Software as a Service
Focus on your mission – not software maintenance

Software as a service (SaaS) is a software application or tool that is delivered as a service via the web. Available through a subscription model, the customer organization “rents” a solution delivered online, rather than taking ownership — and responsibility — for the software. By choosing a SaaS provider, nonprofits are, in essence, hiring an external company to build and operate a system for them — letting the provider make the investments in equipment and software, as well as staff needed to operate the software. SaaS vendors will deploy, maintain, update, and optimize your applications, as well as provide the infrastructure required to run them, while you maintain complete control over your applications and data.

Many organizations choose SaaS models to enhance the user experience, gain remote access, attain service guarantees, achieve compliance, and off-load the many IT responsibilities that aren’t core components of their mission. Spreading infrastructure, development, maintenance, and future innovation costs across a broad base of users means that nonprofits can access enterprise-quality tools that would otherwise be out of reach.

Software as a service allows nonprofit organizations to take advantage of the “pay as you go” model, freeing more time and resources for your mission and less on your IT systems. In addition, since you only pay for the software as a service that you use, SaaS applications can be as affordable for smaller organizations as they are for larger, multinational nonprofits.

BENEFITS OF SOFTWARE AS A SERVICE

As a nonprofit, you’re always seeking ways to advance your mission through fundraising, communications, and advocacy, with a focus on using resources wisely. The primary value that software as a service brings specifically to nonprofit organizations is the freedom to focus more on your mission — and less on IT. The following highlights are benefits your nonprofit organization can realize by adopting software as a service technology:

1. **Little upfront investment.** Software as a service provides a significantly less expensive way to “try out” software applications without the risk, pain, and expense of a large upfront investment.

2. **Reliable cost forecasting.** Software as a service subscription fees are not just affordable — they generally are fixed, enabling nonprofits to reliably forecast their IT costs over several years.

3. **No extras needed.** With software as a service, implementation fees can be significantly lower than developing custom solutions or purchasing proprietary software and hardware. You can run the software on your organization’s existing computers and browsers, and you won’t need to pay for expensive hardware, specialist IT support staff, or system development.

4. **Up-to-date technology.** Software as a service providers take care of system updates and maintenance automatically and invisibly, keeping you ahead of the technology.
curve. With SaaS, there is no need to pay for custom development or a new upgrade every time technology takes a step forward.

5. **Security and reliability.** The best SaaS vendors are SAS 70 Type II and PCI compliant, and can maintain a much more secure, sophisticated, and high-capacity infrastructure for your data than an average nonprofit organization. You can benefit from high-end infrastructure and security without bearing the cost.

6. **Remote access.** Software as a service is accessible via the Internet, which means that your staff can access the service via the web from any computer anywhere in the world with Internet access. This makes using software in distributed organizations, multiple chapter sites, or while on the road considerably easier.

7. **Scalability.** Software as a service provides the flexibility to grow with the organizations it serves. SaaS offers the ability to easily add functionality and applications available online to a nonprofit in a quick and cost-effective manner.

Software as a service offers nonprofits access to comprehensive, scalable software applications for an affordable price — without the hassle, risk, and expense associated with traditional software, hardware, updates, and maintenance. And best of all, organizations spend less time and resources on their software systems and more time focusing on and achieving their missions.