

Donor Databases 101

Selecting and Implementing Your Next Donor Database

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Agenda

Part 1

- When to Change
- How to Change
 - Needs Assessment
 - Software Selection

Part 2

- Surviving the Conversion

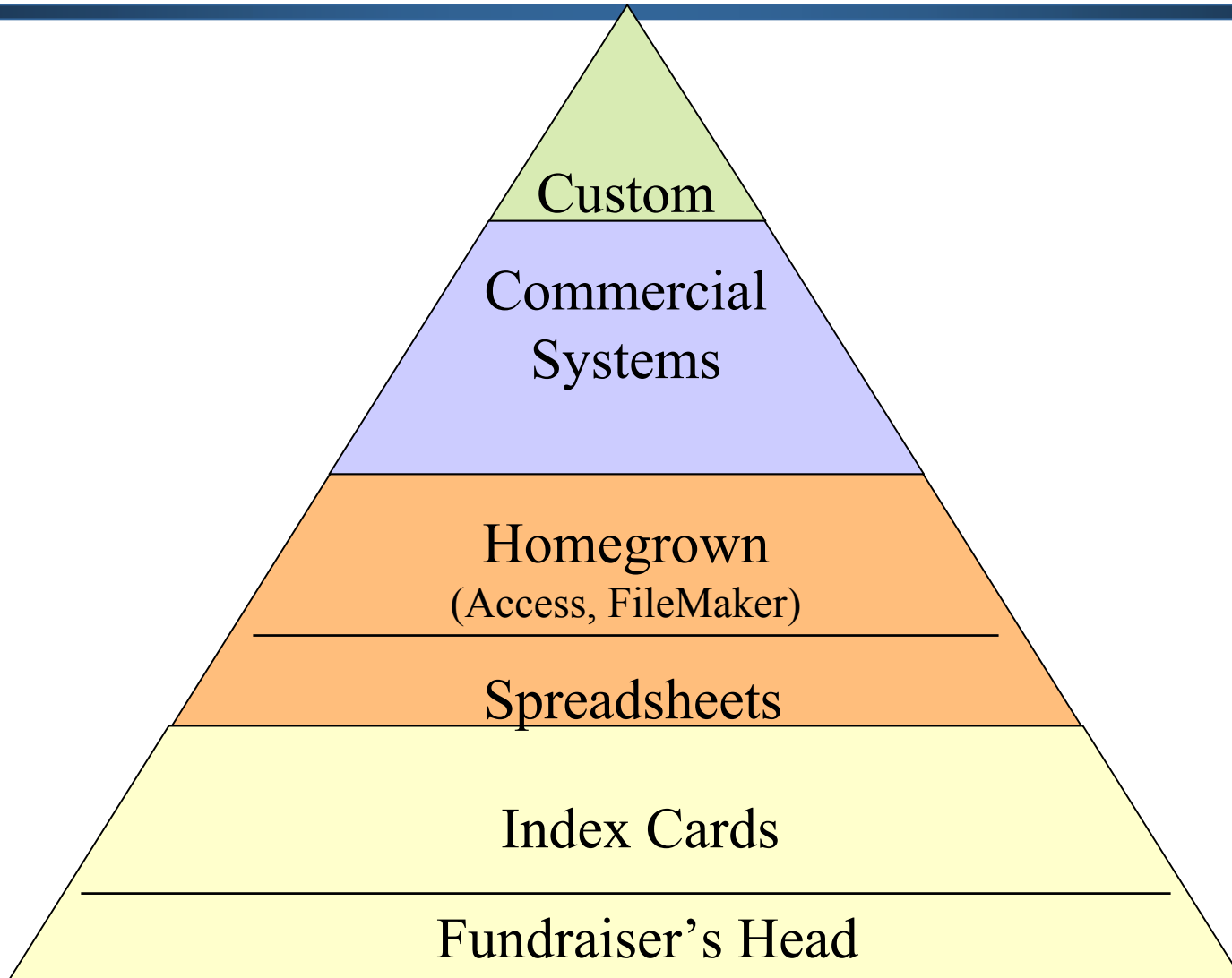
Common Mistakes

1. Letting Techies Make the Decision.
2. Wishful Budgeting.
3. Prioritizing Price above Everything.
4. Randomly Looking at Demos.
5. Falling in Love with Cool Features.

