoices. A project of this scale and importance must be seen as a strategic decision from the top of the organisation. If the senior leaders in the organisation are not behind the project, if they are not supporting it, talking about it and espousing the benefits of it, then it will be almost impossible to make the project a success.
Organisation

Changes to organisational culture and structure are often required to become a ‘CRM’ organisation, whilst robust project governance is a must from the outset.

Culture

In order to gain the full benefits of the database, increase the efficiency of your processes and meet the goals of your CRM strategy, the culture of your organisation may need to change to move towards a more collaborative approach of working. A CRM database will often facilitate this process as disparate systems are retired and previously siloed departments start using the same system. A direct impact of this could be that one department needs to enter information in a certain way, not to benefit them or their department, but so that another department in the organisation can utilise the information for their purposes.

“You must remember always that a new database is simply just a new database...The new system needs to be part of a managed change process...with new ways of working and, in some cases, a new operational culture.”

(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

The move towards a collaborative way of working is far easier said than done. There are a lot of issues to contend with, not least information ownership and the change in mind-set required of employees to think beyond the department they work in.

“The technological change was easier than establishing a change in culture...[the implementation] can sometimes set up a conflict between the method a member of staff feels is the quickest way to do their job, and the method that will be of most benefit to the charity overall....With hindsight this needs the management team to be fully on board and involved in the process, which is the major mistake that we made...”

(Paul Powell, Karuna Trust, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

Organisation Structure

Depending on the scale of change it is likely that the job descriptions and responsibilities of key staff may change as the new system gives you the ability to standardise tasks, automate processes and re-design processes that may sit across multiple departments. Additionally, if a bespoke system is currently in use (which could range from a set of spreadsheets to an AS/400 database) then the individuals who maintain and update these tools may no longer be fully utilised.

In larger organisations the structure of whole teams and, in some cases, departments may also change as you strive towards a more collaborative approach to working that having a centralised supporter database naturally encourages.

It is essential that these aspects of the implementation are considered and, if required, the HR function is involved to help re-define roles and responsibilities.
Governance

It’s important to put a proper governance structure in place – often called a steering or management committee – to which the project team will report and escalate issues. It is the responsibility of these key stakeholders to set the direction of the project and make decisions that affect the scope, time and cost. The members should, ideally, have been involved in producing the business case for the project in the first place.

Project steering committees are fairly standard practice nowadays, however, an important area that is often neglected is to have a governance structure in place once the ‘project phase’ has finished and the organisation resumes ‘business as usual’ operations. The responsibility for these individuals is to make key business decisions that impact the tool – not technical decisions, but policy and procedure decisions. If ‘ownership’ of the system is left purely in the IT or database team, then it will continually be viewed as just another IT system – this will undermine the significance the tool plays in helping the organisation meet its strategic objectives. The new system should be fully integrated into discussions about organisation and fundraising strategy, and not left as an afterthought for the IT team.

The end of the ‘project’ should not be viewed as the end of the programme of change and improvements. It is just the end of the beginning. A cyclical process of improvement should be encouraged – new needs will arise and opportunities for improvement identified – having a ‘business as usual’ governance structure in place will ensure that you can quickly prioritise and implement improvements to processes and system use – maximising the benefits you can gain from the tool.

“Recognize CRM success is a journey. Continual training, upgrades, new releases, new methods to leverage information and the like will present constant opportunities to evolve the CRM strategy.”
(Sanjay Rai Gupta, CRM Implementation and Strategy)

Support Structure

Another important change to be introduced or updated in the organisation is a proper support structure - the larger the organisation the more formal this will be. ‘Super users’ (for functional questions) and ‘business process owners’ (for policy and procedure questions) are often key components of any support structure. Whilst the supplier of your new system will often have a support desk, it is important to be able to handle basic questions internally, particularly those that affect organisation specific policy decisions and practices. This structure can also double up as an internal training team and can keep policy and procedure user guides up-to-date as decisions evolve and updates are applied to the system over time.
Operations

Re-designing your processes and effective knowledge management are the route to operational efficiency - this is how the change is translated into everyday working practices.

