

The Comprehensive Guide to Fundraising Technology for Nonprofits and Schools



Double *the* Donation
matching gifts made easy

Everything your org needs to know to make informed decisions about your fundraising toolkit

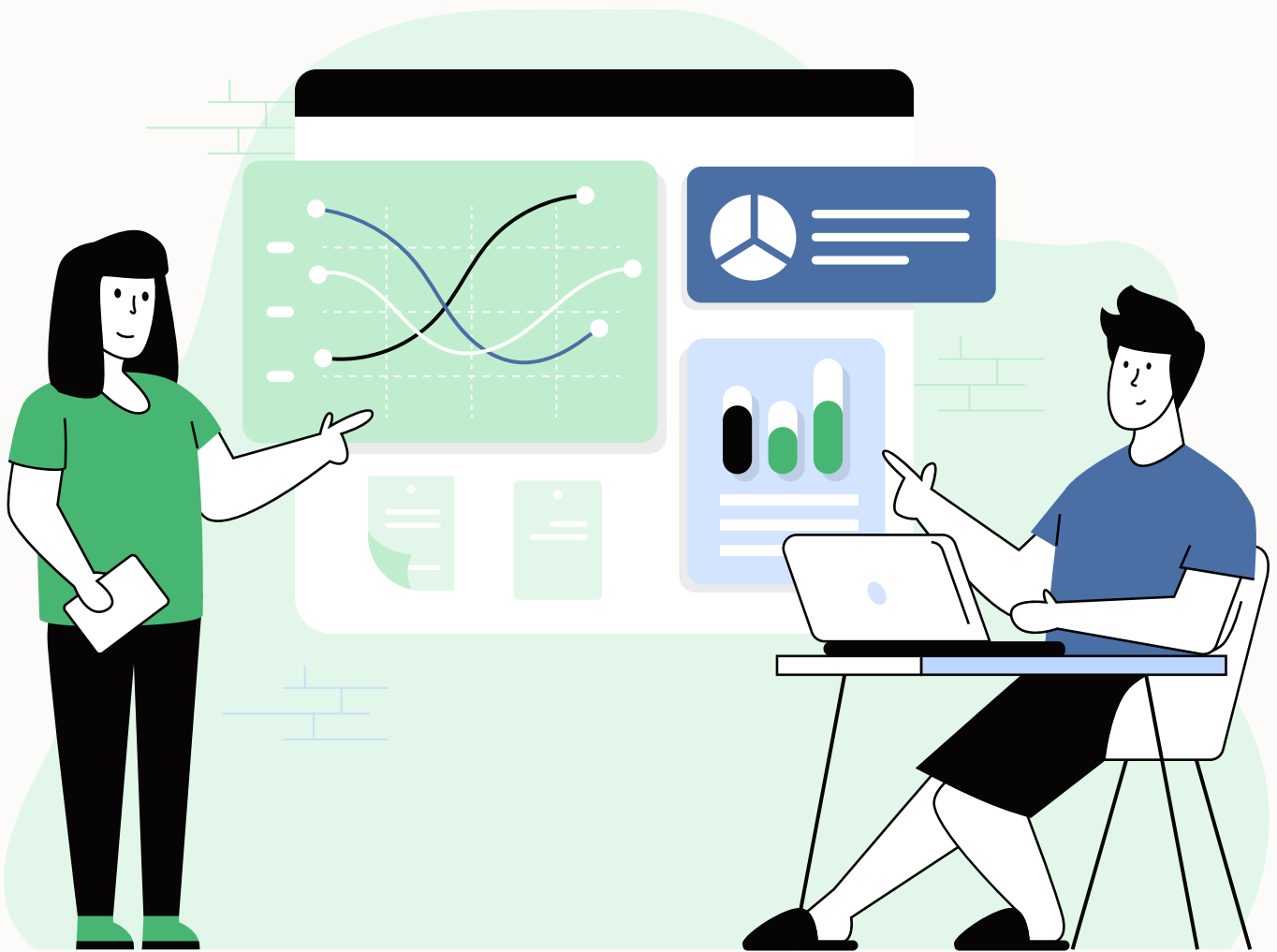


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Introduction

Introduction

Fundraising technology continues to develop at a rapidly increasing pace—it can feel hard to keep up sometimes! But having the right tools can actually be the difference between an organization that's struggling to keep its lights on and one that's flourishing in its fundraising efforts with overflowing revenue being invested directly back into the nonprofit's mission.

Now, take a minute to stop and think: where would your nonprofit fall on that scale? Are your efforts being fruitful, or do you feel as if your team is putting in more than you're getting out?

Regardless of your answer to the question, there's always room for growth; and fundraising technology continues to pave the way for improvements among nonprofit operations.

What that means for your organization exactly can vary;

For some, it may be getting up and running with a donor management system for the first time.


For others, it's learning to utilize your existing tools to their fullest potential.

And for others still, it might mean upgrading your toolkit from one solution to another.

In this complete guide to fundraising tech, we'll share everything you need to know about nonprofit tools, common types of technology, what to look for in a new solution, answers to frequently asked questions, and more.

Let's begin!



The background is a solid green color. In the center, there is a large, semi-transparent dollar sign (\$) being held by a hand. Surrounding this central image are several smaller, semi-transparent dollar signs scattered across the frame. A white rectangular border is positioned around the central text area.

What Is Fundraising Technology?

The Basics

What Is Fundraising Technology? The Basics

Fundraising technology is an overarching term used to describe the tools used by nonprofits, educational institutions, and other fundraising groups to improve upon the fundraising process in some way.

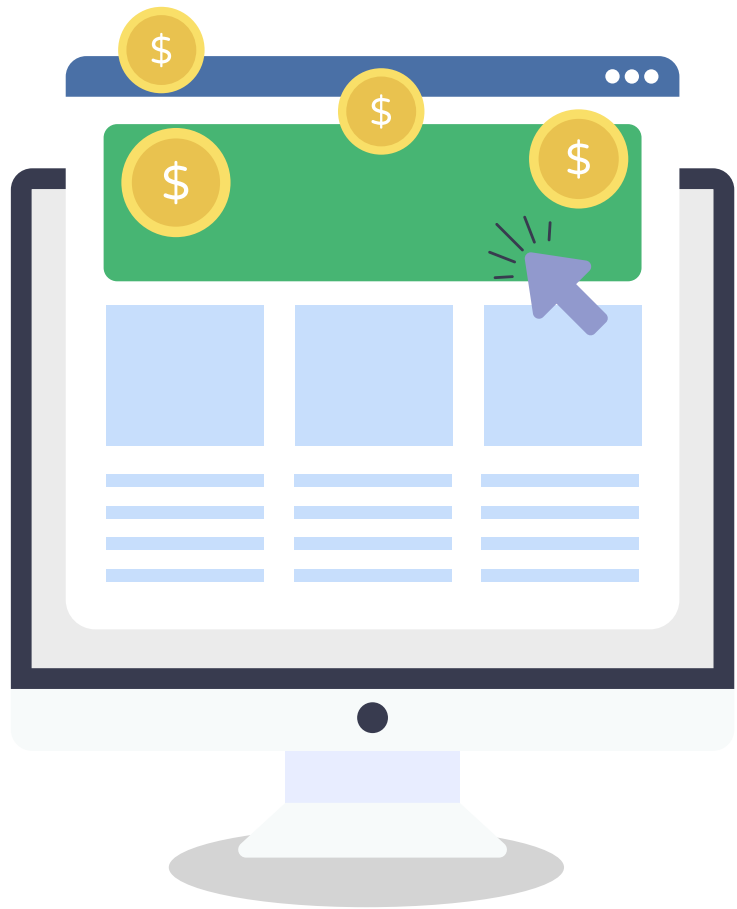
That's a pretty vague definition, and it's because "fundraising technology" can encompass a ton of different tools in the nonprofit sector. In fact, technology can be described as *any tool that utilizes knowledge to solve a problem*.

