A COMPARISON OF ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT (AMS) VENDORS

Competitive Analysis Series

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YCHANGE International

Executive Summary

YCHANGE International has conducted extensive research on suppliers of Association Management Systems (AMS) software, largely as a result of assisting our association clients with the selection of new and replacement AMS software solutions.

The software solutions market for AMS has evolved significantly, as has the CRM market, from very costly, inflexible, monolithic systems that are very expensive to purchase and implement, to much more cost effective options including hosted solutions, modular 'customer premise' solutions, shared Application Solutions Provider (ASP) offerings, and most recently the On Demand model.

This variety of implementations have given rise to a large number of software vendor offerings, making the selection of an appropriate AMS solution challenging even for the most sophisticated association or nonprofit organization. Based on our research, YCHANGE has selected what we believe to be the best of the AMS software vendors, and present a comparison of these vendors on the following pages.

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Out-of-the-Box Modules (Back Office/Staff View)		Association Management Software Vendors Matrix				
		A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
1	Membership	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Committees	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	eMarketing	3rd Party	3rd Party	Yes	Yes	3rd Party
4	Events	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Accounting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Content Management	Yes	Yes	Yes	MS CMS	3rd Party
7	Awards	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
8	Job Bank	No	No	Yes	No	No
9	Inventory Management	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
0	Advertising	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Fund Raising	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	Exhibits	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
13	Certification	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
14	Accreditation	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
15	Abstract Management	No	No	No	No	No
16	Grant Management	No	Yes	No	No	No
17	General Ledger	3rd Party	3rd Party	3rd Party	MS GP	3rd Party
18	Accounts Payable	3rd Party	3rd Party	3rd Party	MS GP	3rd Party
19	Document Management	No	No	No	No	No
20	Development Toolkit	Yes	Yes	Advanced	No	Yes

Out-of-the-Box Modules

(Front-Office/Member view)

1	User Access Management	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Member Profile Management	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Member Directory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Online Event Registration	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
5	eCommerce	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Chapter Information Mgmt.	No	No	No	No	No
7	Committee Information Mgmt.	No	No	Yes	No	No
8	Discussion Groups	No	Yes	Yes	MS CMS	3rd Party
9	Frequently Asked Questions	No	Yes	Yes	MS CMS	3rd Party
10	Press Releases	No	Yes	Yes	MS CMS	3rd Party

Competitive

Competitive Differentiators		Association Management Software Vendors Matrix				
		A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
	Product name	AA	BB	CC	DD	EE
1	Technology Platform	VB/SQL	Omnis, VB/SQL	ASP.NET	Magic, VB/SQL, Microsoft CRM reseller	Gupta, VB/SQL/ Oracle, .NET Fat client
2	Unified Enterprise Architecture	No	No	Yes	MS CMS	No
3	Advanced Development Toolkit	No	No	Yes	No	No
4	100% .NET	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
5	100% Thin Client	No	No	Yes	No	No
6	Unified Web Site Content Mgmt.	No	No	Yes	MS CMS	No
7	Advanced Query Tool	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
9	Direct Export to Office Formats	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Granular Security: User/Field Level	No	No	Yes	No	No
11	Offline Briefcase	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
12	Multi Association Management	No	No	Yes	No	No
13	Data/Transaction Segmentation	No	No	Yes	No	No
14	Baseline Reports	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	Import/Export Utilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
16	Partner Programs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
17	Hosting	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
18	Online Implementation	No	No	Yes	No	No
19	Online Support	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
20	Upgrade Tool	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

Differentiators - Conclusions

1. Technology Platform:

The most advanced Microsoft platform is ASP.NET. This web technology allows rapid development and easy integration with third party products and services. Older platforms like Visual Basic (VB), Gupta and others are not Web-centric and are more difficult/costly to implement.

2. Unified Enterprise Architecture:

This new architecture allows CMS to deliver a unified, better-than-integrated, front-office/back-office. Screens and functionality created for staff data processing can be easily exposed for member self-service with unified content management tools.

UEA technology delivers two user-facing views of the same database – the internal view for the association staff, and the external view, or the website, for members, prospects and the general public. Both the internal and external views are simply different snapshots of the same database.

A full offering of Microsoft CRM, CMS and Sharepoint can create an interesting offering but it has some limitations for organizations with distributed operations.

3. Advanced Development Toolkit:

A Development Toolkit is used to harness the power of the .NET architecture for associations. This means associations are free to configure and customize their systems using the same tools as the vendor developers. Associations no longer have to contract and schedule every change to the system with their vendor.

4. 100% .NET

Microsoft® .NET is a set of software technologies for connecting information, people, systems, and devices. This new generation of technology is based on Web services—small building-block applications that can connect to each other as well as to other, larger applications over the Internet.

.NET provides associations with a vendor-neutral platform for integrating additional applications and best-of-breed technologies. Because of this, associations can take advantage of the entire partner ecosystem while maintaining a single, unified, enterprise membership system.

5. 100% Thin Client

To access 100% of the functionality of a state-of-the-art AMS, users need nothing more than Internet Explorer 6+ and access to the Internet. 100% Thin Client means there's no software to download,

and nothing to install or maintain on any workstation. Client-Server, "fat" or "smart" client applications all require that users have software installed on their workstation to access the system.