Process Re-engineering

To meet the goals of your CRM strategy a change in processes is often required. Implementing a new database system gives you the perfect opportunity to assess what you are doing as an organisation. To question why you do things in a certain way, to look at ways in which things could be improved and to not continue doing them in the same way just because ‘that’s the way it’s always been done’.

“This is one of the most significant things you can do during a procurement and subsequent implementation. It can help provide some of the biggest benefits you can get out of procuring a new system.”

(Ivan Wainewright, 101 tips on how to buy fundraising software and Charity CRM systems)

“One of the most common situations we come across is a client trying to force a product to fit their current processes without having taken the step of reviewing these processes.”

(Dr Warren Sherliker, The SmartTHING, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

Your current business processes are likely to have been shaped by your existing systems and previous employees. There may also be no distinguishable explanation as to why they are like they are.

“.most organisations do not really know what they want from a CRM system at the time they produce their ITT [...] most organisations really only know what they do at the moment; they don’t know what they could do, or how other organisations do things differently, or how a different CRM system could help them to do things better.”

(Iain Pritchard, Partner - Adapta Consulting, CRM Implementations - Articles and Case Studies)

The CRM system that you have chosen to support the change in your organisation should have been developed to cater for common processes in the sector. Reviewing your current state and entering the project with a view to adapting your processes to the new system and applying best practice (some of which you may already be doing) will ensure that you maximise efficiencies when the new system is in place.
“Rather than assessing the organisational strategy and looking at how a new tool could help us deliver and report against multiple long-term objectives, the project focused initially on how data would be migrated to the new system and the purchase and implementation was led by the IT team with this in mind, as it was perceived as a more technical upgrade.

This focus meant that some of the preparation work to document business processes was confined originally to replicating existing business processes in the new system. We soon realised, however, that this project provided an opportunity to re-engineer the organisation’s processes to deliver greater efficiencies. The fact that this realisation came midway led to some delays as we had to run additional workshops with staff to identify, assess and define potential improvements to our processes.”

(Lucy Caldicott, CLIC Sargent, CRM Implementations)

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management affects all aspects of an organisation’s activities and, unfairly, has a rather unglamorous reputation. People hear the word ‘knowledge management’ and think only of internal document repository systems such as Microsoft SharePoint. Knowledge management is more than that – it comprises a range of strategies and practices used in an organisation to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable adoption of insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in an organisation’s processes or practices. At the very basic level it is the ability for anyone in the organisation to locate and utilise ‘knowledge’ as and when they need it without spending hours sending emails to each department or hunting through the online folders for the right documents or the right person to talk to.

In respect to database implementations, it is important to document key decisions made, policy and procedures that are developed and best practice processes which result from business process re-engineering. There is little point configuring a database to be used in a certain way, if the only people that know the secrets of the ‘certain way’ keep it locked in their heads. Users will soon divert from agreed processes, areas of the system will be used for a purpose other than that for which they were designed and automated processes and reports will not be accurate or simply won’t work. Over time people with knowledge will also leave the organisation.

Documentation related to the system’s use and its relation to business objectives should be created during the project phase and owners formally assigned. The owners should continue to update and maintain the documents in business as usual operations and reference them when queries are raised.

“Remember to factor in sufficient time for preparing system documentation, procedure manuals and user guides. Also allow plenty of time to develop training materials and to undertake detailed user training in the new system and ways of working. Your organisation’s staff may dislike the current system; nonetheless they may become strangely loyal to it if the new system appears complicated or doesn’t make their life easier.”

(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)
Data

The successful transition from legacy systems, data accuracy and resolving information ownership issues are all huge factors that influence how the new system is perceived in the organisation.

