

Why You Only Need

ONE

DATA MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE





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No matter what line of work you're in, it's inevitable that you'll need management software. And guess what? It's hard to figure out which one to choose from. It's hard for those making the decision, for those implementing the change, and for those who end up with the final product. With that in mind, there are several factors to look at when adding data software to your parish office. Here are some aspects to consider when deciding which one to use.

DEFINE YOUR "BUSINESS GOALS"

Whether you're a Fortune 500 company or a rural Catholic parish in the heart of America, you need to have a business goal in order to figure out where you want to be and how you want to get there. For parishes, that goal includes the cost of providing essential sacraments such as the Eucharist and Reconciliation, as well as funding the numerous ministries that the local community depends on.

With this in mind, each goal that a parish focuses on will depend on the community it resides in (needs and wants), as well as the type of faith community it strives

to serve. A parish that is stationed in a large city may find that there is a huge need for homeless assistance, so one of their prime ministries is a food pantry. Another parish only a few miles away might discover that there is a large portion of senior citizens that need assistance, so they offer a rideshare program to help them get to doctor offices for appointments, the store for groceries, or to the social security office for benefits.

If your parish is having difficulty figuring out which goals to choose from, it's time to look at that specific angle by collecting the information out there that will help narrow down the choices. And that's where data collection software is essential to the process.

COLLECT ONLY THE DATA YOU NEED

While it's good to collect as much information as possible to make informed decisions, it's not necessary to collect all that is available. So, start with the basics, and then expand if time allows (and it's relevant to your goals). Some areas to look at include:

PARISH

- Mass attendance (all Masses — not just once a year!)
- ZIP codes of all registered parishioners
- The number of children baptized compared to the number of teenagers confirmed

COMMUNITY

- Median/average income within your ZIP code and surrounding area
- Significant demographics in your area, like a particularly large number of senior citizens, college students or another group
- Unemployment rates

Once you look at these factors, then expand your search to see if there are already churches or non-profits in your area already serving these needs. If there are 10 food pantries, it's safe to say that your parish can join forces with a ministry to strengthen its mission or focus on a different area that isn't being covered.

STRATEGIZE WITH ESSENTIAL DEPARTMENTS

While we may not call them departments, your parish does have separate branches. Think liturgy and worship, social justice, finance, marriage and family, etc. Too often, we tend to think of these as separate entities, rather than part of the whole organization. That is why when it comes to choosing a software program that works, you need to consider all the departments that will (or should) be using it.

You may not think that a data gathering software system that keeps track of parishioner data could also be used for the social justice ministry team. Or that a system to keep track of sacramental records could also

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be useful for the finance department to keep track of parishioner giving. But that's what you need to consider when investing in a new (and oftentimes expensive!) program — can we all find value in what it can do?

