

8 Reasons Your Nonprofit Can't Excel with 'Excel'

At first glance, Microsoft's Excel seems like the perfect solution for a resource-constrained nonprofit that needs a way to track supporters and donations. But looks can be deceiving, and what appears to be a free and easy option can actually be far from free.

What are the hidden costs of Excel?

Here are eight of the most common complaints we've heard from organizations about using excel:

1. Time Waster

You spend WAY too much time doing manual data entry, manipulating spreadsheets for mailings and reports, and cleaning up your data. That's time that you're not spending on advancing your organization's mission or reaching out to prospects and donors.

2. No Collaboration

Excel doesn't allow two people to make changes to a spreadsheet at the same time, so it forces you to work in silos. Your organization ends up with multiple spreadsheets, each one organized according to the logic of its "owner" rather than the strategic goals of your nonprofit. This setup doesn't support the inevitable staff changes that occur in every organization.

Your database needs to be your institutional memory, and the way it functions needs to be obvious enough for a new person to jump right in if something happens to the staff expert.

3. Explosion of Spreadsheets

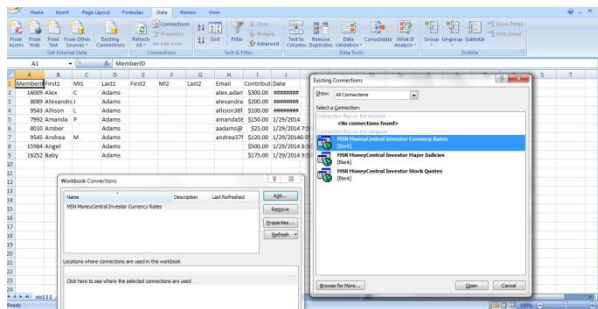
One spreadsheet for event attendance, one for donations, one for volunteer activities, and so on and so on. This fragmentation means you can't get a holistic picture of an individual's involvement with your organization. It also means that your data becomes an unwieldy mess. If someone moves or gets a new phone number, you have to update their contact information in all of your different spreadsheets.

4. No Website Integration

Any good database includes a donation page for your website where the contributions are automatically processed and the data entered online is automatically fed into your database. Can your version of Excel do that?

5. Can't Track Relationships

Excel is not designed to link different records or rows of data. Do you have a husband and wife who are both donors, and sometimes she writes the checks and sometimes he does? Good luck tracking that in Excel.



Relationships in Excel

VS.

Edit	Type	Member Role	Related Name / Company (Role)
	Alumni	Alumni	Zane Gray (alumi)
	Board	Chair	Adam's Research Foundation (Organization)
	Business	Client	Ben Adams (Consultant)
	Business	Employee	Steve Shey / Orange Co (Employer)
	Church	parishioner	First Baptist (Congregation)
	Household	Spouse	Ron Smith (Spouse)
	Household	Parent	Cindy Adams (Child)
	Household	Parent	Jean Adams (Child)
	School	Parent Leader	Leah Donney (School)
	School	student	Loring School (School)
	Team	Team	Ann Fernandez (Team Member)

Relationships in the Databank

6. Lack of Security

Excel isn't web-based, so it doesn't have any built-in back-up mechanisms in the cloud. One person can accidentally delete or severely alter your whole database.

7. Excel Doesn't Travel, But You Do

Do you attend meetings with donors or allies? Does your nonprofit host events, like house parties or conferences? Do you ever get sick and want to work from home for the day? With an online database, you can jot down notes immediately after a meeting, update event attendance on the spot, and easily spend a day working from the comfort of your couch. With Excel, you have to wait until you're back at the office.

8. Higher Long-term Costs

You may think that Excel is just a temporary solution until you can afford the nonprofit CRM of your dreams. But one of the priciest aspects of transitioning to a donor database is the cost of data migration.

The longer you use Excel, the more spreadsheets you have, the more complicated your spreadsheets become, the greater the expense of moving your data from Excel to a real database. We're talking thousands of dollars. If you start out with a real database, or move to one while your spreadsheets are still simple, you can avoid the expense of data migration altogether.

Final Thoughts

There are many affordable options, so get your nonprofit the integrated, all-in-one solution that you deserve. If your organization is currently using Excel instead of a donor database, now is the time to make the switch. You've probably already encountered many of Excel's limitations, so don't keep pouring your time and money into software that isn't meeting your needs. Learn more about [thedatabank's CRM solution and how it can help your organization](#).

About thedatabank

Established in 1998, The Databank is nonprofit software: an all-in-one cloud solution that combines a database with tools for Fundraising, Advocacy, and Communication.

It's not just software - it's a solution.

You can buy software from anyone, but with thedatabank you are also getting great service. And behind that great service is a great company made up of people who are committed to and care about your organization's mission.

If you're interested in learning more about us or our product, send an email to info@thedatabank.com. We're looking forward to chatting with you!