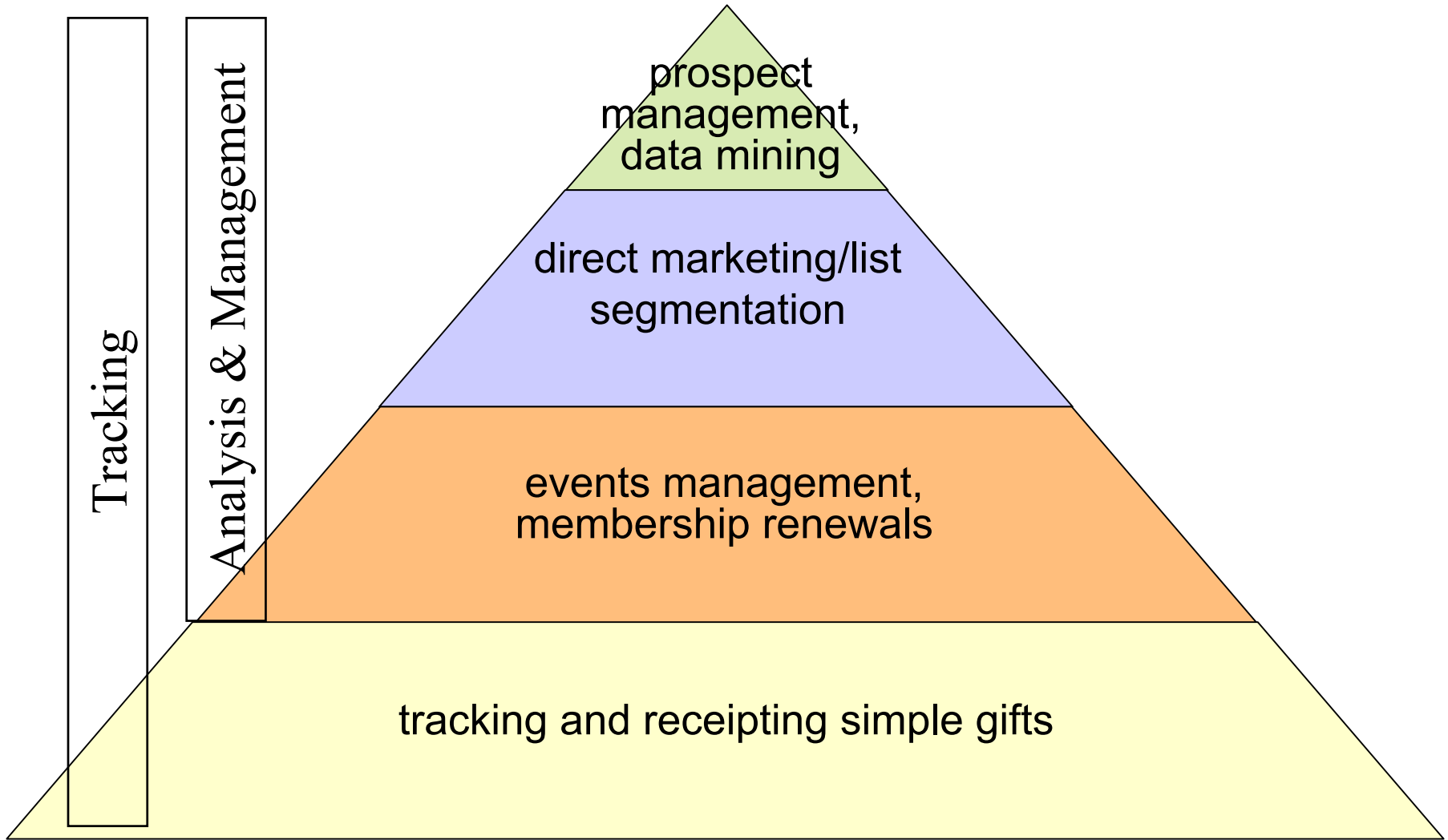
Common Mistakes (2)

6. Falling in Love with the Salesperson.
7. Buying More Than You Need.
8. Confusing Highly Functional Software with Highly Trained Staff.
9. Hoping the Database Will Install Itself.
10. Leaving the Database to Fend for Itself.

