Considering a New Grants Management System?
Navigating the Potential Pitfalls

Martin Schneiderman
Information Age Associates
47 Murray Place
Princeton, NJ 08540  USA
mbs@iaa.com
www.iaa.com
Office 609-924-6936
Mobile 609-203-1137

Copyright © 2019  Information Age Associates. All Rights Reserved.
Some Session Ground Rules

- Please use the handheld mics so that everyone can clearly hear you
- Pose questions of general interest to our broad audience of grantmakers
- Some questions will be taken after each of our 3 speakers
- More questions will also be taken at the end
- No public discussion about individual service provider systems
The Basis of IAA’s Perspective

- **200+ grantmaking clients** worldwide
- We’ve **evaluated 50+ different grant systems**
- Our clients have used **15 different major grants management systems**
- **Diverse professional background** as a grantseeker, grantee, consulting program officer, foundation senior executive, senior management consultant, and Chief Information Officer
- **Consultant for Idealware’s bi-annual grantmaking guide**
25 Major North American Integrated Foundation Information System Grants Management Service Providers

Names of acquired companies are underneath the larger logos
Grantmaker Feedback

- **Seamlessly integrated grantmaking systems**
- **A better user interface for everyone**
- **Powerful and easy**
- **Great support service**
- **More needed features**
- **Better backend efficiency**
- **Reliable systems**
- **High level of security**
- **Better searching**
- **Improved reporting**

- **Mobile accessibility**
- **Better 501(c)(3) validation**
- **Grant outcome tracking and reporting**
- **Global reach for your staff and nonprofits worldwide**
- **Multi-lingual & multi-currency**
- **Links to external services and our accounts payable**
- **Responsiveness/timing of disaster relief sites**
- **Shorter lapse time to donate funds**
Our Grantmaking Clients
Key System Functionalities

- A built-in knowledgebase of grant files with contents that are auto-indexed and fully searchable
- Dynamic links to multiple external systems and databases
- Integration with accounting, e-payment, and e-signature systems
- Multilingual and multi-currency
- Integration with incoming and outgoing email and public websites
- Social networking and broadcast email
Some Major Reported Challenges with Grantmaking Systems

- Not meeting all of our expressed needs
- Problems with services and inexperienced provider staff
- Insufficient configurations, and personalizations
- The UI is too complicated
- Poor web browser compatibility
- Integration with other systems
- Searching and reporting our data
- Need for outcome tracking
- We’re seeking lower costs
More than **Migrating Data** *

- In addition to migrating all data and attached files, who will also migrate, configure, or reconfigure all:
  - User access rights
  - Hierarchical code tables
  - Write-up templates
  - Correspondence templates
  - Online application forms
  - Online review forms
  - Online grantee reports
  - Saved searches and favorites
  - Workflows
  - System and ad hoc reports and favorites
  - Budgets
  - Graphical dashboards for each team and/or user
  - Links to all external systems

*Each of these are specific to different systems*
Key Factors in Vendors Managing Acquisitions and Partnerships

- Underestimating their **challenges** merging very different organizations
- Managing different **business models and leadership styles**
- **Scaling up** to hire, train, and manage more staff plus effectively support more clients
- Figuring how to **realistically link and integrate** entirely different technologies
What are some of the greatest problems you encounter selecting and running your core systems locally and from the cloud?
Case Study
Selecting a New System

- How do we go about specifying our prioritized new system requirements to select our *best-fit integrated system*?
  - How do we determine our key requirements?
  - Which is better, a *customized* system or a *commercial* system that enables extensive *personalized* configurations?
  - Should we be concerned about having all our *core system* software and data off site in a vendor hosted commercial data center?
How satisfied are you moving grantmaking applications to the cloud?

- Extremely satisfied: 17%
- Very satisfied: 53%
- Satisfied: 23%
- Not applicable: 6%
- Very unsatisfied: 1%
- Extremely unsatisfied: 0%

Source: TAG 2017 Technology Survey
Selecting a New System

The Pitfalls

- Not developing an up front prioritized list of Required and Desired $5 = High,$ $1 = Low$ specs

- Not requiring all RFP respondents to specify if and how their system can do each of your key things

- Grantmakers grossly underestimate all of the work necessary for their staff to decide, specify and configure the new system
Selecting a New System

The Pitfalls

- No personalized demo script with your key specs for each vendor to adhere to in the live presentation of their latest current production system.
Migrating to a New System