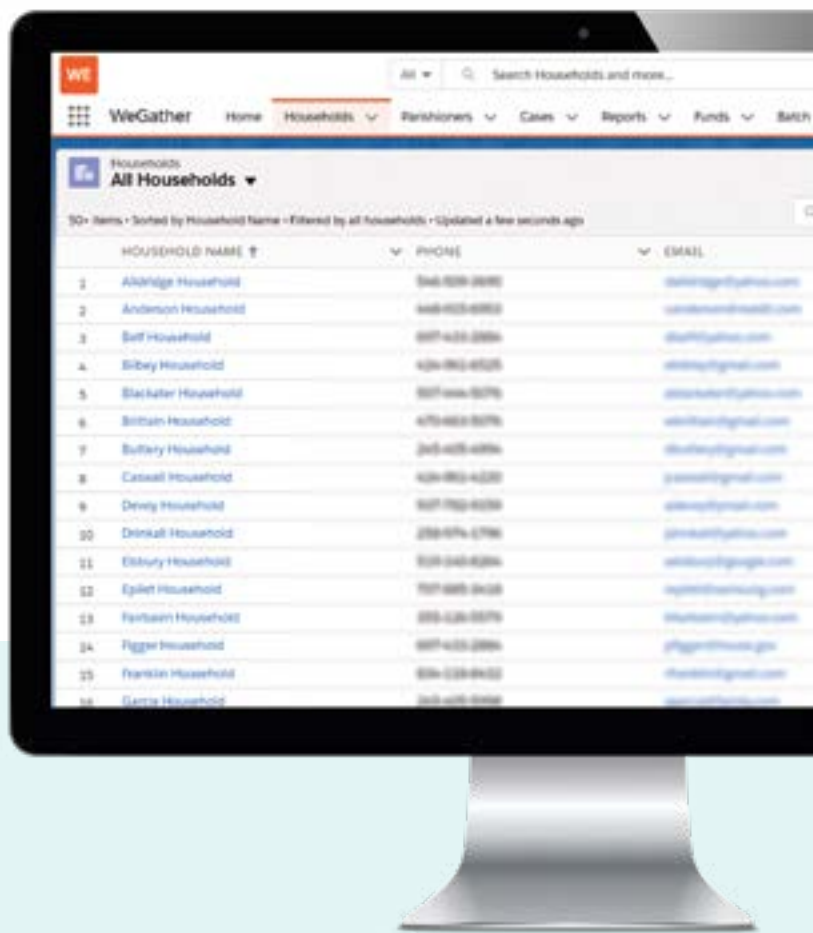


ADVANTAGES

Increase Productivity & Eliminate Redundancies

While it may be tempting to look at a whole slew of software that will benefit each group — maybe a software designed specifically for liturgy, another for finance, etc. — there are some great benefits to finding one system that can hold everyone's data, and subsequently allow all parish personnel access.

Say for example that your parish needs an accounting system to hold all parishioner financial data, along with the ability to produce year-end statements and easily transfer in and out of bank accounts. At first glance, you may be hard pressed to think of another ministry in your parish that could also benefit from that data, but you'd be wrong. Stewardship ministry — specifically annual giving — can make great use of this parishioner data by knowing how to target potential donors and figuring out which current donors might be open to giving more.



Using that same scenario, you could even get your social justice ministry involved when you look at parishioner statistics and see that a good majority of giving goes to funds that service the poor and vulnerable, as opposed to perhaps building upkeep or parish school scholarships. When planning for the next themed campaign, your communication coordinator (if your parish has one) can use this information to capture the generosity of donors.

ADVANTAGES *Cost Savings*

There is also a monetary benefit to having one software for all data. If you need to purchase three or four different programs that essentially do the same thing but for different groups, the cost adds up quickly. Not just for purchasing the initial program, but also the monthly or yearly fee associated with it.

There is also a hidden cost that needs to be considered, the cost of training personnel. Depending on what kind of software it is, staff may need some comprehensive guidance on using the program. The cost of training in paid time may be hard for some parishes to account for. By having just one software to train for, you can train as a group instead of multiple trainings for different programs and employees.

ADVANTAGES *360° View Of Churches*

Finally, let's move up the branch and imagine what would be possible if not just a parish has access to all parishioner data, but if a diocese had access to all data. Instead of segmented data that needs to be entered and reentered multiple times, files that don't fit, missing parishioner information, broken financial data, and important reports that should have been submitted months ago, imagine if the bishop of a diocese had access to all complete information in real time. Think of what a diocese could do with a complete, 360° view of all the parishes in their territory. The trends they could spot

year after year, or issues that come to light now that all information is at their fingertips.

With an integrated data software solution, diocesan administration could see which parishes are gaining members at a rapid pace, and which ones could use a little help. They'll know which churches have yet to pay their annual parish assessment, or still need to submit their diocesan capital campaign pledge amount. With this information literally at their fingertips, your diocese can cut down on administration work, and actually have the time and then knowledge to plan for the future.

ADVANTAGES *Fraud Prevention*

Not all data management software is created equal, which is why limiting the amount of software programs you use is essential to keeping your parishioner information safe from online scammers and instances of parish fraud. WeGather, for example, is built on Salesforce, the world's #1 data management system, and has one of the strongest security features on the market today. Major corporations and non-profits worldwide trust Salesforce to keep information safe. With the security of this strong platform, you can rest assured that your parishioner data is secured according to the highest level of compliance standards.

As a parish, you're tasked with many important duties, including keeping track of sacramental records, updating parish contacts, paying utility bills, maintaining the building, and keeping track of parish giving. It's no wonder that with so much going on, it can be easy to be lax about keeping things safe online. And that's exactly what hackers and online scammers are counting on.

Keep your employee and parishioner financials safe by using secure online financial programs. From mainstream programs, such as QuickBooks and FreshBooks, to a parish-specific cloud-based software solution like WeGather that has categories for parishioner finances and data, the important thing is that everything is safe, encrypted, and backed up.

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