Levels of Tracking Donors & Gifts



Levels of Using Donor Data



What Should Your Database Tell You?

- Who gave?
 - How much, when, and and for what purpose?
 - How much have they given this year? Ever? Largest single gift?
 - Who are your biggest donors? Who are your most loyal donors?
- Who's interested in what (programs, events, advocacy)?
- Who knows whom?
- Who had the latest contact? What's the next step?
- Who should we invite to this event? Ask for a larger gift this year?

When to Change?

- More tech- (or data-) savvy fundraisers.
- Increased goals.
- Significant growth (donors, gifts, staff, locations, security or control needs).
- Unifying/integrating separate databases.
- Moving to a new type or level of fundraising:
(Membership to Major Gifts, or a Capital Campaign)
- Bottom Line: Is your software as sophisticated as your fundraising?

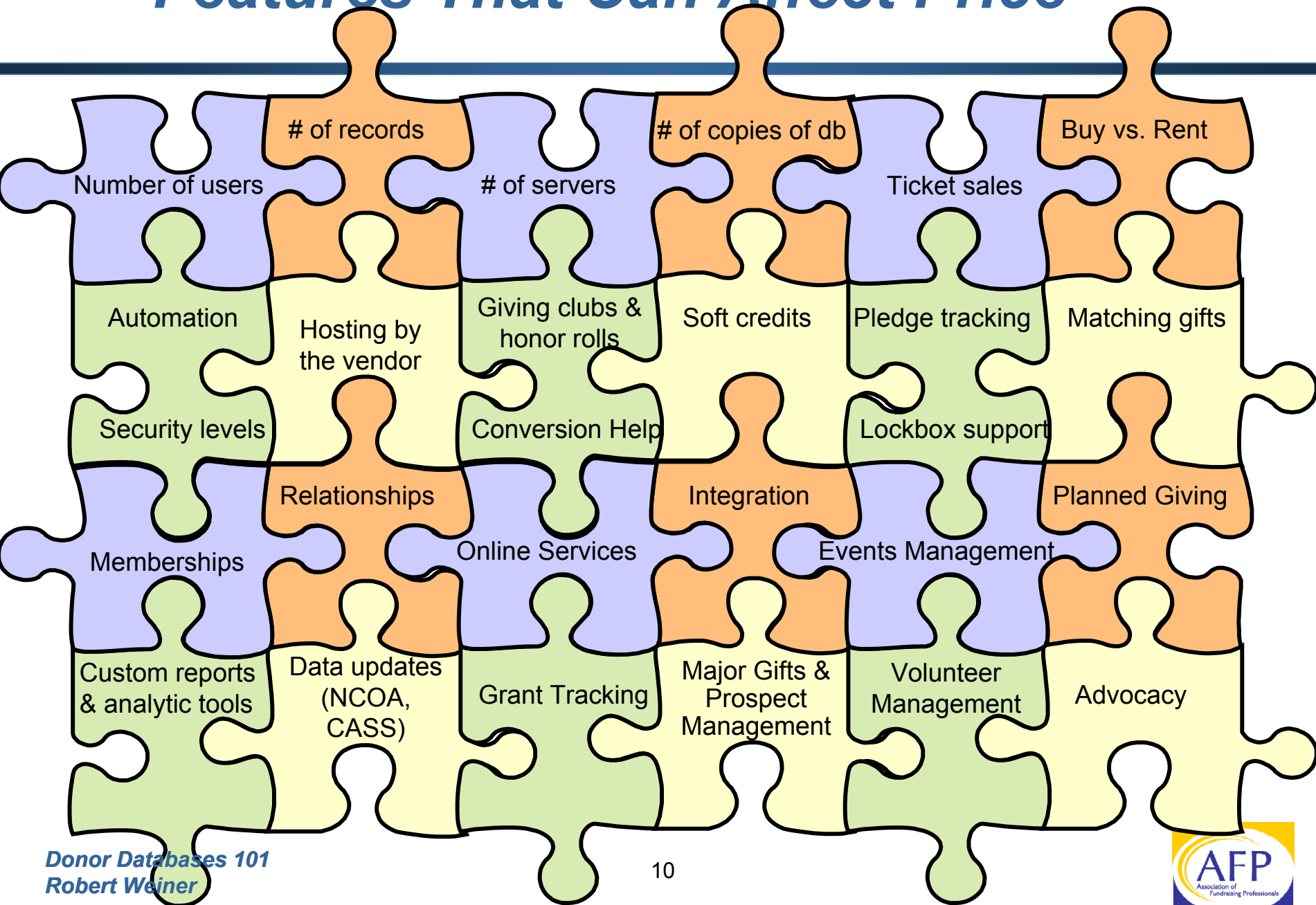
Why Not Build Your Own Database?