More Pitfalls

- Missing key capabilities in the new system that *you assumed would be there* just like the former system
- Lack of comprehensive new system acceptance testing *by the grantmaking staff*
- Finding and fixing lots of duplicate organizations, requests, and contacts
- Missing data and documents that weren’t migrated because they weren’t provided
Migrating to a New System
Other Key Pitfalls

- An unbalanced legal agreement with no recourse that favors only the service provider
- Believing everything that you were told without documenting this in writing as part of the contractual agreement
- Changing of the guard on both the grantmaking and the service provider staff
- Genuine misunderstandings between your staff and the service provider’s project manager
Case Study
Poor Legacy System Integration

- Why don’t/didn’t our legacy non-integrated systems work together at all?
  - What things caused this major limitation?
  - What do we now need to do when selecting and configuring our new fully web-based remotely hosted system to prevent this from happening again in the future?
Case Study
System Acceptance Testing

- We discovered that after we cut over that all user access doesn’t work, and our data migration wasn’t complete.
  - What was missing?
  - Why did this occur?
  - What should we have done differently?
Web User Interface Issues

- All service providers claim to provide broad Web browser access to your grantseekers, grantees, staff, reviewers, board, and the system administrator.

But there are many problems with the different browsers and versions.

- Some are providing limited access to mobile apps.
Browser Use in North America

Chrome is *strongly* on top and Safari is a strong second

Browser Use Worldwide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Browser</th>
<th>Market Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chrome</td>
<td>63.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safari</td>
<td>16.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefox</td>
<td>4.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung Internet</td>
<td>3.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Browser</td>
<td>3.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Browser Market Share Worldwide - September 2019

Chrome is very strong on top and continuing to grow

Case Study
Slow System Response Time

- Our system response time is extremely slow accessing and running searches and reports from our remotely hosted web-based grants management system
  - What are possible causes of this problem?
  - What tests can we run to find out and verify the suspected causes?
  - What do we need to do to fix this?
The actual speeds of Internet access from different locations

- Internet speed tests were run from [https://www.speakeasy.net/speedtest](https://www.speakeasy.net/speedtest) to test upload/download speed from nonprofits worldwide to a grantmaker’s NYC-based server.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Download Speed</th>
<th>Upload Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>86.2 mbps</td>
<td>87.2 mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila, Philippines</td>
<td>20.02 mbps</td>
<td>19.94 mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Philippines locations</td>
<td>3-5 mbps</td>
<td>3-5 mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sao Paulo, Brazil</td>
<td>7.87 mbps</td>
<td>5.78 mbps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka, Bangladesh</td>
<td>1.1 mbps</td>
<td>2.4 mbps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* mbps = megabits per second
50 Lane Traffic Jam

See the bottleneck of all traffic narrowing after the toll
Some Really Good Advice

- Just because you can do it doesn’t mean you should do it!
- Technology alone really won’t solve all of your problems
- Before changing do your homework
  - Identify the real pros and cons
  - Conduct site visits
  - Ask lots of really good questions
  - Be realistic about risks
Time for spirited questions!

mbs@iaa.com
609-924-6936
Considering a New Grants Management System?

Navigating the Potential Pitfalls
“Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have, and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.”

- James Belasco and Ralph Stayer
Determining Your WHY?

Why do you need a systems change?
1. Outdated System
2. Improve Processes
3. Automate Workflows
4. Enable better collaboration between teams
5. Bring your technology up-to-date (cloud based, multiple app integration).
WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
Steps in Deciding Whether to Change Grant Management Systems

1. Know Your Process

- How does grant administration work in organization?
- What does your Grantmaking timeline look like?
- How do the various teams in your organization work? What does their process look like?
Sample Grant Development Timeline

Due Diligence (10 weeks)
Grant Recommendation Memo (6 weeks)
Recommendation for Grant Approval for Board (2-3 weeks)
Grant Award Letter (GAL) (6 weeks)

**6-7 Months from Due Diligence to GAL Execution**
Steps in Deciding Whether to Change Grant Management Systems

2. Find resources to help aid in your decision

- Case Studies
- Conferences / Webinars
- Idealware / PEAK Grantmaking Guide to Grants Management Systems
3. Talk to your peers

- Find like-minded organizations whose Grantmaking mirrors your own (ex: international grantmakers focused on Africa with local field offices).
- Understand who was involved in their process
- What system did they use before the one they currently have
- What sparked the change
- How does the staff engage with the system
- Were there any challenges/things they would do differently
- Why they chose the system that they did
4. Get Others Involved