So, wouldn't that be...everything?

Sure. Your excel spreadsheet that's chock full of donor data could be considered fundraising technology because it provides a solution to the inefficiencies of handwritten donor records in a dusty filing cabinet somewhere.

But your handwritten records might also be considered fundraising technology because they provide a solution to simply lacking donor information in the first place.

Yet when you participate in discussions about fundraising technology, you're not referring to manually updated spreadsheets and handwritten records. Instead, you're likely thinking more along the lines of robust online giving forms, streamlined payment processing tools, automated donor databases, and more.



In a more targeted sense, fundraising technology enables nonprofits to raise more money with less time, effort, and resources required. This type of technology typically streamlines both front-end (or donor-facing) and back-end operations (nonprofit teams behind the scenes). For example, fundraising tools may help simplify the procedure donors take to make a gift, allow organizations to more effectively manage their engagements, and drive supporter contributions to the next level—sometimes even all at once!

One thing to keep in mind about fundraising technology is that even if you can manage a task on your own, it doesn't mean that you should. In many situations, the dollars you might be saving by taking a manual approach to a process is often counteracted with investments of team member time (and remember—time is money) and even the possibility (or probability) of human error.

And that's why it's not just about having fundraising technology but having the right fundraising technology.





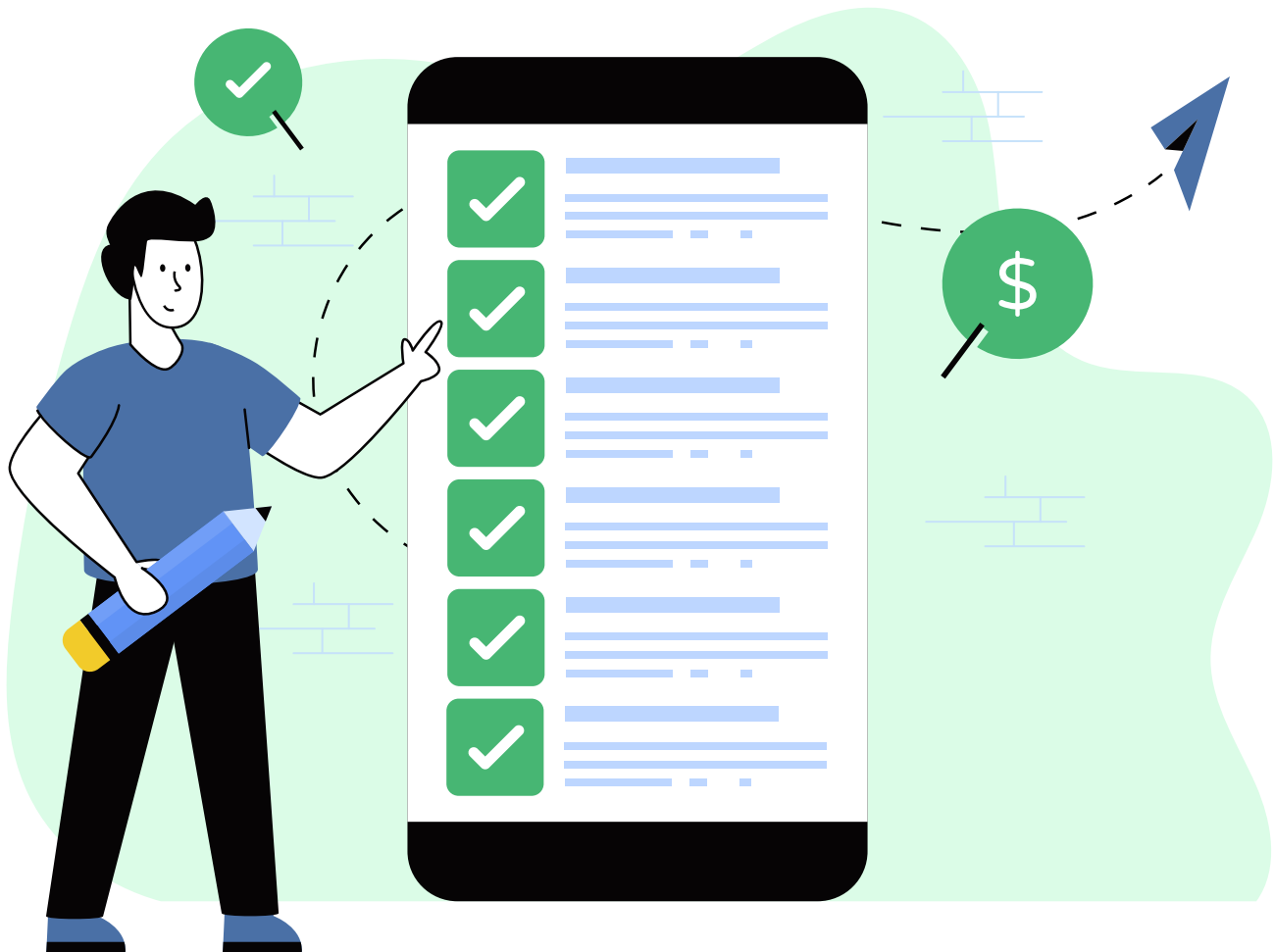
**The Most
Common Types
of Fundraising
Technology**

6 Most Common Types of Fundraising Technology

Fundraising tools come in all shapes and sizes, as they're designed to meet a variety of nonprofit needs. But do you really need all of them? How do you know which solutions are most important for your organization?

As you explore the most common types of nonprofit technology, keep in mind that many fundraising platforms will provide innovative solutions that fill more than one need. For example, many systems will provide tools for both traditional online donation processing and peer-to-peer giving. At the same time, tons of nonprofit CRMs also comprise event management and even marketing tools!

That said, here is an overview of the six most common categories of fundraising technology.



Donation Software

Key Features:

- User-friendly interface
- Multiple payment processing options
- Recurring gift functionality
- Mobile-friendly technology
- Customizability to your organization
- Suggested donation amounts
- Engagement tracking
- Automated receipting

Nonprofit donation software is one of the most critical pieces of the technology puzzle. After all, it's how individual donor funding typically gets to your organization in the first place. Not to mention, it opens up your potential supporter base worldwide, rather than being refined to a particular area.