- Risk (how do you know it will work?).
- Distraction (fundraisers must become database designers).
- Support & Maintenance (who you gonna call?).
- Documentation (will there be any?).
- Training (a game of “telephone”?).
- User Community (there won’t be one).
- Cost (how can you get a firm price?).

What Will It Cost?

- Software: prices range from < \$500 to \$\$\$\$\$\$
 - Also Open Source & Freeware, but many lack support, interface, good interface design.
- Hardware (server(s), desktops, network)?
- Implementation assistance?
- Training – will you need more than the standard?
- Customizations?
- Interfaces to other systems?
- Annual support: ~25% of retail price.
 - If you can't afford the maintenance or training, don't buy the software!

Features That Can Affect Price



What Will It Cost? (2)

- Ballpark starting price: ~0.25% to 0.5% of annual operating budget. \$1M budget = \$2,500 to \$5,000.
- Software is often a fraction of the total cost (see next page).
- Plan for additional modules, support, training, conversion, consulting assistance.
- Conversion cost will depend on how much help you need, what kinds of help you need (data migration, custom programming, business rules, report creation), and what shape your data is in.

Sample 5 Year Budget

Item	Unit	Cost	Total
Software	1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
1st Year Support	1	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
Staff training	5	\$750.00	\$3,750.00
Workstations	5	\$1,250.00	\$6,250.00
Shared Printer	3	\$350.00	\$1,050.00
Consulting	20	\$125.00	\$2,500.00
		Total Year 1	\$20,050.00
Support, years 2 - 5	4	1500	\$6,000.00
Ongoing Training	3	750	\$2,250.00
Workstation Upgrades	3	1250	\$3,750.00
		Grand Total	\$32,050.00

How to Change?

1) Needs Assessment

- What's wrong now?
- Where do you see the organization in 5 years?
- Is software the problem?
- What do you **really** need?
- What are your top priorities?
- What's on your wish list?
- What can you afford and support?

How to Change? (2)

2) Vendor Pool

- Goal is to identify a few vendors for demos.
- Ask similar organizations, as well as on lists like [TechSoup](#), [CharityChannel](#), [Information Systems Forum](#).
- Vendors must fit your culture, staffing, and budget, as well as meeting functional needs.
- Vendors should have demonstrated experience addressing your issues.

Software Demonstrations

- Goal: comparing “apples to apples.”
- Use on-site demos when possible.
- Either use scenarios for demos or tell vendors which areas you need to see.
- Demos must cover the most critical functions identified by your needs assessment.
- Try to get your hands on the software.

Demonstrations (2)

Sample scenario:

- Add a \$25 donor.
- Add a \$10,000 donor.
- Marry the two records and show joint giving.
- One spouse dies. Show the database process. Is the survivor still a major donor?

Another scenario:

- Create a mailing list of donors over \$250 within the past 2 years who have given for at least 3 consecutive years and attended at least 1 event.

Demonstrations (3)

- Make sure key stakeholders can attend demos.
- Invite all interested staff.
- Collect input from everyone.

AREA	RATING	COMMENTS
Data Entry		
Membership Mgmt.		
Prospect Management		
Events Management		

Reference Checks

Reference Checks

- Talk to previous similar clients.
 - Was work delivered on time and on budget?
 - How is ongoing support relationship?
 - Caveat: try to distinguish client implementation & support issues from vendor problems.
 - Try to visit client sites.