Database Audit

Ensure that you have a full list of all the ‘databases’ currently in use. It sounds obvious, but you will probably be surprised how many ‘systems’ have developed over time. Perform a ‘data amnesty’ and encourage all users and departments (not just management) to reveal the various systems, databases, spread sheets and contact books they have with information (some may be paper based).

Perform a basic audit on each of the identified systems:

“[For each system identify the] number of records (including contacts, donations/transactions, communication history), number of users, type of database, basic description of the sort of data/how it is used, and ideally (because at some point this will be important) details on how the core contact data is held; i.e. are names and addresses in one field/multiple fields, free text/coded; do all records have a URN – fundamental information but it will definitely help.”

(Ivan Wainewright, 101 Tips on How to Buy Fundraising Software and Charity CRM Systems)

Doing this will help you grasp the key areas of functionality required in the new system, give you an idea of the size of the data cleansing task and complexity of the data migration (including which systems, if any, will continue after the new implementation is in place). The process will also help to uncover the potential issue of ‘information ownership’ – see below.

Data Cleansing

The quality of data in a new system has a big impact on the first impressions of the system – if the data looks ‘funny’ then the system will immediately lose credibility and develop a negative reputation that is hard to shift. It is vitally important that the data cleanse and migration parts of the project are taken seriously and enough time is built into the project timeline to do this.

Data Cleansing is the process of ensuring that the data you currently hold and want to transfer to the new system is, in fact, accurate and correct. Organisations will often assume that the data migration process that a software supplier conducts will sort out data entry mistakes that have built up over years in the existing systems. This is partly true, in that a good data analyst will be able to spot obvious mistakes, but it is a costly and time consuming task. The acronym, GIGO, is one that should be at the forefront of your mind when thinking about data:

Garbage In, Garbage Out (GIGO) - A phrase often stressed during introductory courses in computer utilisation as a reminder that, regardless of the correctness of the logic built into the program, no answer can be valid if the input is erroneous. It should be used as a reminder that computers, unlike humans, will unquestioningly process nonsensical input data and produce nonsensical output.
It is recommended that you start a process of data cleansing early (it can start before you have even chosen which software you are going to purchase) by identifying data anomalies in your current system(s) and recording how different users have used the system(s) in different ways over the years. The more preparation work you do, the quicker and smoother the data migration process will be, reducing the risk (and cost) on your project.

“It is a good opportunity to strip out unnecessary and inaccurate data, and to standardise and clean your data to improve quality going forward.”
(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)

Data Migration

The technical process of data migration will often be handled by your chosen software provider or an external supplier, but there are a number of areas that you must be aware of about the process:

1) Review the data you currently hold and decide what really needs to be transferred into the new system (ask yourself ‘how many business decisions will be made on data more than x years old?’):

“The key thing to remember is that it is not important to import all the data you have in an old system into the new one. Your existing data should be assessed and then determined whether it should be moved over, and if so whether this is during implementation or later, after you have more knowledge of the product. Data can easily be archived into Excel or Access files where it will not be lost. It can then be uploaded into the new system if experience shows that it is regularly used; if not it may as well stay in the archive.”
(Dr Warren Sherliker, The SmartTHING, CRM Implementations)

2) Factor in time for mapping to the data structure in the new system:

“Never underestimate the complexity of transferring data from one system to another, and factor in lots of time for understanding existing data structures and mapping them to the new ones.”
(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)

3) Factor in time (and prepare) end users for the task of checking and testing the data:

“Allow for several iterations of the migration scripts, and test several data cuts. End users from across the organisation should be involved in testing that the data is migrating correctly, and they will be able to point out errors straight away.”
(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)
Information Ownership

The issue of who ‘owns’ the information held about supporters is a common one when an organisation is moving from a number of disparate systems and consolidating their data into one system. Paradoxically, one of the big advantages of moving to a more advanced fundraising or CRM database system - the opportunity of a 360 degree view of a supporter - is often seen as a major disadvantage of the new system by some end users. This is because people or departments get sensitive about the information they hold, with a feeling that it is ‘their’ data not ‘yours’.