- Determine who the primary stakeholders are that should be a part of the process
- Create a team (either colleagues or a consultant(s) to help with the scoping, selecting/implementing process if needed (ensure they are system blind)
Steps in Deciding Whether to Change Grant Management Systems

5. **Trust Your Gut**

- Once you have found a system that ticks 80%+ of your boxes, don’t be afraid to pull the trigger.
- Be comfortable and confident in your decision.
Lessons Learned From The Process

1. **First Things First**: Do the pre-work to a systems renovation or change.
2. Recognize your bias as well as the biases of others.
3. Align all key stakeholders for change and be prepared to weave change management throughout the entire process.
4. Gather your allies and set them up for success.
QUESTIONS???
Implementing New Technology to foster collaboration, change, and process improvements

Nora Mitnick
Grant Information Systems Manager
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Implementing New Technology Can:

1. Foster Collaboration
2. Create Change
3. Improve Processes
COLLABORATION
Define the Mission Statement

– Mission statement should be controversial
– Can utilize an acronym or slogan to define key priorities
– Can be used as a decision making tool and guiding principle for the project
Collaboration

• Agile Project Management Approach
  – More frequent touchpoints for smaller chunks of work
  – Iterative product/outcomes
  – Decentralized decision making power
  – Requires constant communication between team members

• Traditional Project Management Approach
  – Emphasis on documentation
  – Set deadlines for big chunks of work
Tools for Transparency and Accountability

• Agile Project Management Requires Constant Communication
  – Trello
  – OneDrive Online
  – Shared Calendar
  – Microsoft Teams
  – Jira or other ticketing systems

• Meetings
  – Set a goal for the meeting - why are you meeting?
  – Set frequency
  – Empower everyone to speak
  – Use video for remote teams
  – Make them fun!
Defined Responsibilities

• One project lead
• Clear responsibilities for all
• Separation of duties

Set timelines for communication - ex/will respond to email in 24 hours, etc.
Discussion Question

Think about a time when a group came together from across your organization to collaborate – did it go well and what did you learn?

If it didn’t go well, what ideas from this presentation can you take to make it go differently next time?
CHANGE MANAGEMENT
Moving to a Commercial/Configurable System

- The cultural differences between a custom system and a commercial system.

- What to do when people have new system ideas? Or want new fields?
Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder = affected by change or could influence change

- What will this change mean for them?
- What is their current attitude towards the change?
- What personal/group context should we be aware of?
- How might we best engage this person/group?
Why Change Management

All change is hard - even if it’s for the better, it can still be depleting

All change has a *perceived* or *real* element of loss.*

* [http://www.rotman.utoronto.ca/Connect/Rotman-MAG/Current-Issue](http://www.rotman.utoronto.ca/Connect/Rotman-MAG/Current-Issue)

---

I used to be quick and confident in our old system... *Now things take me a long time and it’s embarrassing.*

It doesn’t sound like my role will be needed after the new system is rolled out... *What will happen to my job?*

I used to be the go-to person for information... *Now that everyone can access it, will my colleagues still respect me?*
Emotional Response to Change

Your job is to help people let go of the old and accept the new. Remember that everyone’s journey is unique.

Revisit throughout the process.
Sample Change Management Activities

• Define the change
• Meet with every dept/all stakeholders
• Communications with the auditors, Board, and grantees
• Digest emails to staff
Take Time for Change Management

• Looking back
  – Where did we make progress?
  – Where did we learn something?

• Looking ahead
  – What is creating stress?
  – What activities do we want to do?
Reflection

- Think of someone who is not fully on board with your project
  - What is the challenge/concern you have with this person?
  - What personal context might explain why their behaviour is a rational response to the situation?
  - Is it a rider, elephant, and/or path problem?
  - What could you do to help address the underlying issues?
STREAMLINING
Prep Work & Clean-Up

• Look at your IT environment as a whole; what systems are you using and how do they connect? Are there any upgrades that need to be made?
• Think about getting rid of paper files/digitizing pre-implementation.
• Draft workflows and document processes.
Streamlining with the GMS

The system often allows you to streamline in ways that you haven’t thought of - be open to it!

Iterate on process post-implementation.

Areas that are often involved:
- Approvals
- Internal and external review
- Manual emails
- Reporting
Keeping it Cool

• Bringing people in at the right level
• Being able to delegate
• Having a team and allies
• Having confidence
Key Takeaways

• Recognizing when to outsource and being able to do so
• Get buy in/managing expectations
• Transparency/Accountability – hard/worth it!