Reference Checks (2)

- Sample Software Reference Questions:
 - How long did it take for you to “go live” on the software?
 - How many of your staff worked on the project?
 - How was the project organized?
 - What assistance did the vendor provide?
 - Did you use consultants or other 3rd parties?
 - Were you happy with the training provided by the vendor?
 - What would you do differently next time?

Databases Don't Raise the Money

The right database can assist with:

- Prioritizing and segmenting lists.
- Prospect management and tracking.
- Stewarding your current donors.
- Identifying future donors.
- Time-management.
- Measuring and forecasting.
- Asking the right person for the right gift at the right time for the right purpose.

This is only possible if data is captured and made available to appropriate staff.

Selection Recap

- There is no perfect database.
- First, decide what you're looking for.
- Buy-in is critical. Stakeholders must be involved in the decision.
- Structure software demos so you can compare “apples to apples.”
- Make sure you understand all the costs.
- Trust but verify.

Implementation Overview

- Project Initiation:
 - Define goals and scope.
- Project Mobilization:
 - Secure resources – people, time, money.
 - Develop a work plan and schedule.
 - Prepare the environment (hardware, software,...)
 - Communication plan.
- The Project!
- The Clean Up.

Goals and Scope - What is “the project”?

What needs to happen before the project can start, finish, succeed?

- Workflow changes?
- New forms?
- New or changed responsibilities?
- New staff?
- Additional hardware or software?
- Integration with other systems?

Goals and Scope (2)

What will it mean to go “live”?

- Will all modules be implemented initially?
- What reports will you REALLY need on Day 1?
- Is there a hard deadline?

Get Resources

People:

- Project Sponsor – clears roadblocks, approves budget, has final authority.
- Optional: Steering Committee – makes policy decisions, especially those that affect multiple departments.
- Project Manager – day to day oversight.
- Optional: Team Leaders – depending on project size and scope.
- Team Members – team makeup can vary greatly.
- Other decision makers, e.g., fundraisers to approve reports.

Resources (2)

Time:

- The amount of time that team members can dedicate will determine the project's duration.
- Can you dedicate a project manager (and team leaders) full-time? You may need to temporarily promote staff or hire to take over day-to-day duties.

Resources (3)