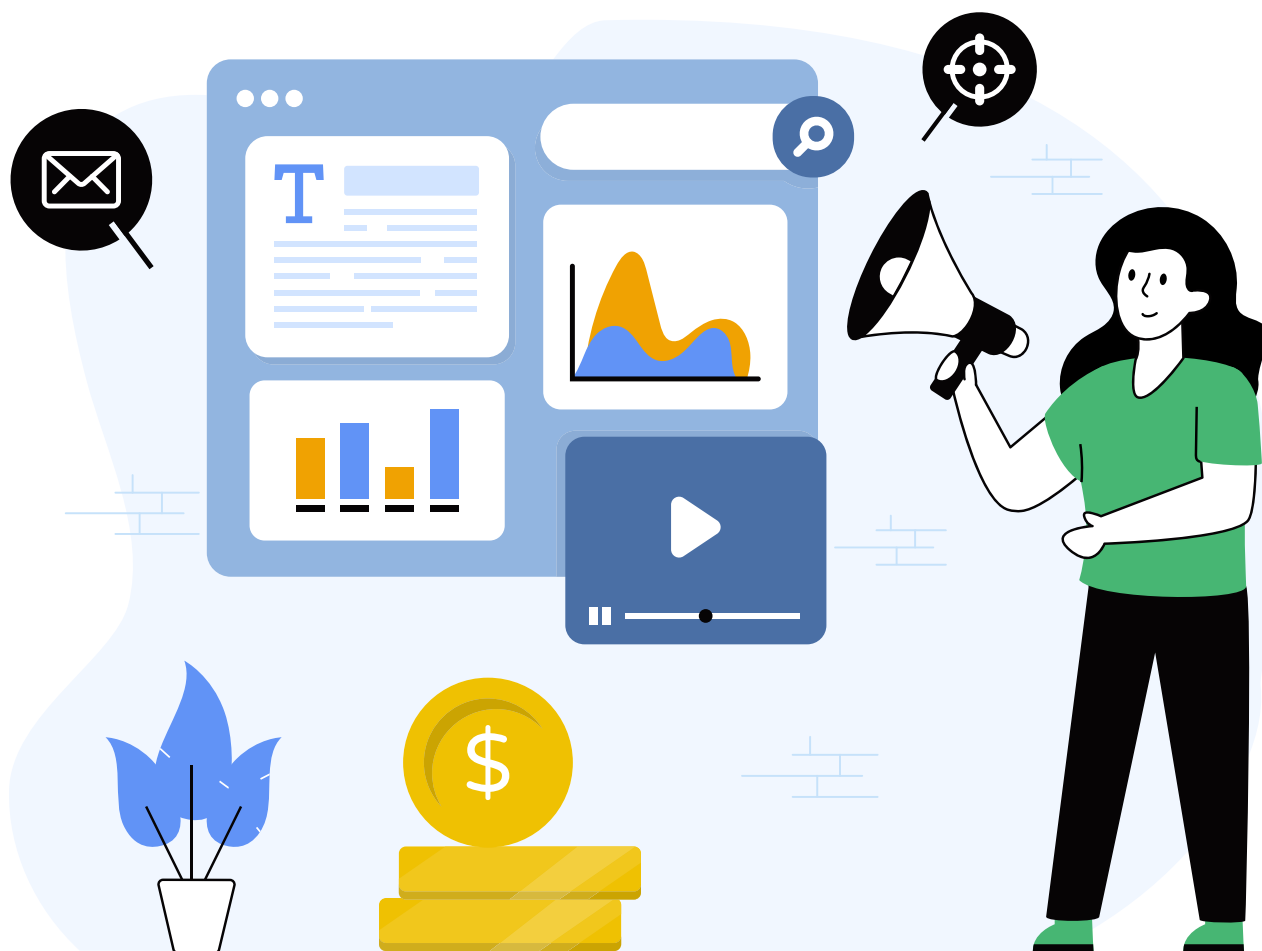
Now, the term "donation software" can encompass multiple types of tools, many of which are bundled together by technology providers for increased accessibility. These typically consist of things like online donation forms, payment processing tools, text-to-give or other mobile giving solutions, automatically recurring donation software, and crowdfunding platforms.



Equipping your organization with optimal donation software enables your nonprofit donors to give quickly and easily to your cause. A nonprofit donor simply inputs basic data like their contact information, a form of payment, and intended gift size. Nonprofits may also utilize donation software to collect additional details about their supporters, such as geographic location, employment status, motivation for giving, and more.

Then, once the donor submits their donation form, the payment is processed (often using credit or debit card, ACH transfer, and mobile payments such as Apple or Google Pay) and transferred to your organization digitally.

Keep in mind that the simpler the giving experience is for donors, the more likely they are to complete their donations. On the other hand, a lengthy or complicated procedure can lead to frustrated donors and abandoned gifts. And that's why the tools you choose to facilitate your organization's giving process are so essential!

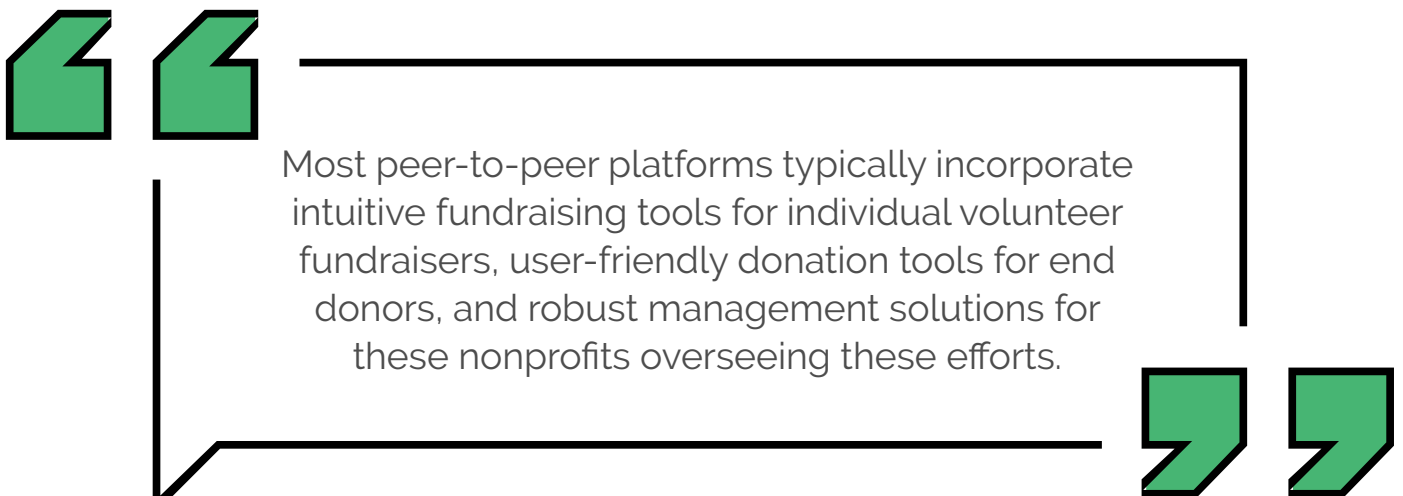


Peer-to-Peer Tools

Key Features:

- Branded platform with individual customizability
- Embedded fundraising goal trackers with real-time updates
- Easy social sharing capabilities
- Gamification solutions
- Multiple payment processing options
- Individual and team fundraising abilities

Peer-to-peer fundraising tools are a particular type of donation software that empower a nonprofit's supporters to fundraise on its behalf. **These solutions typically equip each volunteer fundraiser with a personal donation page, which they are then able to share with their family members, friends, colleagues, and more.**



For the greatest results, that means easily customizable donation pages that fundraisers are encouraged to populate with photos, goals, updates, and a description of why the individual is hosting a fundraiser for your organization. Many even incorporate gamification elements such as goal thermometers, badges and rewards, leaderboards for "top donors" and "top fundraisers," and other ideas to drive friendly competition for a good cause.

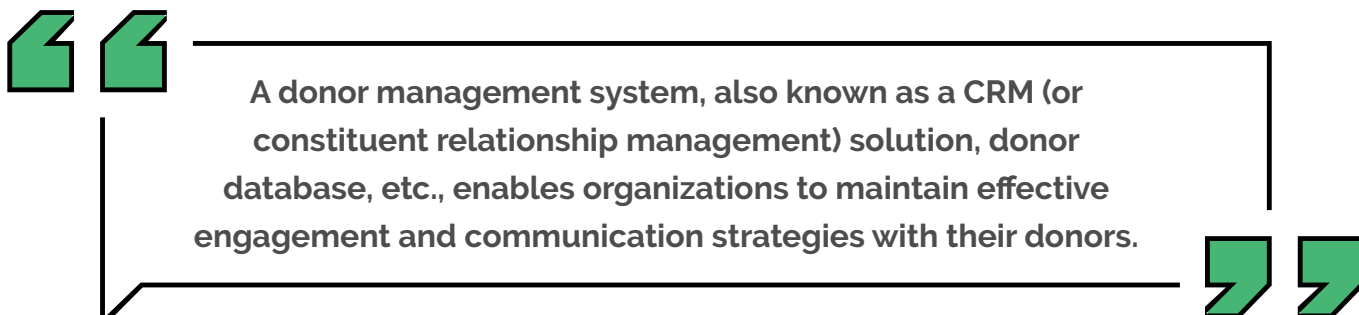
Donors tend to be more likely to contribute to a new cause if they're being solicited by a friend or family member (largely due to the idea of social proof) rather than the organization itself. And that's even more true when the giving process is quick, straightforward, and even interactive!

CRM

Key Features:

- Data-rich donor profiles
- Ready-made and customizable reporting options
- Communication automation (including gift acknowledgments)
- Donor list segmentation
- Detailed engagement tracking
- Birds-eye view and individual data analysis

Your organization likely has a decent-sized group of supporters that help fund your mission through charitable donations. But it can be difficult (or nearly impossible) to keep track of who needs to be thanked at any given moment—not to mention develop personal relationships with each one. And that's where your donor management system comes in!



A donor management system, also known as a CRM (or constituent relationship management) solution, donor database, etc., enables organizations to maintain effective engagement and communication strategies with their donors.

It essentially is, as mentioned, a database collection of all the information you have about the individuals who support an organization. Depending on the organization, that might include donor contact information, previous engagements with your nonprofit (such as volunteer history or most recent donations), employment status, familial relationships, birthdate and age, geographic location, and more.

Armed with this information, your CRM should allow you to pull data on any individual donor at any time, with just a quick search of the database. At the same time, it should enable your team to automatically segment and personalize your donor communications (e.g., sending different types of gift acknowledgments to first-time donors than established supporters and addressing each individual by name).

Fundraising CRM technology continues to develop, too. For example, some constituent management systems have begun to incorporate smart technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities. Other solutions enable organizations to track and engage with other types of key supporters (beyond the traditional donor) as well, including volunteers, nonprofit employees, and board members.

Event Management

Key Features:

- Online and in-person ticketing
- Online and in-person registration management
- Automated pre- and post-event communications
- Donation and payment processing
- Print or digital receipting
- Comprehensive reporting

Many nonprofits rely on well-thought-out events to spearhead their fundraising efforts and mission programming. For example, this might include charity galas, fun runs and other event-a-thons, tournaments, and more. But managing the event-hosting process from start to finish (or idea inception to post-event follow-ups) can be a lot for any person or group to handle on their own. Luckily, of course, event management software can help your organization streamline these efforts.

Nonprofit event management tools enable organizations to automate aspects of the process, empowering teams to plan, organize, and pull off highly successful fundraising events—all while expending fewer resources (and typically raising more) than they would have for a low-tech version of the same initiative.

As you explore your options, keep in mind that two of the most essential components of event management technology for nonprofits are registration and ticketing capabilities. The easier it is for your supporters to get involved with your upcoming event, the more likely they are to take part!

Not to mention, in this day and age, more and more events are transforming into highly immersive virtual and hybrid attendee experiences. And that means they're more and more reliant on innovative fundraising solutions.

In addition to general event management technology, nonprofits also have the ability to utilize more specialized solutions. For example, charity auctions are some of the most highly-favored and lucrative event opportunities for nonprofits and schools of all shapes and sizes. But your typical event-hosting software doesn't always have the tools you need to seamlessly manage an auction fundraiser.

And this is why nonprofit auction software is another common type of fundraising technology to consider. Depending on your team's needs, auction tools (designed for live, silent, in-person, virtual, and hybrid events) can sometimes be incorporated into your existing event management solution, though other software providers have created software that can be purchased à la carte.



Marketing Solutions

Key Features:

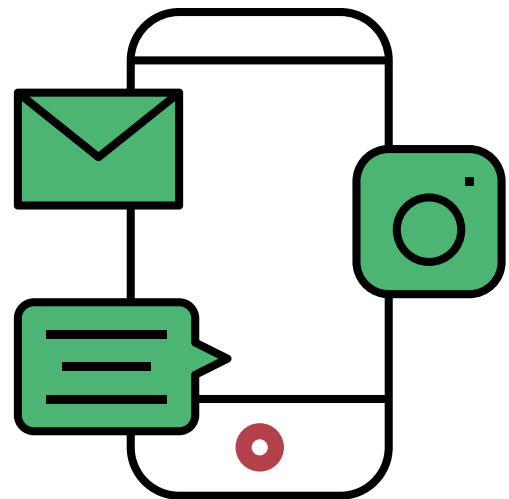
- Automated email streams
- Social media management
- Website development
- Content marketing and blogging tools
- Ready-made and customizable templates
- Donor engagement and interaction tracking
- List segmentation capabilities
- Pre-scheduled communications
- Robust reporting

Even the most well-planned fundraising initiatives are not likely to bring in the revenue you're aiming for if your audience is unaware that they're taking place. To significantly increase awareness and participation in your campaigns, you'll likely need to enact a marketing plan.