When this question is raised on projects, departments will often be eager to see what information other departments have on ‘their’ supporters, and want to see ‘prospects’ that other departments might have for them, but then get very sensitive about sharing ‘their’ supporters with other departments.

Moving to a new system gives an organisation the opportunity to get rid of duplicate records and see all the touch points a supporter has with your organisation to help improve your contact with them. A supporter might be a regular donor, volunteer, consumer of services and a fundraiser, but this information might currently be held in several different systems and managed by different people or departments, each interacting with the supporter in a different way. This gives the impression to the supporter that the organisation doesn’t know its left elbow from its right and has been proven to lead to a decline in the level of support given.

It is worth noting that the more advanced systems in the marketplace give the ability to restrict certain parts of a supporter’s record to certain users – so whilst all users can share and view the same records, some information on the records may be restricted e.g. financial information, the consumption of certain services or the contact information of a celebrity supporter.

The issue of information ownership should be raised early on and a key message filtered to all users - supporters belong to the organisation, not individual departments. Policies will need to be developed to cover who updates and maintains each part of the supporter record, how and when communications should be sent and which parts of the record should be visible to which users.
Resources

Having the right people involved and leading the project is vital to ensure the new system meets the needs of the organisation.

Project Manager

It is enormously important to get a strong internal project manager leading the implementation. As well as some of the standard recognised project management qualifications and attributes (see six attributes of successful project managers), the following are also vital:

- Experience in implementing CRM/fundraising systems in other organisations
- Strong Communication Skills – both verbal and written – to ensure that messages are delivered clearly to all stakeholders
- Business focused – it’s important for the project manager to have some knowledge of the technical side of IT systems, but more important is that the individual is aware that the IT system is simply a tool to enable organisational processes, support the strategy and achieve organisational goals
- Influence and respect in the organisation – the project manager may have to make unpopular decisions and, sometimes, have to convince others they are the right decisions
- Formal and informal power – senior enough, and with the right command of respect, to ensure that when tasks need to be completed by individuals in the organisation they are done so on time and to sufficient levels of quality

The project manager must always be supported by senior stakeholders in the organisation. If they are undermined in any way, then this makes the job an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task.

“Too often, projects are doomed to fail because they didn’t get enough support from the departments and people affected by and involved in the project.”

(Jennifer Lonoff Schiff, 12 common project management mistakes and how to avoid them)

Project Management is also vital from the supplier side. The supplier you choose to work with will be managing a number of resources, and the coordination of those resources requires time and effort. Your internal project manager should be leading the project within the organisation, liaising with the supplier project manager for the design, installation and configuration of the database system, as well as any technical customisations, data migration and scope issues.

Project Team Resourcing

It is vital that the right people are involved in the project team and that they are assigned clear roles and responsibilities. Project teams are normally composed of people that already work for your organisation and are seconded into the team, but may also include external consultants.

Depending on the size of the project and your organisation, the project team will probably be made up of a mixture of ‘part-time’ members, who continue their day job alongside their project responsibilities, and ‘full-time’ project team
members who are dedicated to the project. In all cases you will need a strong project manager to provide leadership to the team as well as additional SMEs (subject matter experts) who provide information about specific tasks and procedures.

A common mistake made by organisations (both in the corporate and charity sector) is to staff a project team with individuals that might be considered periphery to the organisation’s needs and might not have the deep knowledge needed to implement the project successfully. This is because organisations do not want to take their ‘best’ people out of their positions to work on the project. This can lead to expensive mistakes, delays on the project and, ultimately, a less successful implementation. Invest to get the best people on the team, and you will reap the benefits down the line.

