



# INFLUENCING DECISION MAKERS

How to secure budget for a constituent relationship management (CRM) solution



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What do savvy nonprofit leaders know about managing relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? That if you're managing your data inefficiently, you're missing valuable fundraising opportunities.

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Are you wasting an inordinate amount of time juggling data from disparate systems trying to gain a cohesive view of your supporters and donors? Do you lose valuable institutional knowledge every time there are staff transitions?

Consolidating your donor data into a single integrated system will give you the visibility and efficiencies you need to take your relationship management and fundraising efforts to new levels.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Your relationship data is scattered across a mishmash of siloed databases, Excel spreadsheets, address books, and post-it notes. When your board or Executive Director asks you for a report that contains specific information, you're left scrambling to gather and aggregate bits and pieces of data from various sources. Valuable time you could have used to reach out to current and prospective donors is spent combing through lists in Excel. Is this why you became a fundraiser? Managing your data inefficiently means you're distracted from your passion, and your organization's mission, and foregoing valuable time that could better be spent on actually fundraising!

You know that better, more comprehensive fundraising software — a constituent relationship management (CRM) platform — would streamline your data management efforts, make the creation of reports a breeze, and free up time to focus on important tasks that bring in dollars. But before you can even think about investing in a CRM solution, you need the support of your organization's decision makers.

Detailed in this guide, you will find insights regarding:

- » **The role of decision makers**, and what they need from you to make an informed decision;
- » **Demographic and donor trends**, and what they mean for you; and
- » **Must-haves for effective relationship management.**

Your organization's ability to build a network of engaged supporters and donors is tied directly to your relationship management efforts. Following a clear set of guidelines can help you be persuasive and set your organization up for relationship management success, which in turn will boost fundraising results.

**Start here:** As with any important decision, your organization's decision makers will need you to conduct a thorough analysis before recommending a course of action. You will want to summarize the status of your current data management activities and highlight the

inherent challenges and limitations. Consider surveying your staff to learn how many places contact information is being stored. Even you might be surprised by the number of Excel spreadsheets, address books, and email blast tools that come into play!

**Calculate the true costs:** Purchasing traditional database software for your organization has some obvious costs — servers, networking, and migration. But don't forget about the significant hidden costs — implementation and configuration, upgrades, staff time devoted to maintenance, security investments, backups and more. Compare these true costs against those associated with software delivered via the Internet, and you'll discover that in the latter scenario, your costs are spread out over a longer period and the vendor is responsible for keeping the servers running, updating software, performing backups, managing security and much more. This translates to time and money saved so you can focus on your mission.

**Try before you buy:** Be sure to get a trial of the software you are recommending, try it out for yourself and speak with references. When it comes time to recommend a CRM solution, consider Convio Common Ground™ for data management. This solution was designed to help nonprofits solve the problem of disconnected silos of data by consolidating all spreadsheets, address books, database systems and lists into a single CRM solution.

You can get a free trial of  
Common Ground right now by  
visiting [www.convio.com/cgtrial](http://www.convio.com/cgtrial).

**Prepare for objections:** As with any decision related to new software or technology, there will likely be concerns which you need to address head-on so your decision makers can move quickly past ill-informed misconceptions.

**Focus on the benefits:** It's important that you focus on identifying the topmost goals of key stakeholders, and prepare an explanation of how a new CRM solution will provide benefits in relationship management. Get the decision makers excited by telling them that you will be able to get them the reports they need, with a level of quality that your board members are likely used to experiencing in their for-profit jobs where they use world-class applications, such as Salesforce or Siebel. Show them how you will be armed with the tools you really need to raise more money. Explain how those tools take advantage of the most contemporary, emerging and yet proven fundraising strategies that are all happening online.

This guide has everything you need to get started.


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- ✓ Summarize the current state of your organization's data management systems
  - ✓ Calculate the true and total costs of purchasing traditional software vs. web-based systems
  - ✓ Try before you buy and make sure the solution that you're recommending will meet your needs
  - ✓ Prepare to counter anticipated objections
  - ✓ Focus on the benefits, for both your staff and your stakeholders
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## THE ROLE OF DECISION MAKERS

First and foremost, your organization's decision makers, including board members, are responsible for overseeing strategic plans, investments, and initiatives that tie directly to financial sustainability. Second, they offer professional knowledge and expertise to your organization. And third, they are expected to fundraise on your behalf. With this combination in mind, you should expect key decision makers to support projects designed to raise more money and further your mission. But first they need to agree that effective relationship management is critical to your fundraising and marketing activities and part of the strategic planning and budgeting processes for the organization as a whole. Before they can approve a CRM initiative, you will likely have to prepare a solid business case to show that investments in this information technology (IT) solution will pay off.