And to make the most of your fundraising efforts and elevate the impact of your marketing plan, nonprofit marketing technology is a great solution!

There is a ton of different marketing technology available, depending on your organization's needs. Some providers will offer a solution targeted to a particular service (such as email or social media management), while others will bundle multiple functions for a comprehensive marketing toolkit. In the same vein, some software will focus on mass marketing initiatives, while others highlight direct marketing and the positive impacts that can bring to your fundraising.

It all boils down to this: if you're looking to up your organization's promotional efforts and get the word out about your upcoming fundraising campaigns, events, and more, having the right tools can help you easily scale up your results without putting more on your marketing team's plate.

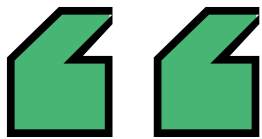


Matching Gift Software

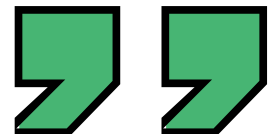
Key Features:

- Embeddable donation page company search tool
- Pre-populating matching gift confirmation page widget
- Comprehensive and regularly updated company database
- Multiple methods for match-eligible donation identification
- Automated email follow-ups
- Engagement-tracking portal with forecasting abilities

Corporate matching gifts are a powerful—yet continually underutilized—source of funding for many nonprofits. And the most significant challenge facing nonprofits looking to maximize this funding source is a widespread lack of knowledge about the programs.



In fact, our research shows that more than 26 million individuals work for companies that offer matching gifts, despite 78% of the group being completely unaware of their employers' existing programs. As a result, approximately \$4 to \$7 billion in available matching gift revenue goes unclaimed each year.



Luckily, matching gift software exists to help organizations increase knowledge of these opportunities and aid donors through the request process. These solutions typically work in a few ways: the first step of which includes informing donors about matching gift programs. For example, the technology may highlight matching gifts directly within an organization's online donation experience and request employment information to help determine eligibility.

Then, once the donor submits their online donation, they may be met with a pre-populated informational widget about their company's giving programs (if they shared their employer's name in the previous step) or another opportunity to provide their employment data (if they hadn't previously done so). This information should include links to the company's online request forms or submission portal, the employer's minimum and maximum matching donation amounts, matching gift ratios, type of qualifying employees and nonprofits, and submission deadlines.

Donors are typically also followed up with matching gift information via an automated email stream. This resource should once again provide company-specific matching gift program information and encourage donors to submit their match requests to their employers.



And throughout it all, top matching gift software should also provide detailed reporting information for organizations to easily track donors throughout their company request processes, estimate incoming match revenue, and more.



Things To Look For In Top Fundraising Technology Solutions

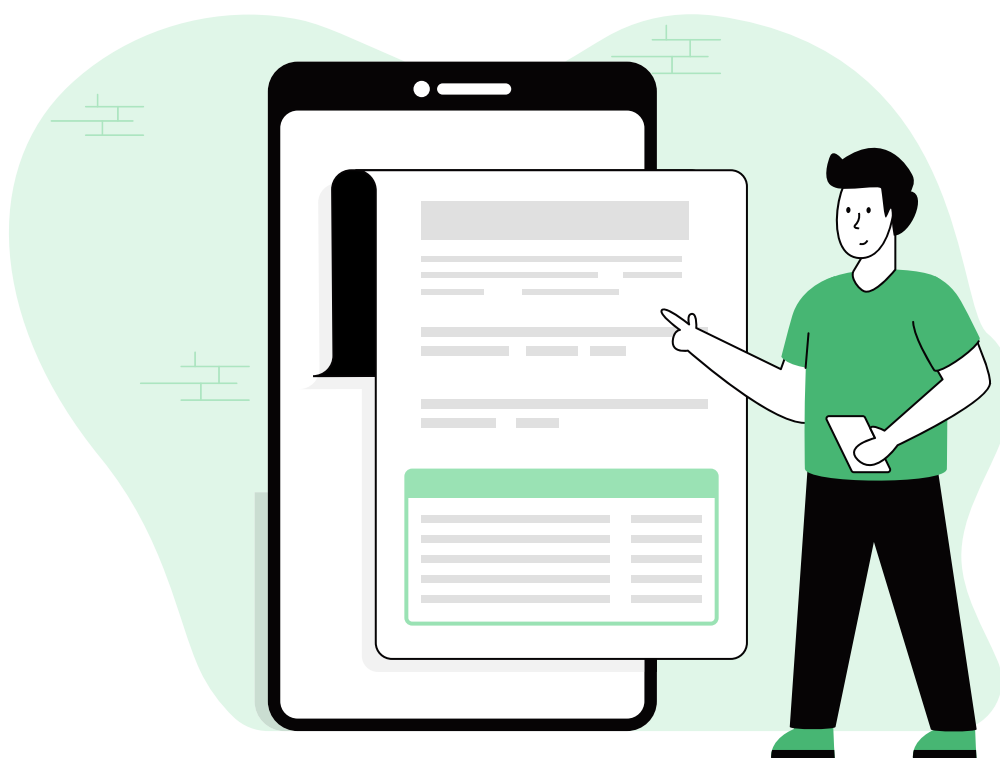
8 Things To Look For In Top Fundraising Technology Solutions

Now that you know which types of fundraising technology you should have in your toolkit, how can you narrow each category down to the best provider available?

Whether you're looking to add a new type of fundraising tool to your nonprofit's technological toolkit or upgrade an existing system, it's essential that you go into the buying process with a well-thought-out plan.

Remember to request personalized demos of your leading prospective technology providers, and keep these eight items in mind as you search for the best-fitting solution for your needs.

Bonus tip! Before you go into any sales conversations, rank the following components of a technology solution in order of importance for your team. This will enable you to keep your priorities straight as you search for and compare potential systems!



