What is Nonprofit CRM?
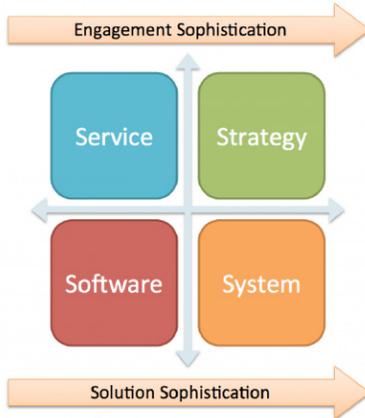

For in-depth information from our community site, visit The Connected Cause

Insights into CRM for Nonprofits

theconnectedcause.com/crminsights

Donor Management Apps for Nonprofits

theconnectedcause.com/donorapps

Contact

Beverly Hannay
Business Development Associate
518-797-3438
beverly@teamheller.com

TeamHeller.com

Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) has the potential to help non-profits better serve their constituents. It can help organizations break down process and data barriers and enable a more consistent, responsive and efficient approach to constituent communications and service.
But, what is CRM?

At Heller Consulting, we look at CRM from four standpoints — software, system, service, and strategy — to see various approaches nonprofits can take. We also think about it in the context of both engagement and technology solutions because how you intend to engage with your constituents defines what you need from your technology solutions.

Our definition of CRM is based on our experience designing and implementing CRM environments for hundreds of nonprofits, and from interviews with 30 of the largest nonprofits in the U.S. that we completed for our industry paper, Insights into CRM for Nonprofits. Here is how we see it:

CRM as Software — A single piece of software that holds all data and manages all business practices. Most nonprofits would like this; it's a "silver bullet" solution to siloed-data problems. But, it's not realistic for most organizations. The smallest and simplest may find a specialized system that meets their needs, but most organizations will need something more.

CRM as a System — Multiple pieces of software working with business practices to manage information and meet key business needs. This is more sophisticated, and it's what most organizations need. It can include integrations, business intelligence tools, and data warehouse solutions. It allows organizations to adapt their system as their strategies change. The correct implementation of a CRM system includes up-front planning and the recognition that all good systems require ongoing attention.

CRM as Service — Adopting technology, business practices and communications to re-actively meet requests of constituents for information and services. Some nonprofits may improve their constituents' experience using CRM as Software, but there are limits to this. Interactions are driven primarily by the constituent, and the organization tends to engage only constituents who initiate contact — leaving the nonprofit with limited influence and missed opportunities to engage the entire organization in constituent interactions. CRM as Service can be a substantial improvement. Adopting the right technology, business practices and communications yields considerable benefits and lays the foundation for later adoption of a more sophisticated approach.

CRM as Strategy — Pro-actively engaging constituents where they are to expand reach and delivery of the organization's mission. CRM as Strategy offers the ultimate opportunity and ROI. Interactions are initiated and driven by the organization. Every staff member is guided and supported in their work to represent the organization, and the organization pro-actively engages constituents where they "congregate/reside" (i.e., online, at home, or via social media) to expand reach and delivery of the organization's mission. All of this allows the organization to be more adaptive, responsive, accurate and effective. It requires planning, communication and coordination, plus technology to support it. The ROI? Staff members and constituents fully engaged in expanding the impact of the organization's mission.