

Efficiency, productivity, and transparency for not- for-profits

How technology is making it easier to do good



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Introduction

Doing good can be difficult. Not-for-profit organisations juggle the challenges faced by commercial businesses along with a raft of issues unique to NFPs: limited operational budgets, time and staff, rigorous internal controls, the need for public transparency and the pressure to devote every possible dollar to the cause.

These pain points can make it difficult to run a not-for-profit effectively.

Even if your organisation is drawing in big donations or receiving sizeable grants, if you're not managing your operations well, you'll waste time and money that could be better spent elsewhere.

Staff who could put their talents into donor outreach or other valuable work might be spending too much time on manual tasks and data entry. In a big-picture sense, charities and not-for-profits that overspend on operations can damage their standing with the public – and that type of reputation can take a long time to shake.

The problem is, many of the challenges that plague NFPs also make it difficult to find solutions. Where for-profit businesses would invest in a business management software system without much hesitation, it can be much harder for NFP organisations to make that leap. Investing donor funds into software that offers less tangible long-term benefits can be hard to justify.

Here's why, even if your NFP faces barriers, it's worth looking into an update.





The challenges of running an NFP

And signs yours needs a change

While some see not-for-profits as softer, less challenging forms of business, they have many of the same operational tasks as for-profit firms – along with many their own.

As with for-profit businesses, not-for-profits have staff to manage, which comes with payroll and scheduling issues – and many manage volunteer teams as well. They need to maintain books and accounts, as for-profit businesses do, with the added oversight of board members, government bodies and the general public. NFPs don't have customers but they do have donors and recipients to manage. While most don't deal with the complexities of manufacturing or large-scale inventory management, they still need to pay for goods and services, and may even sell products as part of their mission.

Challenges come when these complex operational needs conflict with limited resources. If a not-for-profit is using outdated software or doesn't have the budget to pay for expert help, issues can become entrenched. Here's what that might look like in your organisation.

Too much work, too little time

Time is a precious resource in any business, and in a not-for-profit, it can be particularly scarce. If a disproportionate segment of that time is taken up with operational work rather than the mission of your charity, it's not a good sign.

Time-consuming manual processes can add up to hours wasted every day, slow, inefficient systems can lead to lost time and frustration for staff or donors, and human error or lack of accurate data can create rework and slow processes even further.

Low-budget operations

Most NFPs try to devote as much of their budget as possible to the cause – whether that's funding research, providing services to the community or handing out food packages. This can mean limited funds for the back-office, leaving you using outdated systems with little expert help and not enough staff to manage things effectively.

Disconnection and delays

The wrong software can be a major roadblock to efficiency. If your organisation is using outdated systems that don't integrate efficiently or lack the features you need, that can cause a range of issues in your everyday work.

You may be using add-ons or workarounds to get things done – but this often means re-entering data or adding other manual processes.

If your software is outdated, it might struggle to integrate with other systems, or need frequent maintenance and updates to keep it functional – which costs more time and money you don't have.

Lack of visibility and transparency

Transparency is a big issue for NFPs. Most have to answer to a board of directors, meet not-for-profit compliance rules and show the public that they're not squandering donations. NFPs that receive grants or funding from government bodies must also justify their spending and keep records for tax or audit purposes. Donors need to get receipts so they can claim tax back.

If your NFP doesn't have access to accurate, accessible, timely data, maintaining this level of transparency can be difficult. If your data is stored across multiple systems, for example, you might not be able to quickly grab the information you need on a day-to-day basis – let alone at the end of the financial year or in case of an audit.

Low tech issues

Like commercial businesses, NFPs need to be able to track their work and make changes as needed. If you can't track donations and other income, see the results of your fundraising campaigns or identify major donors or potential new donors, you won't be able to make good decisions around future campaigns and donor management. Older tech tools can also make it more difficult to integrate with social media or use data to reach younger donors, which means missing out on a potential pool of income.

Financial complications

NFP finances can be more complicated – and more precarious – than standard businesses. Donations may come in the form of one-off collections, recurring payments throughout the year or through the sale of products or services. Other funding may come from pledges during events or fundraising drives, which need to be followed-up and collected at a later date.

There's also uncertainty – donors can withdraw support at any point, and external factors can affect how much people can donate. Because of this, it's

Some NFPs receive the bulk of their income during a single month, thanks to an annual funding drive or event.

hard for many charities to predict future income and budget accordingly.

Tech is transforming not-for-profits

New solutions for long-term issues

Increasingly sophisticated business management systems offer new solutions to entrenched not-for-profit problems - freeing up precious time, saving money and improving the way they reach out to customers.

Although lack of funding and a reluctance to invest in operational tools has made uptake slow, many NFPs are getting on board with this new technology – and finding that the benefits make it well worth the investment. Improvements to back-office functions filter through to the rest of the organisation, increasing the time available to work on the mission, streamlining everyday processes, giving donors and clients a better experience and even saving money on maintenance and updates.

Here's how the right technology could change things for your NFP:

Multiple functions, one system

One of the most significant benefits of a business management system is housing all your business functions under one digital roof. When you can access all your process information and tools, reporting dashboards and data through a single interface, it's far simpler to track work across your organisation and identify bottlenecks slowing down key processes.

