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By Mary Girsch-Bock

The software needs of the nonprofit organization are vastly different from those implemented by standard organizations. Many nonprofits are funded solely by grants, which require detailed tracking and accountability for every dollar spent. As well, those active in fundraising need a way to record donations, provide receipts and track donors for future fundraising campaigns.

As evidenced by 2009 statistics showing there were a record 16 million nonprofit corporations in the United States, this is a continually growing segment of the population. And as this segment continues to grow, nonprofit software products will continue to grow, as well. In our review of nonprofit products, we took a look at the following:

Basic System Functions – This section includes information on product installation (if applicable) and setup, along with navigational ease. We also list the modules that are included or available with the product, and we consider scalability, examining whether the software can grow and expand along with an organization.

Core Not-for-Profit/Fund Accounting Capabilities – This area includes available account structure, budget management capability, donor management and grant tracking functionality, along with automatic fund balancing functions. We also discuss the availability of an audit trail and any e-features, such as remote system access, data sync capability, and e-payment and e-banking functions.

Management Features – This section considers things such as dashboards, what-if analysis, fund raising, collections, and document management capabilities.

Financial Statements and Reporting – Along with standard reporting, we also look at financial statement formatting options, endowment and grant reporting, and any

report customization features that are available. As well, we note report export

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product support options.

Summary & Pricing – Finally, we provide pricing information as well as a brief summary of the product's strengths, along with a note on the type of organization for which the product is best suited.

Because nonprofits vary so widely, their needs will vary, as well. That's why it's so important for your nonprofit clients to carefully investigate the available products (visiting websites, taking test runs, etc.) before making a purchasing decision. n

Nonprofit

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