“Assemble a CRM implementation with the right members, not the available members. Recognize that the ‘right’ members are in constant demand and will be the least available. Nonetheless, they are essential to this project and ultimately achieving the CRM vision.”
(Sanjay Rai Gupta, CRM Implementation and Strategy)

“I severely underestimated the amount of staff I would need to implement the system and the time required from SMEs within the organisation – this led to delays and late nights for my team.”
(Simon Collins, Project Manager, British Heart Foundation)

Throughout the course of the project you must constantly remind stakeholders why you are implementing a new system – what the aim is and what the benefits will be – as well as celebrating project milestones. This can act as a motivator to project team members and help them to see the bigger picture of the project.

“It is important to celebrate each incremental success to maintain enthusiasm and commitment to the project [...] morale can flag unless you continue to promote the benefits the project will bring and maintain the momentum for change and improvement.”
(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)

Finally, do not consider ‘go live’ the end of the project, particularly with regard to scaling down resources. When the database is first operative the emphasis will be on learning new processes and operations, but once the system is embedded and used on a daily basis, new ideas will arise and you should seek to take advantage of them. The opportunity for improvement is continuous and ‘quick wins’ can often be identified in the first couple of months after ‘go live’. If you do not have the resource to respond to these ideas you will miss a great opportunity to give your users that necessary sense of ownership and feeling that ‘go live’ is not the end, it is just the end of the beginning.

“CRM does not end with a software implementation go-live, and in fact, the go-live is actually the start of the CRM strategy achievement.”
(Sanjay Rai Gupta, CRM Implementation and Strategy)
Backfill

As mentioned above, it is likely that a number of your resources will be seconded into the project team either on a part-time or full-time basis. Either way the tasks the individual normally performs in their day job will still need to be completed.

“The problem is that in an efficient business all staff will be fully employed. Involving them in the project can only add to their workload. To involve them as much as possible we suggest that there are only three real alternatives:

1) Backfill their position either with other staff or with a temp.
2) Attempt to move other work for key staff to before or after the project.
3) Reduce their involvement in the project and look to the software supplier, a temp or a consultant to complete the work.

The choice will obviously depend on budget and current business objectives, but in practice at least one of these should be possible.”

(Dr Warren Sherlicher, The SmartTHING, CRM Implementations)
The Project

Clear success criteria, effective change management, competent planning and the management of expectations can often make the difference between a failed or successful CRM database implementation.

Success Criteria

What measures will be used to determine if the project is a success? These should be clearly defined before the project starts and shared widely (both internally and with the software supplier). Remember, you are entering a partnership with the supplier, the success (or failure) of the project is down to both of you, not just the supplier of the software. The success criteria should follow the SMART formula:

- **Specific** - the goal(s) should be clear and unambiguous; without vagaries and platitudes. To make goals specific, they must tell a team exactly what is expected, why it is important, who’s involved, where it is going to happen and which attributes are important.

- **Measurable** - the need for concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of the goal. The thought behind this is that if a goal is not measurable, it is not possible to know whether a team is making progress toward successful completion. Measuring progress is supposed to help a team stay on track, reach its target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs it on to continued effort required to reach the ultimate goal.

- **Attainable** – goals should be realistic and attainable. While an attainable goal may stretch a team in order to achieve it, the goal is not extreme.

- **Relevant** - choosing goals that matter. A Fundraising Director’s goal to "Make 50 marmalade sandwiches by 2:00pm." may be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, and Time-Bound, but lacks Relevance. Relevant goals (when met) drive the team, department, and organisation forward. A goal that supports or is in alignment with other goals would be considered a relevant goal.

- **Time-bound** - The fifth term stresses the importance of grounding goals within a time frame, giving them a target date. A commitment to a deadline helps a team focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. This part of the S.M.A.R.T. goal criteria is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise in an organisation.


Change Management

Change management is the discipline that facilitates change in an organisation. It is focused on the impact a change will have on the employees. The change could be a new strategy, organisational structure, process, culture or IT system. If done properly, a CRM project will have aspects of all of these and, in all cases, there will be an impact on the people within the organisation.

"The database project will need to be undertaken as part of a wider change management process within your organisation...The objective of the project should not be simply to implement a new database, but to further the mission, aims, priorities and objectives of the organisation..."