- ▶ All teams and staff members use the same software, making it easier to share information.
- ▶ Work processes can be connected across the business, eliminating roadblocks and boosting efficiency.
- ▶ Reporting dashboards give you an overview of what's happening at any given time, so you don't miss issues or opportunities.





Save time with automation

With the right software in place, you can automate key processes across your NFP, reducing time-consuming manual tasks, boosting efficiency and making outcomes more consistent.

- Communication with donors and clients can be automated at certain points, so they get a positive, consistent experience of your organisation.
- Automate repetitive manual tasks – for example, transferring data to an accounting system or sending payroll information to the right team – to save time and boost productivity.

Remote access, faster results

A cloud system lets you and your team access all your work programs and data through any device from anywhere. This is a game-changer, making it easier for staff to work from home if needed and reducing the need for rework and data entry in the office.

- Staff can work from home – for example, during lockdowns or outbreaks.
- People working in the field or visiting clients can access key information and enter details in real-time, so there's no need to fill in information back at the office.
- Staff at different offices or premises can share information and communicate in real-time, reducing the risk of errors or confusion.

Better options for donor management

A modern business management system offers smart tracking and management options for donors and donations, making it simpler to maintain oversight of your incoming funds.

- Store donor details in an integrated database, rather than a separate system or spreadsheet.
- Feed donation data and donor information through to other parts of the organisation, so outreach can be coordinated and consistent.
- Manage staff and volunteers through the same system, so it's easier to find ongoing or temporary help as needed.

Real-time data for better decision making

In NFPs, as in commercial businesses, it all comes down to the latest numbers. With an integrated system, up-to-date organisational data is accessible 24/7 so it's far easier to make day-to-day decisions and set long-term goals.

- ▶ See your current funding levels and adjust service delivery to match.
- ▶ Track fundraising campaigns in real-time and create reports to deliver results to your board.

Fine-tune financial management

Managing complex finances and compliance requirements can take up a significant amount of time and energy at NFPs. With a business management system, access to current data and smart reporting tools can make it easier, saving time and reducing errors. The result? More time to devote to your organisation's cause.

- ▶ Create monthly and yearly financial reports in minutes – rather than pulling together data from a range of systems.
- ▶ Get instant access to financial data in case of an audit.
- ▶ Forecast funding and create budgets using current data.



Choosing the right tech tools

Business management software designed for your NFP

Budget limitations and wide-ranging needs can make choosing software for a not-for-profit complicated. The right system needs to bring all your business functions together, provide remote access to all your staff, offer smart reporting capability, store sensitive data securely – it can seem like an impossible list of requirements.

That's where MYOB Advanced Business comes in. A cloud business management system for small to medium NFPs in New Zealand and Australia, it offers a suite of features designed to streamline and simplify operations throughout your organisation. Budgeting and reporting tools, project management, data storage and remote access, responsive dashboards to give you a view of what's happening every day – it's all about managing your organisation more effectively. Because it's cloud-based, MYOB Advanced Business can also reduce the maintenance and IT costs involved with maintaining an older, server-based system.

Here's a look at the top five ways MYOB Advanced Business could help your NFP:

1 Streamlined workflows



With all your operations in one place, it's easy to connect the dots across your organisation. Automate manual tasks, cut unnecessary steps and speed up unwieldy workflows for a smoother, faster-moving NFP.

2 Financial clarity



Get instant access to all your financial data through an accurate, real-time system. This gives you clarity around your financial situation day-to-day and makes it easier to meet compliance requirements, create budgets and prepare for audits. Better financial management and fewer errors = more money for your mission.



3 Remote access



A cloud platform, MYOB Advanced Business offers full access to all data, dashboards and tools – no matter where you are. This means your people can update records while they're out and about, check client details in real-time and work remotely whenever they need to. In a fast-moving world, it's a game-changer.

4 Donor management



Advanced brings all your donor and donation info together, making it easy to track and manage.

The ability to flag donors who have stopped donations, identify major donors who need extra attention and track income over time can make all the difference to your donor relationships – and the level of donations coming in.

5 Cheaper, simpler technology



While a full business management system can seem complicated, the technology is simpler to manage in many ways. Because MYOB Advanced Business is cloud-based, you don't need on-premise servers. You may also find that using a single, unified system for all your operational needs is cheaper and more effective than using a raft of disconnected systems.





Software designed with NFPs in mind

MYOB Advanced Business and your organisation

Although many NFPs are hamstrung by low budgets and a reluctance to invest in operational tools, this approach can be counter-intuitive. Refusing to spend money on back-office tasks can directly translate to less time and money for the mission if staff are forced to play catch-up with older, inefficient systems. Reworking errors, completing clunky manual tasks and transferring data between systems can add up to hours and days that could be spent where they are more useful – working on your organisation's cause.

While the problems faced by many NFPs are complex, the solution doesn't have to be. MYOB Advanced Business offers tools to help you manage the full spectrum of operational tasks across your organisation – from payroll to donor management to financial reporting and compliance. With all these tools under one cloud-based digital roof, you can transform operations and free up time and money. With such significant long term possibilities, it's worth looking into.

Could MYOB Advanced Business change
the way your organisation works? Talk to
the Acacia team to find out.

Learn more

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