

# The Value of Fully Integrated Member Databases

By Scott D. Oser

Large associations have historically been department based, with departments often sheltered from each other. Unfortunately, this silo approach results in different departments working with different vendors and leads to process redundancy, lack of operational efficiency, and multiple databases with no interaction.

Fortunately, there are companies in the marketplace today that develop databases and processes that fully integrate all of the operation-critical functions an association undertakes. These systems allow organizations to focus on their strategic priorities, their memberships, and their missions; realize significant cost savings; and save enormous amounts of staff time and money. These systems also present an opportunity to market smarter and make more money without a significant investment.

The first barriers to break down are the silos, and technology can help do that. Databases have been developed that can bring all of the departmental data together, giving a 360-degree view of a member and his or her participation in the organization. This is important for a number of reasons.

**1. Instant revenue.** With a fully integrated database, a member's purchasing and activity history are available in one place. This allows a customer service representative to

pull up an individual's record and react appropriately, giving special attention to a long-time member, for instance; promoting a meeting near the member's home or office; or reminding a member that it's time to renew.

**2. Outsourcing option.** Member-service interaction like this is possible for in-house staff, but it can be outsourced as well. There are a number of firms that offer call-center services that can be tied directly to your database. Recently, firms that have extensive expertise in call-center and database management have entered the market-providing top-quality service without the challenges of staff hiring, training, and retention. Having a more full-service approach leads to less data transfer, less staff time, and more control for an association, because everything is in one place.

**3. Simplified strategic planning.** Because you have data on your members in one location, you can streamline your resource and strategic planning processes. A fully integrated database can provide reports that show member purchasing history and usage trends. This information can help you determine what you should continue to focus on, stop focusing on, and start focusing on in the future.

**4. Better view of the money in the bank.** A fully integrated database will

interact seamlessly with your data entry and lockbox/caging operation. Whether you work with an in-house or external operation, having these functions tied directly into your database not only allows you to see what members have purchased but it also allows you easy access to financial reports. One thing to consider when deciding whether to outsource your data entry and lockbox is whether there is significant new technology available to companies that focus in this area that you may not be able to afford on your own. The goal of this technology is to get your data entered and your money in the bank as quickly as possible.

**5. Smarter marketing, resulting in increased retention rates.** Having access to everything a member has done with your association over time gives you the knowledge to do more

targeted marketing. For instance, using database technology allows you to group people who have similar traits and send them appropriate offers. Many databases are extremely flexible and allow you to pick and choose your test group, your offer, and your method of delivery.

Having a fully integrated database will be crucial for large associations in the future. Whether you decide to manage your database in house using internal resources, use multiple vendors, or work with a full-service partner, having key information in one easily accessible place will allow your association to increase member retention, reduce costs, and increase revenue.



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## COMPANY BIO

Palm Coast Data is your complete member-service and publication-fulfillment solution. Our integrated database provides a comprehensive view of member activity, including membership, subscriptions, fundraising, product purchases, and event participation. Our suite of services also includes mail processing, lockbox, data entry, customer service, and more. Our services are offered a la carte or as a comprehensive turnkey solution.

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