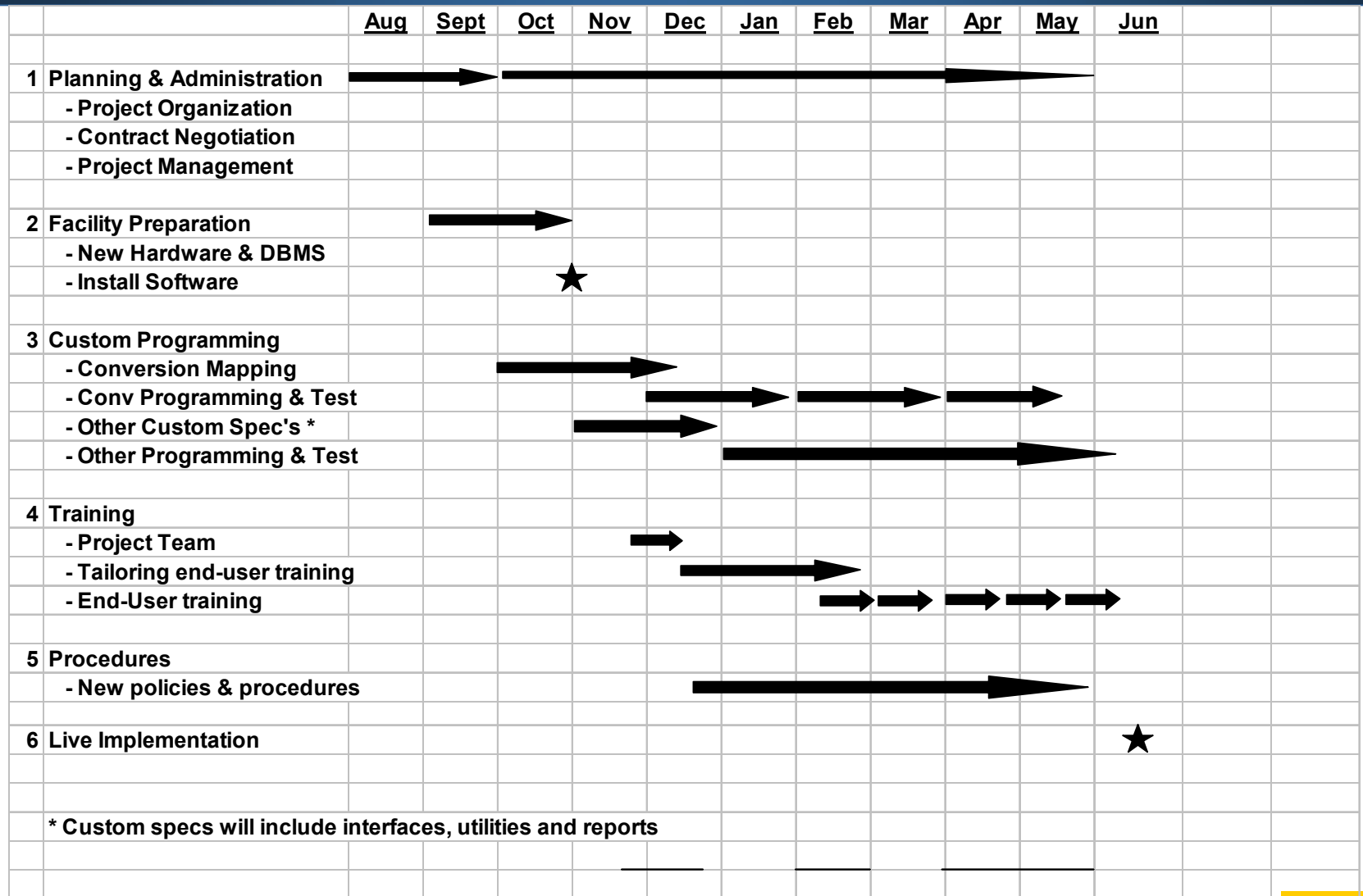
Money Buys:

- More time (new staff, staff relief).
- More help from the vendor.
- Infrastructure upgrades, interfaces, customizations, custom reports.
- Specialists (in your old or new database, reporting, interface development, process improvement).
- Incentives for performance, staying through project duration.

Mobilization

- Detailed Timeline
 - In spreadsheet or project management software. List tasks, dates, who's responsible, dependencies, status, comments.
 - Project calendar should be overlaid on institution's calendar. Make sure key project dates don't conflict with major mailings, events, key staff vacations, or holidays.
- Project Communications
 - Kickoff meeting, newsletter, web site, emails, briefings at staff meetings.
- Contingency Plans, Budget.

Simple Timeline



Detailed Timeline

Activity/Task	Target Dates		Who's Involved	Dependencies/ Prerequisites	Comments/Notes
	Start	End			
Project Teams					
a Establish project Manager and Teams	24-Sep	25-Sep	Vendor, RW, DS, AL		Steering, Implementation, Sub-committees
b Set regular Team meetings		5-Oct	Implementation Team		every week for IC, every other for SC
c Assign responsibilities		5-Oct			minutes, action follow-up, communications
Finalize contracts					
			DS, JG, RW		
Data conversion					
a Prepare, test and save data extract					
b Prepare data for mapping					Print screens from new db to help
c Finalize crosswalk					
d Prepare for conversion testing (data checking)			All staff		
e Testing for each conversion run			BF	2 instances of old db (1 to freeze at time of data extract)	Quantitative/baseline reporting and qualitative
Data cleanup					
a Pre-conversion develop list and manage cleanup electronic and/or manual data changes			AL		
b Final conversion data cleanup develop list and manage cleanup electronic and/or manual data changes					
c Post conversion data cleanup develop list and manage cleanup electronic and/or manual data changes look-up tables					

Implementation

- Order, install, and test:
 - Servers (at least production and test. Optional: training, reporting, web).
 - Desktop computers.
 - Database software – production, test (& training?) copies.
 - Other peripherals, software, upgrades.
- Training
 - Team at beginning of project.
 - End users selectively during project, fully just before you go live.
 - 80/20 rule: 80% of training is lost if not used in 20 days.