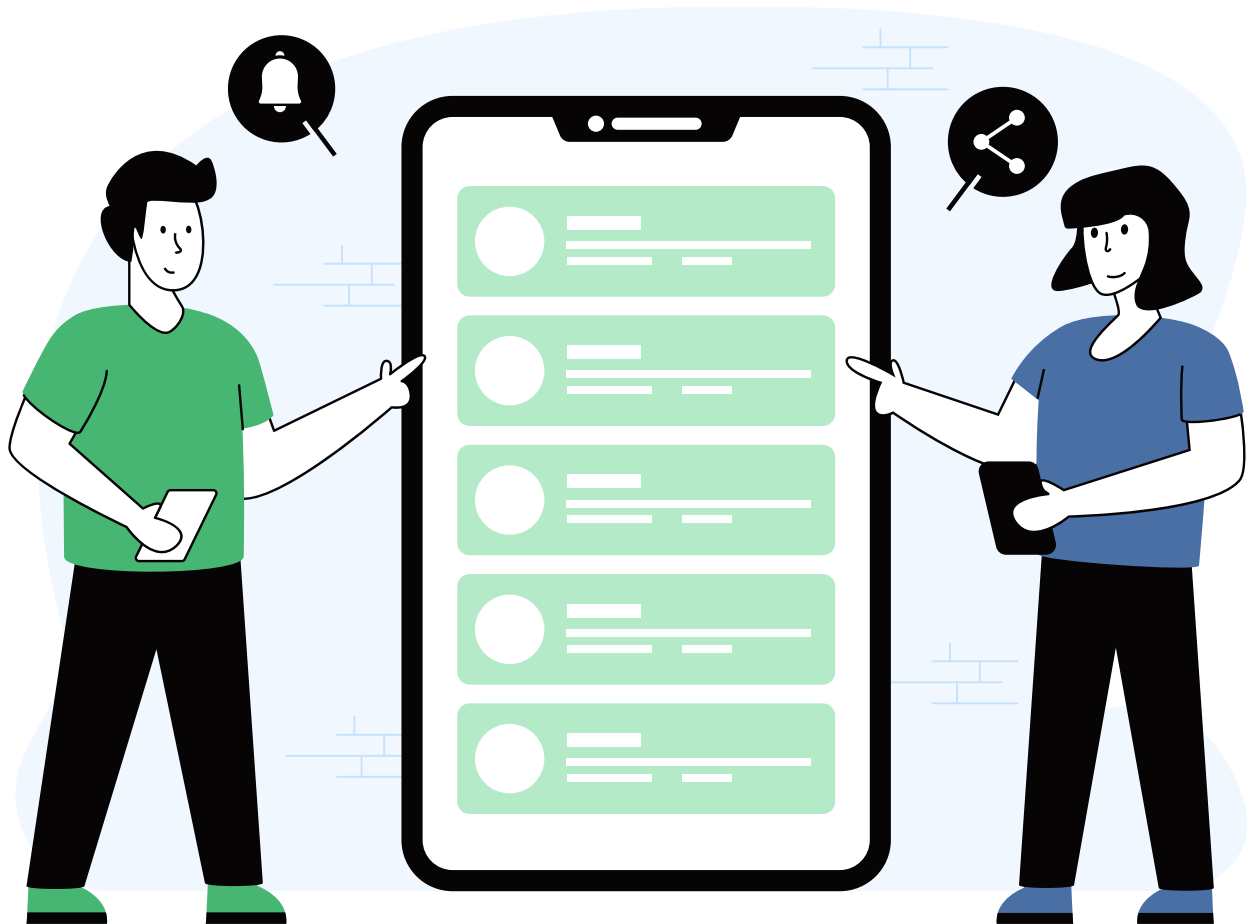
Features & Functionality

The key features and functionality of a software solution are essential factors in any organization's technology buying decisions. Above, we shared a list of top characteristics of many types of fundraising technology—including donation tools, CRMs, matching gift software, and more. But not every choice in a particular category will offer all of the recommended features.



Therefore, be diligent about the types of functionality that are most important to you and your team. For example, say a provider offers innovative online donation forms without text-to-give functionality. Decide whether that's enough for your needs or if you should focus on an alternative solution that does incorporate easy text giving.

And remember, features not necessarily included in a tech solution's core offerings may be able to offer extended functionality through integrations with additional platforms—which brings us to our next point to consider.



Integrations

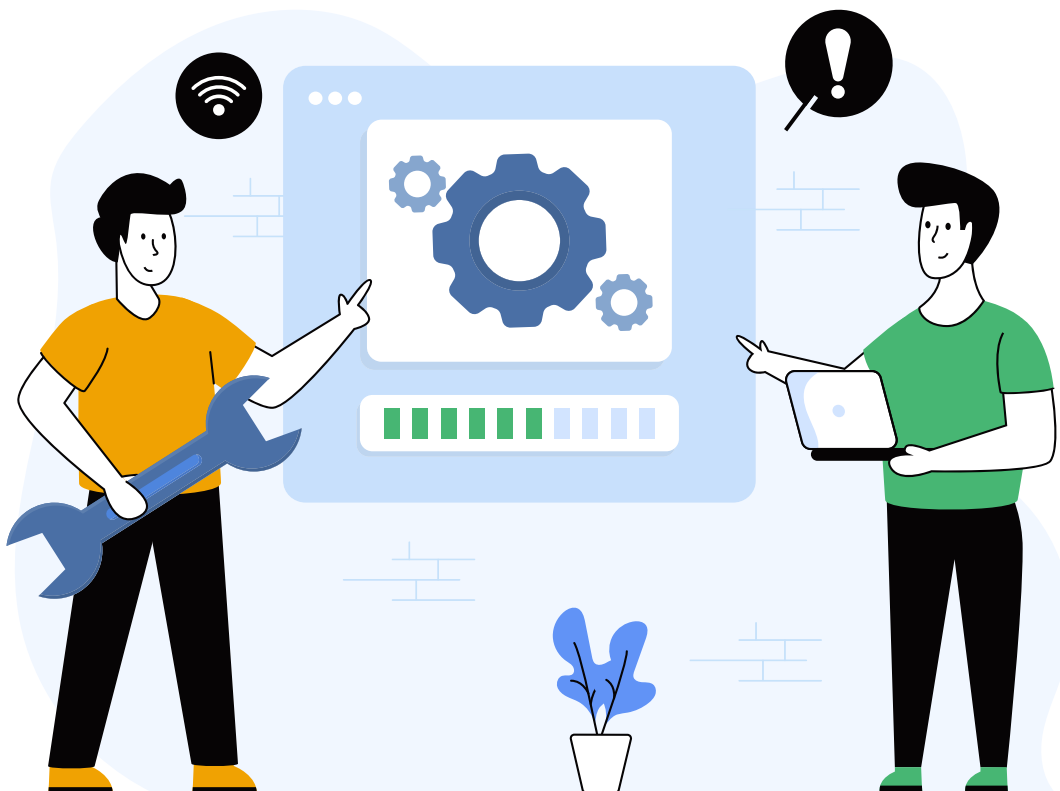
Software integrations occur when technology brings together pieces and functionality from different systems into a single, unified solution. Nonprofits benefit greatly from fundraising tech integrations by enabling teams to get the best of multiple specialized platforms without having to worry about complicated piecemeal tools.

For example, online donation tools will typically integrate with various donor management systems. This enables organizations to process donations and collect user data through the giving platform, which is then seamlessly transferred to a separate, partnering CRM. When the two tools offer an integration, users can ensure their data is flowing from one system to the other in the most effective, accurate, and organized manner possible.



And similar ideas can be seen through integrations [between matching gift software](#) and the donation forms, peer-to-peer giving platforms, and CRMs that their clients use to collect and manage donor information. These software integrations result in significant benefits such as cleaner data flow, more streamlined and accurate reporting, and increased scalability, as well as saving time and money for your cause.

So what does this mean in your search for the best fundraising technology? Essentially, your team is not constrained by the limitations of any one platform.



