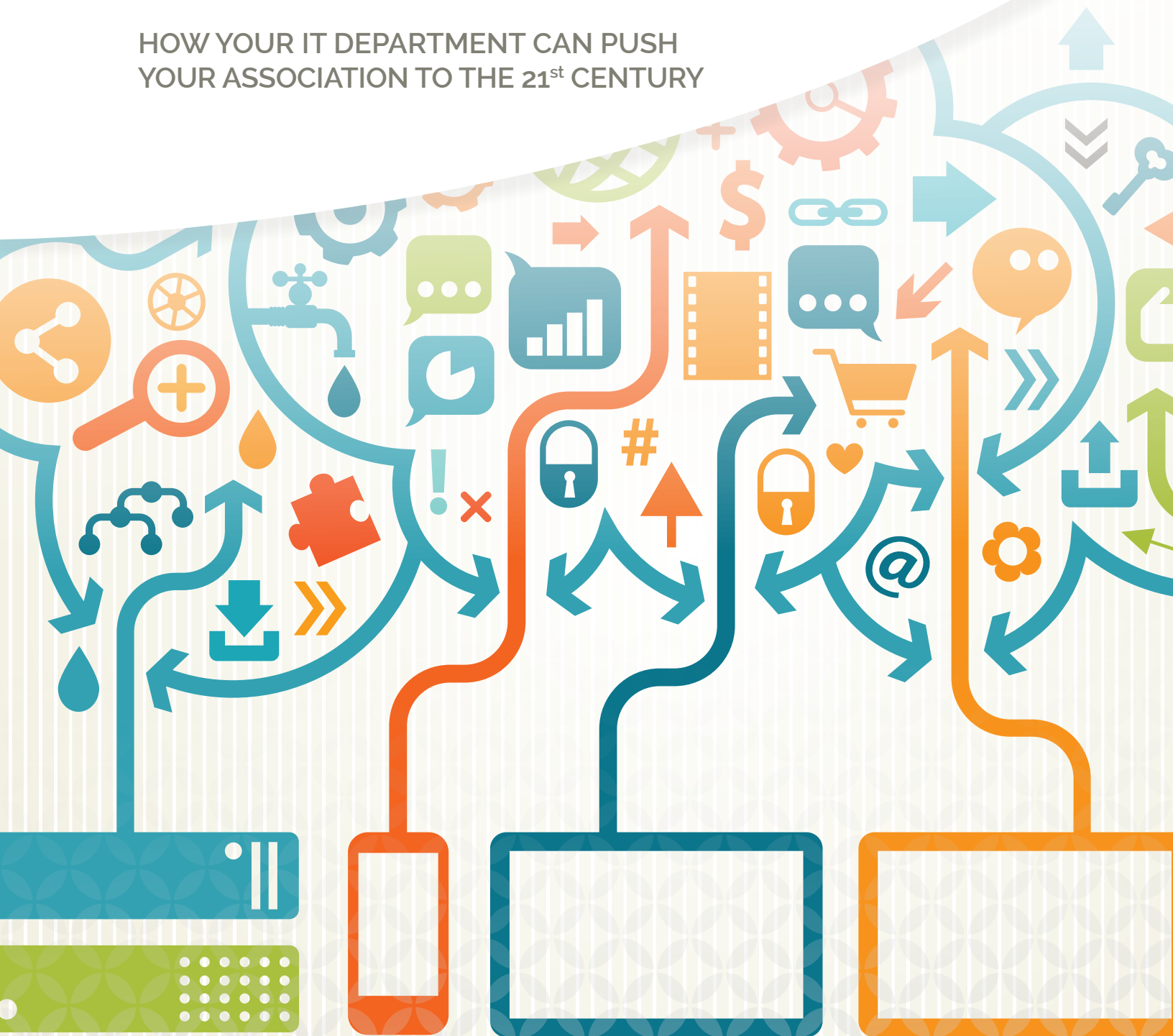


The Future Of Association Technology

HOW YOUR IT DEPARTMENT CAN PUSH
YOUR ASSOCIATION TO THE 21st CENTURY



State Of The Art Technology

Setting up your IT team for success with the right technology is critical for any organization. So how do you know which tool is the right fit?



The responsibility of any good IT department is to make their organization more efficient and effective through the power of technology. Technology has advanced greatly over the past decade and continues to change the way companies do business. In the association space, the IT team spends more time putting out fires, rarely getting the opportunity to be innovative. This challenge that IT leaders encounter is why modern technology tools are so crucial. The right technology can help your IT team provide your organization the value it needs from its tools and from its staff.

Your organization is counting on you to implement the best technology for the best cost. Your members are expecting top-notch technology due to the level of service provided in the consumer market. Finding the right system is no easy task, especially when a large amount of technology in the association space is outdated or obsolete.

In this white paper, we will identify the negative effects of an outdated association management software tool, what modern technology looks like, and how it can impact your organization.

Why Aren't You Using Modern Technology Now?

Modern technology allows you and your organization to be more efficient and effective at a lower cost.

Maybe you think your AMS works just fine for your association. Maybe you have custom built software. Or maybe you inherited the software your association uses. No matter the scenario, if you're using an outdated system, you and your organization are not reaching your full potential. Modern technology allows you and your organization to be more efficient and effective at a lower cost. So how do you know if your current system is outdated? If you identify with any of the following criteria, it might be time to consider finding a more modern route for your association.

Your AMS was built over 10 years ago.

Technology advances happen fast. Software capabilities have changed immensely in the past year, let alone the past ten. The first generation iPhone was introduced in 2007. Can you imagine using an iPhone 1 now? The size alone is laughable. Add in its memory capabilities, storage space, and battery life and you have a phone that no one today would want to use. So, why would you still use the same AMS that was built ten years ago?