Implementation (2)

- Develop business rules, translate into codes, security.
- Map and convert your data.
Data clean-up options:
 - Manually or using programs.
 - In old system.
 - During conversion.
 - Afterwards in new system.
- Conversion: map data, 2+ tries until right.

Implementation (3)

- Collect examples of current reports *that are actually used*. Specify and develop new reports.
 - Make sure fundraisers accept them.
- Build and test any customizations and interfaces.
- Create documentation
 - Procedures Manuals, such as data entry (see Resources slides)
 - Training Manual(s)
 - Interfaces.
- Keep Communicating!

Testing (1, 2, 3, 4,...)

- Test, test, test, and test some more.
 - Print reports and screens from old system, compare to converted data.
 - “Freeze” a copy of your old database whenever you send data for conversion.
 - **Everyone** should review reports, look up constituents.
- Develop procedures for “cutover” period.
 - How will updates be handled?
 - Will you manually enter them in new system or import?
 - Run “parallel” as a LAST resort; invest the time/money in testing.

You're Done (or are you?)

Take a deep breath and

CELEBRATE!!!

Acknowledge and reward your team.

Gotchas

- Un/under-trained staff, lack of communication, and poor management will not be solved by new software. In fact, the problems may get worse.
- Higher-end software requires *more* computer skill among users, not less.
- Complex software must be properly configured. This may require help from the vendor or a consultant.
- Reports – there are never enough.
- Staff turnover – will it affect the project's timeline?
- Data problems – you'll have them.

Nope, You're Not Done

- Identify unmet needs
 - Estimate costs, develop plans and timelines.
- (Re)examine staff roles
 - Data Manager (quality control), Trainer, Database Administrator, Report Writer, Help Desk.
- Create an internal user group to advise on priorities.
- Plan for ongoing training and support.

Opportunities for Improvement

New databases provide opportunities to:

- **Rethink** functional areas of responsibility.
- **Focus** on strategic goals.
- **Change** processes and policies.

Implementation Recap

- Define project's goals and scope.
- Secure resources – people, time, money.
- Develop a work plan and schedule.
- Communicate!
- Prepare the environment (hardware, software,...)
- Convert the data.
- Develop business rules, reports, documentation.
- Test, test, test!
- Train the staff.
- Go Live.
- Clean Up.

Resources

Batchelder, Duff: *Evaluating & Selecting Fundraising Software*

www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/software/page1471.cfm

Grantsmanship Center: *A User's Guide to Selecting Fundraising Software*

www.tgci.com/magazine/02summer/soft1.asp

Mills-Groninger, Tim: *Build, Buy, or Rent?*

www.nptimes.com/May01/sr.htm

TechSoup: Selecting Donor Management Software

www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/databases/page2190.cfm

TechSoup: Donor Management Software Comparison

www.techsoup.org/howto/Files/donormatrix.pdf

TechSoup's Technology for Fundraising discussion forum

www.techsoup.org/forums/index.cfm?fuseaction=list&forum=2022&cid=117

Weiner, Robert: *Ten Common Mistakes in Selecting Donor Databases*

www.idealware.org/articles/ten_common_mistakes_in_selecting_donor_databases.php

Weiner, Robert: *Why Building Your Own Database Should Be Your Last Resort*

nten.typepad.com/forecast/2003/10/why_building_yo.html

Weiner, Robert: *Buying and Implementing a Development System*

www.rlweiner.com/case_handbook_chapter.pdf

More resources are posted at www.rlweiner.com/resources.html

Resources

Sample Data Entry Manuals:

New England Medical Center:

www.fundsvcs.org/modules/wfdownloads/singlefile.php?cid=11&lid=96

Dalhousie University: <http://banner.dal.ca/DataEntry.cfm>

Central Connecticut State University:

www.ccsu.edu/its/usersupport/BannerSupport/Banner%20Shared%20Data%20Standards.htm

More examples are on the FUNDSVCS web site:

www.fundsvcs.org/modules/wfdownloads/viewcat.php?cid=11

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