6. Unified Web Site Content Management:

Web-centric AMS places content where it makes sense. Using this, users will have the tools to display products, prices and events automatically and dynamically online for e-commerce transactions. For example, utilizing tools such as "post to Web" and "remove from Web" dates embedded directly in event management screens provide staff with the ability to provide their members real-time information on the Web.

7. Advanced Query Tool:

A query tool empowers end users with the ability to query any field stored in the database. This tool provides an easy method for selecting nearly any query criteria from drop-down lists with data-aware selections that reach across various modules. Advanced users are empowered with the ability to create and modify their own SQL statements. The query tool should produces lists of information that can be exported directly to third-party tools and applications or directly into Microsoft Office products like Excel for further analysis or number crunching with a single click.

8. Direct Export to Office Formats:

This allows staff to easily export the results of any search to Microsoft Office products such as Microsoft Excel with a single click. Searches can be built using the basic or advanced find functionality, or the advanced query tool outlined above.

9. eMarketing Call-to-Action Automation:

A "unified" eMarketing Engine allows staff to build sets of automated communications out to members or prospects. By combining dynamic queries with customizable templates, staff can schedule these messages for the future, or for weekly or monthly recurrence. This tool allows marketing staff to set up entire campaigns in advance and let them run on their own.

10. Granular Security: User/Field Level:

Today's Web-centric AMS applications provide the most granular security available, all the way down to applying field level security to individual users. This granular and integrated security means no one has to build separate data entry or extraction screens to hide specific information from certain users or groups.

11. Offline Briefcase:

Offline Briefcase allows non-connected users with portable versions of a subset of data from the AMS application.

12. Multi-Association Management:

This feature delivers the ability to track not only completely separate associations, but also separate business units or companies within each association for segmenting financial transactions.

13. Data/Transaction Segmentation:

A complete AMS should not only allow staff to track multiple associations within a single database, it should also provide the power and flexibility to segment data based on staff's login and security information. Every record in the application should be able to be tagged with an entity code to isolate that data to only users with

14. Baseline Reports:

Most AMS's ship with over 100 baseline reports available for use to cover many of the common association requirements. An advanced query tool can drastically reduce the number of reports many associations need in other systems.

15. Import/Export Utilities:

Most AMS's provide easy-to-use wizards for importing data and matching that data up to available fields. Look for export features that allow direct export to Microsoft Office products as well as PDFs, XML documents, and CSV files.

16. Partner Programs:

AMS's should have partner programs that take advantage of underlying technology to offer a universe of optional, add-on, mix-and-match products and services that associations may find complementary. Look for a vendor that is committed to allowing customers to enjoy an unprecedented range of options in selecting the products and features that will best serve their needs.

17. Hosting:

Choose an AMS provider that delivers platform expertise and rock-solid network infrastructure. They should assume the responsibility, time commitments, and costs associated with managing Associations clients' servers. This results in predictable and manageable costs, quicker deployment, and minimal technology risk.

18. Online Implementation:

Online Implementation is used to streamline system implementation for clients. A Web-based system provides a unified view of the implementation process to both the vendors and the client's teams. Online implementation allows the client to quickly communicate throughout the entire design and implementation process to ensure a successful implementation.

19. Online Support:

Once an association is live with their AMS, they should be able to access their own personalized Web view of the AMS for access to the entire support team. Using this, clients are able to quickly log issues or check on the status of existing projects or issues.

20. Upgrade Tool:

Some of the recently introduced AMS solutions include an upgrade tool that allows the application and system administrators to quickly and easily deploy software upgrades to the AMS system while ensuring that customizations and configurations remain untouched.

Recommendations

Once you decide that an AMS initiative is right for your organization, consider the following recommendations to help determine which solution meets your needs:

- **Use a "Unified" Enterprise Architecture:** New AMS's use a new web centric "unified" approach to deliver better-than-integrated, front-office/back-office. These systems are delivered with two user-facing views to the same database saving time to implement and reducing overall costs.
- **Explore the technology platform.** Must-have features include a *self-service* architecture and open standard support (e.g., .NET, Web services, XML)
- **Be sure that a Partner "ecosystem" is developed.** With the availability of .NET and Web Services technology from Microsoft, associations have a universe of optional, add-on, mix-and-match products and services that they may find complementary to AMS ever-expanding functionality.
- **Scalability and flexibility for growth are critical.** The ability to grow the application as membership needs change or evolve is critical. Although some departments may not see significant changes from year to year, web-based AMS solutions enable the organization to easily add or retract additional users and keep pace with its evolving needs.
- **Check current, live references.** AMS vendors have many versions of their software built on different platforms. Be sure to check references using the most current web-based version and only those clients that are live using the product.

About YCHANGE International:

YCHANGE International is an executive management, sales, marketing and organizational change consulting company. YCHANGE specializes in improving the performance of technology companies. We assist Associations and vendors with competitive comparisons and analysis of products and services, as well as the selection and acquisition of software and hardware technology solutions. YCHANGE has experienced industry skills, deep business process expertise and a proven track record. We can mobilize the right people, skills and technology resources to help Associations rapidly achieve their business goals.