Case Studies and Testimonials

Sure, a fundraising solution looks great on paper—or on the company's own website. But do they have experience aiding nonprofits like yours? If so, what kinds of results have those organizations seen?



Sometimes, it's extremely valuable to hear from someone other than the provider you're considering buying from. And nonprofits like yours can often share some excellent insights into the ease of use and impact that the solution actually provides.

Luckily, many fundraising tools make their case studies, testimonials, and other client success stories easily accessible from their websites. If not, feel free to reach out to the provider and ask for additional resources and information (such as metrics, client quotes, and more) to guide your choice.



Affordability

Nonprofits often operate on limited budgets, with much of their available resources being allocated toward their missions rather than “overhead” solutions. And that's great—but having the right tools to power your team is essential for optimal organizational performance. Sometimes, that will require an investment in new technology.



But most software providers also understand that affordability is likely a crucial factor in any nonprofit's buying decisions. Thus, it's a good idea to go into your search with a budget in mind but not necessarily opt for the lowest cost solution.

And remember, new technology is, in fact, an investment. You put dollars in toward your new software solutions, then (hopefully) see positive returns in terms of the benefits the tools bring your team. That might be in terms of hours saved, errors avoided, or even additional dollars raised!

Scalability

Scalability, in terms of technology, is the ability of a solution to increase performance, scope, and cost in response to expanding demand for the software. A scalable software solution essentially enables organizations to utilize fundraising technology that develops alongside the team to a significant extent. This is in comparison to requiring the organization to upgrade its technology to a separate platform after a period of growth.



For example, let's say your organization starts out with a free donor management solution that enables you to track information on up to 500 contacts—but that's the extent of its functionality. This might sound great at first if you're starting out with fewer than that amount, but it leaves your team with limited room to grow without necessitating software overhauls (which can be costly and time-consuming).

On the other hand, a scalable solution may start out at a minimal price for a few hundred contacts but offer continually increasing capabilities and further extended limitations. This technology mirrors your organization's growth as you continue to reach new donors and expand your mission's reach.

And, as your software needs develop, the cost of scalable technology will likely increase at regular intervals in order to support your growth. While it might mean a slightly larger investment for new tools upfront, technology that prioritizes scalability often ends up being significantly more cost-effective in the long run.

Maintenance & Improvements

Technology is always developing and leveraging new ideas for better and more efficient results—so you want your technology providers to keep up with the changing times! That said, when you make your next software purchase, be sure to consider the emphasis that a company places on ongoing system maintenance, tech improvement, and other solution development. This, too, will enable your tools to grow alongside your needs, rather than having to be constantly on the lookout for a new software provider offering the latest and most exciting features.



Not to mention, critical tools such as your matching gift database will likely rely on external information being made available. As companies adjust their matching gift program guidelines and new businesses begin offering these initiatives, you'll want to ensure your solution prioritizes regular, ongoing updates to offer the most accurate information to your team and donors.

Training, Implementation, & Support

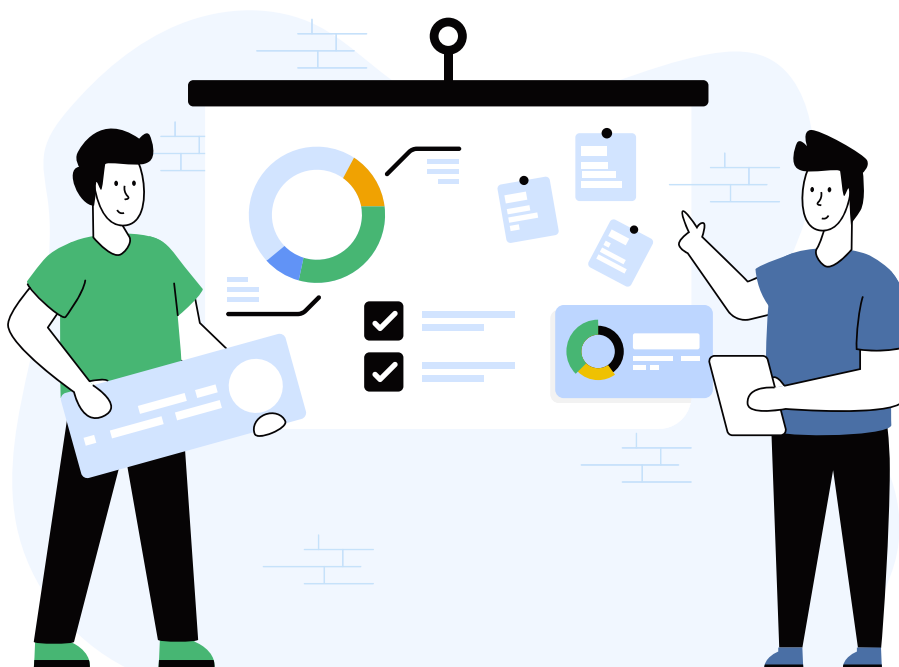
Getting up and running with new fundraising technology can be a significant undertaking for any organization. This is especially true if the new solution offers increased functionality or robust new features that your team has little to no experience with.



Luckily, top technology providers account for strategic training and implementation of nonprofit teams as they get onboarded with the new software. This will typically include a combination of detailed written materials (such as those made available through a comprehensive online knowledge base), pre-recorded training videos made available on-demand, scheduled team training sessions, and additional assistance available as needed.

As you make new software buying decisions, keep in mind that effective training is going to be a critical task in the near future, so it's a good idea to seek companies that offer beneficial resources and support from the beginning. Plus, this will provide your team members with opportunities to get acquainted with the new technology, ask questions, and explore everything that the new solution has to offer.

Then, once your team is successfully up and running with your newest fundraising technology, does your provider have tools and processes in place for additional questions and support requests as they arise? It's another key component of a software buying-decision—because, by the very nature of technology, you're likely to have some support needs beyond the initial onboarding phase. Be sure to look into how the tech company manages its support team in order to be prepared when you do have an issue in need of troubleshooting!



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Frequently Asked Questions About Fundraising Technology

Frequently Asked Questions About Fundraising Technology

Got questions? Most fundraisers do!

That's why we've compiled a list of common inquiries noted by nonprofit and school fundraising professionals as they consider developing their technology systems.

And if you're still unsure after reading this guide, remember that you can always reach out to the software providers you're considering and see if they can clarify any of your remaining questions.

What does fundraising technology do to aid schools and nonprofits?

Fundraising technology encompasses a wide range of roles between nonprofits, schools, and other mission-based organizations. The short answer is that the technology systems enable these organizations to raise more funding for their missions with less time and effort required.

The longer answer is that fundraising technology can provide donors with easy ways to give to their favorite causes, quickly process payments between supporters and nonprofits, collect, track, and analyze valuable donation data, locate areas in an organization's strategy with room for improvement, inform donors about additional opportunities to support nonprofits, screen donor information for matching gift-eligible identifiers, equip matching gift-eligible supporters with detailed information about their employers' matching initiatives, automate personalized communications with donors to build relationships—and that's still just the tip of the iceberg.