Your system requires dedicated hardware.

Get the server out of your closet, host your AMS in the cloud. You won't have the large upfront investment in the hardware, you won't be spending countless hours on upkeep, your operations will be more secure, and your infrastructure capacity grows with you. Are you ready to free up some closet space now?



Your AMS provider has long release cycles.

Do you know the last time your AMS was updated? If your answer is no or if it was not sometime this quarter, your system is not keeping up with modern technology trends. Imagine a world where your system is being updated consistently, introducing new features and correcting any issues. Sounds good, doesn't it?

It doesn't integrate with other systems very well or at all.

If your data is in multiple systems that don't have the ability to speak to one another, it's time for an update. When you are spending time extracting data from all of your systems just to compile it yourself, you are doing work that good technology could do for you in less time. Even if you know where all of your data is housed, it should not be difficult to aggregate it. An AMS with an open API can help you eliminate some of your data silos.

What Does A Modern Technology Tool Look Like?

If your association is using an older system, you may not know what to look for in newer software. You don't know what you don't know so how can you know what you're missing?

A new AMS is a massive investment, one that requires research and discovery before determining what is best for your association. If you decide to lead your association towards the modern era, these are the characteristics you should look for in your next system.

SaaS Model

A SaaS model gives your users access to a system that is more reliable and scalable while relieving you of the constant burden of maintaining servers. It reduces upfront costs, frees up space, and (maybe most importantly) time. You no longer have to worry about the costs related to hosting, hardware, or updates.

Self-Service

The trend of digital accessibility and service in the consumer market is beginning to flood the association industry. The ability to self-serve is becoming second nature to your members because of their experience in the marketplace. A self-service portal not only allows members to be active in the system when it is convenient for them, it relieves staff from the additional workload. With self-service, your members will be empowered through technology to participate in your association.

Integrations

Wes Trochlil, CEO and Founder of Effective Database Management, impresses the importance of seamless integration. "An AMS should be able to talk at all levels and an open API allows that to happen much less painfully than in the past," he explains. An open API makes it possible for application programs to interact with each other and

share data, encouraging innovation and collaboration. With an open API, you can easily integrate with tools like your content management system, online community platform, or marketing automation solution allowing information to be shared to your AMS.

Rapidly Innovative

Innovation is an attitude. "There are not enough new, innovative tech ideas flowing into the association space. There needs to be a constant source. The best thought leaders in the space are the ones introducing new ideas," says Ernie Smith of Associations Now. When an industry becomes stagnant, it becomes complacent. An innovative AMS provider is unsatisfied with its current product and wants to continue to improve and innovate it. This includes regular updates all the way to important product changes inspired by customer feedback. With constant innovation, your AMS will continuously improve the work your association will be able to do and will guarantee that the product you buy does not become obsolete after a few short years.

Scalability

As your association grows, it is necessary for your system to grow with it. There may be features in the AMS that you do not need today, but will later down the road. A scalable AMS will not make you pay for those features today, but they will be available for activation when your association needs them. As your data needs increase, your system will need the ability to support it. With a scalable system, you won't need to spend time or resources updating any servers. A scalable AMS will grow with your association.

How Modern Technology Will Affect Your Organization

Outdated systems and the antiquated methods that so often accompany them cause headaches for associations and their members alike.

The right tool can change the way an association does business. Advancements in technology are making internal staff more efficient by cutting down on time spent on server maintenance and costs related to hardware. They are solving the problems that outdated software have created for organizations like yours, especially the IT department.

An outdated system affects the association as a whole. Shaun Holloway, Director of IT for the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International (ACUHO-I), cites their integration needs as one of the major considerations in ACUHO-I's search for a new AMS provider. *"Our previous system had limited integration capabilities making workflows difficult and created member experience inconsistencies. Those technical barriers no longer exist with MemberSuite because of the open API,"* explains Holloway. The outside systems needed to be able to seamlessly link with the AMS, allowing for the free flow of data and information.

A self-service portal is another feature that was vital to ACUHO-I because of the benefits it provides to members. *"There is a fundamental user expectation for self-service. It became an issue for our members that they couldn't do things on their own. It was an inconvenience,"* recalls Holloway. Major association functions such as membership registration, event registration, and automated billing are transformed with a self-service portal, giving members ownership in the process by allowing them to complete tasks on their timeline. While this is a major benefit for members, it reduces management costs for the association at the same time.



A modern AMS can revolutionize the IT department too. Outdated software comes with a cost, in terms of time and money. Holloway highlights the cost of the knowledge gap, *"our legacy system had an outdated code. We had to train to secure against vulnerabilities in the system."* A modern solution allows the IT department to streamline integrations, offers full data migration, and regular updates to the system.



CONCLUSION:

Technology advances so your association can too.

Association management systems are one of the biggest investments your association will make which is why purchasing one is such a daunting responsibility. As a member of the IT team, your organization will be looking to you during much of the discovery process. This is a time to urge a move to modern, innovative technology.

As you assess the risk of changing systems, evaluating what is best for your team and your members, consider the benefits modern technology will have on your entire organization. You or your team may not realize the extra time and money you are wasting due to outdated software, but a modern system can transform your association.

Your team's day-to-day tasks will become easier, the strategic efforts being made by leadership will include more insight, and your members will benefit from the capabilities that modern technology has conditioned them to expect. Your AMS should advance your association, not hinder it. Leverage available technology to push your association into the 21st century.

**Modern technology is
out there waiting to
make a difference in your
organization.**

Are you ready?

We'd love to learn more about your association technology needs. Contact us to get started.

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