(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)
The people are too often overlooked, and management sometimes naively assume that when a decision is taken at the top, everyone will simply understand the reasons why and follow ‘no questions asked’. This is a dangerous assumption and one that can lead to a lot of resentment and discontent in the workforce. Sector research has consistently shown that the single biggest factor that causes the failure of IT projects (including cost/time overruns and lack of adoption) is not addressing change management.

“Research has shown that individuals can have a profound impact on the success or failure of a project within organizations. How much individuals are on board with the project, how much training they’ve had, and how much people know about a technology change can make or break a project.”
(Bev Magda, Managing Technology Change: Imagine All the People)

The key facets to change management can be categorised as follows:

- Preparation: Involving and preparing your staff
- Communication: Providing the right messages, to the right people at the right time
- Training: Understanding the needs and delivering the training
- Leadership: Guiding and leading the change from the top

To put it very simply - ignoring change management will mean that the goal that the ‘change’ was trying to achieve (and the assumption is always that the goal is to ‘improve’ something) will not be achieved, or will not be achieved in the desired time-frame as people will be uncertain, resistant and hesitant to the change.

“All employees must believe in the CRM strategy and the supporting program and software. They must be educated in order to buy-in to the CRM implementation and utilization. If not, user adoption will be a major challenge and tasks such as software customization will be based on either incomplete or erroneous information. Time frames will not be adhered to and training will not be affective. At best, the implementation will take far longer than planned and costs will be excessive.”
(Sanjay Rai Gupta, CRM Implementation and Strategy)

Branding

It is important to create a distinct ‘brand’ for the project. The project should, as previously stated, be wider than just an IT implementation – it should incorporate a vision to improve and change the way the organisation operates and interacts with its supporters. If the project is simply called ‘the database project’ or the ‘the xxxx system project’ then this is unlikely to inspire employees other than the ardent database techies within the organisation. Whilst ‘branding’ the project may seem trivial to many, it is an important part of ensuring that, in the minds of your employees, the project is made up of more than an IT system.

A positive, forward looking name and ‘tag line’ should be chosen, with the implementation of the new database being one part of a more holistic project to change and improve the operations of the organisation. One idea is to seek a name for the project from the wider staff as a competition with some small reward. Always remember, the IT system is just a tool - it is a ‘means’ not an ‘end’ in itself.
Planning

Planning each phase of the project carefully and ensuring that you stay on top of all the tasks that need to be completed in each phase are vital to ensuring a project runs on time and within budget. Many team members or SMEs that are required to complete tasks may not be used to working in a project environment and, therefore, may not appreciate the consequences of missing deadlines and the knock-on impact that can have. It’s important that this is understood and communicated adequately to all involved in the project. Briefing key people involved at the start of the project and showing simple examples of how a delay in one part of the project can produce delays in multiple other areas can help to illustrate the point to employees not used to working in such an environment.

For larger organisations a ‘phased approach’ is often more suitable than a ‘big bang’ approach. A phased approach means introducing new processes or elements of the system at different points over time. A ‘big bang’ approach is changing everything ‘overnight’, which can be an intimidating and uncomfortable experience for employees. You should work with your supplier to ensure the correct option is chosen for your particular circumstance.

“The size of your database project will determine the most suitable way of launching the system. For anything other than a very small project, a phased approach is recommended. An incremental go-live can enable you to ensure the new system is working correctly while minimising risk to business as usual. It will also enable more effective troubleshooting and user support.”

(Institute of Fundraising Technology Group, CRM Implementations)

The supplier you choose to partner with on your implementation will have implemented the database system before in other organisations. This is an important point. They have the experience and knowledge of how long a project is likely to take. Listen to the supplier when discussing timeline and be realistic. If the supplier estimates that it will take nine months to implement, and you force them into agreeing a six month timeframe, then you are already putting pressure on the project team and setting expectations internally that may not be met. If deadlines are subsequently missed, a negative perception of the project and the supplier will emerge from which it is hard to recover – it is always better to under promise and over deliver than set unrealistic deadlines just because you want to ‘get it in before Christmas’.