Your decision makers likely fall into one of two camps when it comes to understanding the current state of your organization's IT infrastructure. First, there's the person who realizes that your organization's data is spread across multiple places, creating a level of inefficiency that is unacceptable and counterproductive. This person knows the value of a world-class CRM system and its benefits when it comes to providing a better picture of customer interactions.

Then there's the other type of decision maker who is oblivious to the technical requirements of creating a list or report that details data about donor relationships and history. They just want the information in a report now — they don't understand why it's so difficult to fulfill their request.



The best way to garner support of your decision makers in both camps is to get them excited about the benefits of a CRM solution and support your case with facts.

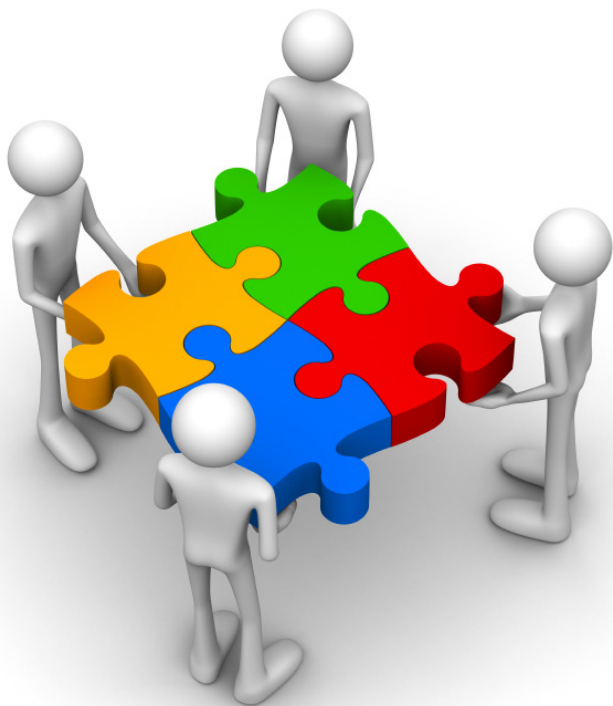
### Stay focused on your immediate needs

Having done your research, you know that some of the more sophisticated CRM systems available can provide value beyond your fundraising efforts and even help to manage your mission. Along with your fundraising data, they even track those who benefit from your mission and support your program staff — the holy grail of nonprofit information management. It's also possible to extend the

CRM to improve operational efforts like human resources and staff recruiting, time tracking, expense management and more. Your future plans might also include extending your CRM solution to work with social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, so you can connect to your supporters and learn more about them and their relationships. However, when making the case to your organization's decision makers, don't focus on "grand vision" projects that may follow. Instead, focus on the key fundraising benefits of CRM:

- » Improved relationship management
- » Increased operational efficiency
- » Retained institutional knowledge
- » Cutting-edge fundraising strategies

And over time, this combination of benefits is going to maximize fundraising results, as well as the efficacy of your mission.



## Common Objections

Your executives and board must perform due diligence before spending precious dollars. So, be prepared to overcome a few objections when proposing a web-based CRM solution.

They tell you:

### **“The web is not secure”**

Ask them where they do their banking, how they submit their taxes, where Fortune 500 companies are managing their HR information. They'll likely answer “online”.

### **“It's cheaper to buy vs. rent”**

Really? Many will and have, argued otherwise. Visit [www.idealware.org](http://www.idealware.org) or [www.rlweiner.com](http://www.rlweiner.com) to arm yourself with the information you need to show the financial benefits of Software as a Service (SaaS). Bottom line: your organization should focus on fundraising and your mission, not IT infrastructure.

### **“It's better to work with a single vendor”**

This used to be the case when systems didn't play well with each other. But now, systems are being built so they can plug into other applications and exchange information. You can pick and choose from forward-thinking vendors and find the mix of solutions that works best for you.



## DONOR TRENDS

When addressing your organization’s executives about investing in a CRM solution to support your relationship management needs, you must have data on-hand that supports your case. Expectations are changing and you need to change with them or be left behind.

### Increasing expectations from donors to provide personalized communications

Amazon and Netflix have paved the way in terms of expectations around communications. It’s all about personalization and options. People want to be in control of their relationship with your organization and dictate how you communicate with them — via the web, email, social networking — and about what.