What's the difference between school fundraising technology and nonprofit fundraising technology?

Some fundraising software providers specialize in nonprofit fundraising solutions, while others emphasize the benefits of their school-specific technology. Other tech companies offer comprehensive tools for each type of organization and its fundraising needs. Others yet will focus on a particular segment of educational fundraising technology, such as K-12 or higher education, thus further differentiating your software needs.

But what exactly is the difference?

A lot of it depends on different types of organizations having different fundraising needs. For instance, a peer-to-peer fundraising tool geared toward primary school fundraisers will likely aim to make their solution as child-friendly as possible. After all, students are many primary schools' most essential fundraising team members. Alternatively, a nonprofit peer-to-peer fundraising platform may be targeted more toward adult fundraisers, as that is their typical fundraising audience.

Or, take a CRM designed for higher education institutions, for example. Many colleges' and universities' most valuable donors and prospects are their alumni. As a result, **higher education-based fundraising technology** typically places a significant focus on engaging a school's prior generations of students. This is not necessarily a feature that a typical nonprofit would need, and thus, a huge differentiator between the two types of tools.



The bottom line is that, although school and nonprofit fundraising technology share many similarities, key differences in the software enable organizations to receive strategically built platforms designed just for their kinds of needs.



How do I know when it's time for a fundraising technology upgrade?

Perhaps you have a set of fundraising tools in place for your organization, and you're thinking something along the lines of, "if it works, why change it?"

The problem that many nonprofits and educational institutions run into is that just because a solution works doesn't mean it's the best you could have. And if it's not the best, it's likely to require additional team member time to manage simplifiable efforts, which also may result in elevated levels of error and lowered fundraising revenue potential.

So how do you know when it's time?

If you spend a lot of time frustrated with the routineness or repetitiveness of your tasks at hand, it might be time for a software upgrade.

If you ponder to yourself, "there has to be a better way to do this!" there probably is.

If there's a whole realm of fundraising that your organization hasn't ventured into because you lack the technology, it's definitely time!

And if you're not the person doing a lot of the hands-on, administrative fundraising tasks for your organization, consider speaking with whoever is in order to get their perspective on your potential needs as well.



How can we get donors and team members familiar with new fundraising technology?

Getting an organization set up and familiar with new technology can sometimes be a bit of a challenge on both the donor-facing side and the behind-the-scenes fundraising side. But it should never be something that hinders your nonprofit from making the necessary software purchases and upgrades that you need.

We previously discussed the importance of seeking fundraising tech providers that offer established solutions for team training and software implementation. This is where those invaluable resources come in! Make sure your fundraising team members, whether employees or volunteers, are provided with the educational materials and the time they need to explore their new technology systems. Provision demo accounts to your staff to see how the process works, from either side of the equation, in order to better equip your team members to support your donors as well.

And for your donor-facing tools (such as donation forms, matching gift widgets, and more), don't forget to equip your donors with guiding materials as well. If there are significant process updates between the old tools and the new ones, you'll want to share resources (such as step-by-step guides) and communicate where individuals can seek additional support in the transition.





Wrapping Up

Wrapping Up

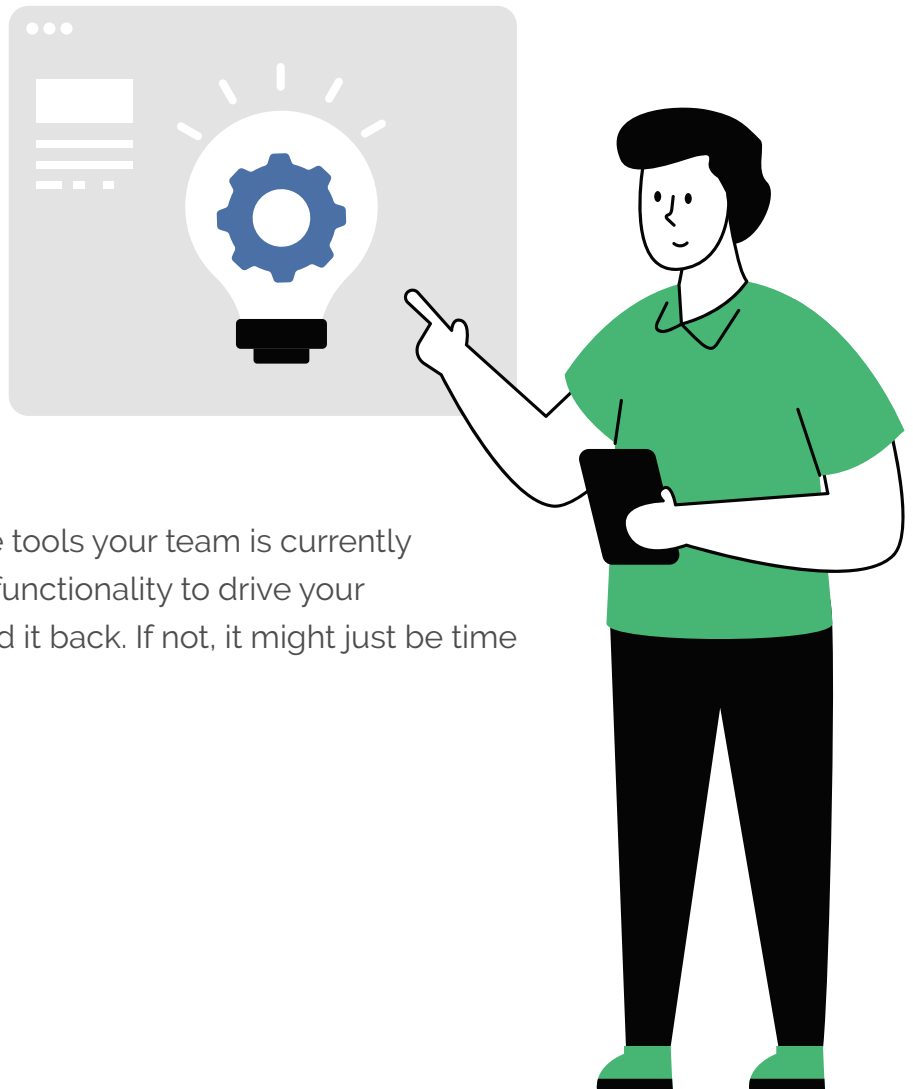
Empowering your team and its donors with the right technology is essential for maintaining effective, efficient, and impactful fundraising efforts from beginning to end. Not to mention, delegating key tasks to powerful software will help save your organization significant amounts of time and energy, which can then be reinvested into your nonprofit's mission.

With the right tools, your fundraisers, your donors, and even your program beneficiaries will thank you.

And what are the right tools?

Technology continues to develop and evolve every day, with new solutions cropping up to help solve a wide range of problems. Keep an eye out for up-and-coming fundraising technology, and determine whether additional tools will enable you to do more for your cause.

And in the meantime, make sure the tools your team is currently equipped with have the power and functionality to drive your organization forward rather than hold it back. If not, it might just be time for a system upgrade.





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matching gifts made easy

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