Expectations

Unrealistic expectations are a real issue on any new database project. Four common misconceptions are:

The new system will solve all our problems
There is a fine balance between getting staff excited and engaged about a new project without letting this roll over to a feeling that the new solution (systems and processes) will fix all the issues in the organisation overnight. This is not realistic and must be avoided! At the point of ‘go-live’ (when a new system starts to be used for the first time) it will not be perfect. Regardless of what your software supplier might say, there has never been, and never will be, a 100% perfect system implementation. On ‘day one’ the system will not do exactly what every user in the organisation needs it to do.

With the right planning, design and testing you can get close to 100%, but there will always be items that don’t work exactly as planned, or items that were forgotten. Also, due to time and cost restraints, prioritisation has to take place and some things may actually be perceived as worse under the new system (although it is hoped this is as a result of a trade-off somewhere else). It is important that the project team and stakeholders appreciate this, but
also that the end users of the system understand that it will be a work in progress, that improvements will continually need to be made and the database is an investment in the future as well as ‘the now’.

The supplier will do all the work
Depending on the software, supplier and implementation method you choose, you will receive varying levels of support to help you actually implement the system and design any associated business processes. Whoever you use to help with the implementation, your staff will need to be involved. They have the knowledge about how your organisation operates and what its key tasks are - the supplier is the expert on its software and potentially on business process design – but they are not the experts on your organisation. Your staff will need to provide a significant amount of input to ensure that the system is set up correctly for your needs and is fully tested to work with your specific processes.

We will receive all the same reports in the new system
The format and output of the management reports that are currently used are likely to have been influenced by the structure and limitations of your current system(s). The new database will not have the same data structure as your existing system(s) and is likely to have the ability to produce reports that may not have been possible in your old system(s). Try and avoid simply replicating existing reports just because people are used to them. A full evaluation of existing reports should be conducted and new requirements identified based on both management need, and the capabilities of the new system. The ability to analyse and process data is, after all, a key justification for a database in the first place. It is the perfect time to get rid of reports that are not used and focus on indicators that will really help management to make informed decisions that improve the organisation's performance.

We can continue to work in the same way and get benefits from a new system
If you simply replace an old system with a new system without adjusting working practices, without reviewing and updating strategies, without re-thinking how departments work with each other and without improving processes, then the shiny new system you implement will not bring you any benefits. The system is an ‘enabler’; it is a tool to support business processes and a means to achieve your objectives. On its own an IT system does not do anything.

A new system can give you the power to do new things, it can enable you to automate processes or analyse data in new ways, it can facilitate a better, more efficient way of working – but you have to change your way of working to take advantage of this. The expectation that you can simply slot in a new system to the existing organisation and everything will suddenly improve is a fallacy. When taking into account the cost of a database project, think beyond the cost of the software implementation and incorporate the full cost of change. There are certainly a lot of benefits that can be gained from having the right tool in place, but it is just a tool – you must use the tool in the right way to get the desired benefits.
And Finally…

The intention of this guide is not to scare or dissuade you from forging ahead with a new database implementation. The benefits of having a more sophisticated CRM tool for recording and analysing data about your supporters is clear. It can help you to consolidate disparate IT systems, reduce maintenance costs, automate processes, reduce administrative overheads, strengthen relationships, improve your knowledge of your supporters and, ultimately, help you to raise more income or support.

What this document has tried to do is highlight the key areas that you need to consider to help you gain the desired benefits as quickly as possible from the investment in a new database system.

 Whilst some of the items in the document may appear to add additional cost to a project, overall it will equate to a small percentage of the overall cost of an implementation. It is an investment worth making. The more that you, as an organisation, put in to a programme of change and improvement, the more you will get out of it.