This shift in expectations means that you need the tools in place to provide personalized communications through the donor’s preferred channel, or risk your supporter taking their dollars elsewhere. This is also where coordination comes into play. The left hand needs to talk to the right hand. If a person contacts your volunteer department to express interest in helping with an upcoming event, you

better make sure that the fundraising department doesn’t send them an email the next day to ask for a donation.

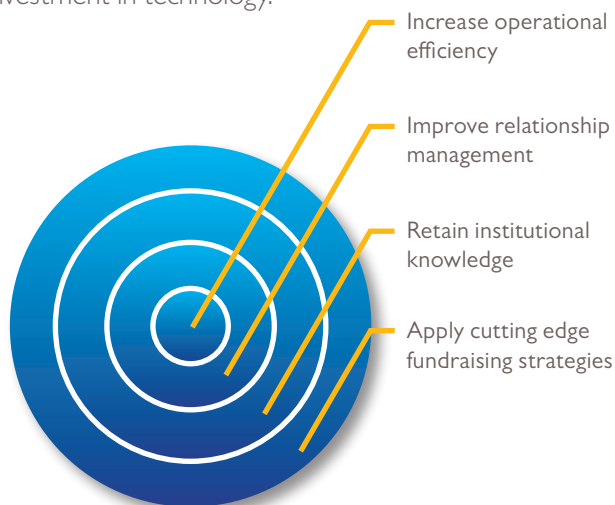
### Smart segmentation

Send the right piece to the right prospect with the right message at the right time. Targeting your fundraising appeals allows you to more closely define your message and the action you ask different people to take. Segmentation also lets you decide who NOT to communicate with — which is important when there are rising costs and lower returns for traditional methods of fundraising (e.g. direct mail) or risks of damaging your reputation (e.g. SPAM). Accurate segmentation requires an integrated CRM that tracks every relationship detail and every interaction, gift, and correspondence. It also provides the tools your non-technical staff can actually use to identify appropriate targets and suppress others. Increasing the average gift for an appeal through targeted segmentation by one or two percent may not sound like much, but it can mean thousands of additional dollars in donations.



## BENEFITS OF CRM

Articulating the benefits of a CRM solution will lead you to the path of least resistance as you make your case for an investment in technology.



### Increased operational efficiency

Paint a picture of the current situation. You are managing direct mail out of one software application, moves management out of an Excel spreadsheet, email out of some other platform, event management in a different tool, and volunteers in a FileMaker database. Yet everyone wants “their” report that compiles all of these sources and expects it to be produced in minutes. But in reality, when you, a colleague or a board member needs a report to make an informed decision, you must waste time pulling information from multiple systems to gather the data you need. Or, perhaps you have to pay a consultant to aggregate the data for you, or use the limited time of a precious IT resource. And even then, you’re not sure if it’s accurate because data integrity is questionable when the information is coming from so many different places.

With CRM, you can manage all of your data in one place and get a complete view of your constituents and their activities with your organization — without the limitations and hassles of your traditional donor database or multiple spreadsheets. No longer will your departments need to maintain silos of data, create dozens of spreadsheets, and build custom databases for project-focused purposes. Real-time reports can be created on the fly, giving you immediate access to meaningful metrics needed to make informed decisions.

### Improved relationship management

True relationship management is not just about managing your relationship with your donor; it's about understanding your contacts and supporters' relationships with one another and coordinating these relationships into action for your cause. You want visibility into more than just household relationships. You also want to see different layers of relationships including employer to employee, constituent to constituent, and board member to major donor prospect. After all, knowledge is power, as long as you can act on it.

Traditional donor management systems simply store data and are typically so difficult to use that very few staff can access and utilize the information. CRM allows you to keep track of your constituents, their networks, and how all their actions toward your cause are interrelated. Your volunteer management, campaign management and

donor management systems can all be communicating to coordinate your solicitation efforts.

### Retained institutional knowledge

With your current systems, it is virtually impossible to see who has spoken to which donor, when, and about what. You have limited visibility into a supporter's interest, requests or recent interactions. This can leave you looking disorganized if you contact a person who heard from someone else at your organization the day before. And then there's the issue if a staff person leaves your organization, along with all the donor information they kept in their head.

With CRM, these challenges are eliminated. The solution will enable you to retain institutional knowledge and stay coordinated. You won't have to worry about crashing computers, lost post-it notes, or your development assistant's upcoming move to Africa.

### Cutting-edge fundraising strategies

There's no doubt that today's innovation is happening online. Fortunately, modern CRM systems have been designed to take advantage of these advancements. Choose a web-based CRM solution that is already integrated with other services on the Internet. You want to be well positioned now, and in the future, to boost your fundraising results by leveraging the latest innovations, such as social networks and mobile devices.

## TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

### Innovation is happening online

In the for-profit sector, innovation started happening online more than a decade ago. Now, nonprofits are benefiting from this innovation, and can access tried and tested tools that improve relationship management. The online world will continue to be the dominant place for ongoing innovation that will incorporate best practices and technologies designed to improve efficiency and meet the needs of geographically dispersed organizations.

### More vendors are designing solutions that are web-based

Board members are probably tired of people in your organization coming to them for approval to buy another point solution. They know that this request is really just the tip of the iceberg, underneath which lies a need for more hardware and more IT support. These hidden costs add up and make your request a difficult one to approve because of budget constraints.





This is where web-based CRM solutions have a distinct advantage: there's no hardware to purchase, no servers to configure, no additional software to manage and support. Pricing is typically based on per user (the number of staff that need to access the system) and that's it. And even better, having your CRM solution "in the cloud" means that it doesn't matter where your team members are, they can access the database as long as they have access to a web browser or smart phone. Having all the information they need at their fingertips will make them more efficient fundraisers and help your organization build the institutional knowledge needed to make the most of your relationships. Your board members are no exception. They can manage their own pool of current and prospective donors online, from their PC or MAC at home or on their iPhone or Blackberry.

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## MUST-HAVES FOR A CRM SOLUTION

- ✓ Accessible via the Internet
  - ✓ Secure and dependable infrastructure
  - ✓ Integrates with Microsoft Outlook
  - ✓ Scalable to grow with your evolving needs
  - ✓ Extensible so you can add features and functionality
  - ✓ Reputable, stable vendor who continues to invest in the product
  - ✓ Supported by a thriving community of developers
  - ✓ Constantly evolving solution
  - ✓ Configurable (supports roles and permissions)
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## CONCLUSION

Relationship management is becoming more important for nonprofit organizations of all sizes. Haphazardly managing data about your relationships with key contacts — your donors, volunteers, supporters, funders — will limit your fundraising success. You must lead the effort to adopt the CRM tools you need to ramp up your relationship management efforts. And you have to be persuasive about it.

Your organization's key decisions makers are eager for you to be more efficient in your job and raise more money. You can expect them to support your business case for an investment in a CRM solution when you prove the related benefits can maximize your fundraising results.

Contact Convio today for more information about Common Ground or to talk with a client who is using the system. You can gather the information you need to present a compelling business case for CRM before your next board meeting.





# ABOUT CONVIO COMMON GROUND

Common Ground is a CRM system designed for nonprofits that moves beyond the traditional donor database. Common Ground provides nonprofits with key features for managing donations, including pledge gift management, batch gift entry, major gift fundraising, relationship tracking, fundraising events and more. It also helps nonprofits manage other types of interactions — including volunteer tracking to organize multi-shift volunteer jobs, then easily find available volunteers in the

database whose availability and skills match upcoming shifts. Because Common Ground is built on the Force.com platform from Salesforce.com it can be extended with clicks, not code, allowing nonprofits to easily customize fields, page layouts, workflows and access privileges and get all of the advantages of a reliable, cost-effective IT solution and avoid the headaches of managing technology onsite.

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## ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is the leading provider of on-demand constituent relationship management (CRM) software and services that give nonprofit organizations a better way to inspire and mobilize people to support their organization. Convio Online Marketing, the company's online marketing suite, offers integrated software for fundraising, advocacy, events, email marketing and web content management, and its Convio Common Ground™ CRM system helps organizations efficiently track and manage all interactions with supporters. All Convio products are delivered through the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model and are backed by a portfolio of best-in-class consulting and support services and a network of partners who provide value added services and applications focused on the unique needs of nonprofit organizations. For more information, please visit [www.convio.com](http://www.convio.com).

## ABOUT HELLER CONSULTING

Heller Consulting helps nonprofits streamline their fundraising operations and maximize their use of fundraising software. With offices in San Francisco, Chicago and New York, this twenty-four person firm has helped over 600 nonprofits nationwide since 1996.

With extensive expertise on both Convio software and Blackbaud's Raiser's Edge®, Heller Consulting co-developed the Convio Connector, which provides seamless integration between the two systems. Additionally, Heller was involved in the development of Convio's Common Ground™ software built on the Force.com platform. The friendly experts at Team Heller can help you with Conversion and Implementation, Merging Multiple Databases, System and Staffing Assessments, Code Cleanup and Database Streamlining, Business Process Design and Documentation, Acknowledgment Letters, Report and Query Development, Customization and Integration, and Targeted Training for either the Raiser's Edge or Common Ground.

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