“*He who stops being better stops being good.*” Oliver Cromwell, English soldier, statesman (1599-1658)

Further Discussion

If you would like to discuss any of the points raised in this whitepaper in more detail then Rick would be delighted to hear from you. Please visit the bb1 website for contact details: www.bb-1.co.uk
## Recommended Reading

Books, research articles and reports that highlight the importance of the areas outlined in this document.

Note: Although bb1 takes all reasonable measures to ensure that the information provided by third parties is accurate and not defamatory or offensive it cannot control the content or take responsibility for pages maintained by external providers.

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<th>Report/Article/Research</th>
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<td><strong>CRM Implementation - Articles And Case-Studies From The Charity Sector</strong></td>
<td>A report commissioned by Charity Finance Directors’ Group, ACEVO and Institute of Fundraising focussed on lessons learnt from CRM implementations in the charity sector.</td>
<td>“You must remember always that a new database is simply just a new database...The new system needs to be part of a managed change process...”</td>
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<td><strong>Insights into CRM For Non-profits – Heller Consulting</strong></td>
<td>A report based on interviews with executives from 30 non-profits looking at how non-profits are approaching Constituent Relationship Management (CRM).</td>
<td>“CRM must directly relate to and support the current and emerging strategic goals of the organization.”</td>
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<td><strong>CRM Implementation and Strategy blog</strong></td>
<td>Blog articles by Sanjay Rai Gupta - independent consultant, published author and enthusiast for all CRM related topics.</td>
<td>“CRM is not a software purchase. CRM is not an IT application. CRM is a business strategy that uses IT and a Business Practice Solution as an enabler.”</td>
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<td><strong>12 common project management mistakes and how to avoid them</strong></td>
<td>CIO.com surveyed dozens of IT executives and project managers and came up with a list of 12 common project management mistakes -- along with ways to avoid them.</td>
<td>“Too often project managers get picked based on availability, not necessarily on skill set. However, an inadequately trained and/or inexperienced project manager can doom a project.”</td>
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<td><strong>Manage People, Not Technology - David Ollerhead.</strong></td>
<td>Article on Computer Weekly highlighting that while organisations frequently proclaim that people are the most important asset, many are merely paying lip service.</td>
<td>“…an organisation's people are likely to be the defining factor in whether the transition is achieved successfully.”</td>
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<td><strong>101 Tips on How to Buy Fundraising Software and Charity CRM Systems</strong></td>
<td>Authored by Ivan Wainewright, this helpful guide sets out tips on both the procurement process, but also key areas to consider pre and during the implementation of a new fundraising database.</td>
<td>“If you are considering the procurement of a new database for your charity but you don’t have a fundraising or membership strategy, then how can you really know what you want the database to do or how you want it to support you?”</td>
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<td><strong>How the “People Problem” Complicates Non-profit Software Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Article on the ‘the connected cause’ forum by Keith Heller underlining that people are the major cause of ‘problems’ when implementing software in non-profits.</td>
<td>“Over the last 16 years, I’ve kicked off most projects with my clients saying this: “80% of this software project is not technical [it’s about the people]”</td>
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<td><strong>Managing Technology Change: Imagine All the People - Bev Magda</strong></td>
<td>Article on non-profit technology network espousing that the people are often forgotten about during IT implementations, and how it’s the people that have a profound impact on the success, or failure.</td>
<td>“The reaction of people who are using or are affected by the new technology has an impact on the productivity of the organization and the eventual success or failure of the technology.”</td>
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<td><strong>The Human Element – Charity Times</strong></td>
<td>Article on getting the human element of any change right -- focussed on structural changes and reorganisation.</td>
<td>“When undergoing organisational change, managers failing to keep employees in the loop do so at their peril.”</td>
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<td><strong>Six attributes of successful project managers</strong></td>
<td>The soft skills necessary to become a top-notch project manager.</td>
<td>“If you’re not managing your users, sponsor or stakeholders, you could deliver on budget, but you might not meet their needs, and they’ll say they’re not satisfied.”</td>
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