



WHITEPAPER

The IT Director's Guide to Selecting New Association Management Software (AMS)

How to evaluate the true cost of ownership and ensure
your new AMS meets your association's needs



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INTRODUCTION

Enterprise-level association management software (AMS) plays a critical role for any large and complex association.

It impacts the organization's ability to effectively manage operations, drive member engagement, and support the organization's overall growth.

As an IT leader, there are many aspects to consider when it's time for a new AMS system for your association. You must:

- ✓ Consider all technical aspects of a new AMS system, including functionality, security, scalability, configurability, performance, and integration options
- ✓ Balance technical innovation with potential technical hurdles
- ✓ Keep departments across the organization running smoothly

The total cost of ownership (TCO) angle

While these are all critical considerations, it's also important to assess the total cost of ownership (TCO) of a potential new AMS system. Doing so will help you to choose an AMS system that balances key technological considerations with cost-efficiency.

About this guide

In this guide, you'll learn how to assess the true cost of owning a new AMS system over time while making sure the system meets your organization's needs – today and in the future.

The guide includes:

- ✓ Tips for evaluating initial and ongoing costs of a new AMS system
- ✓ Long-term considerations as you select a new AMS system for your association
- ✓ How flexibility, configurability, and integration capabilities impact TCO

The importance of total cost of ownership (TCO)

Buying a new association management software (AMS) system isn't just a one-time cost. That's why it's critical to evaluate the total cost of ownership (TCO) of a potential new AMS system before you make the investment.

TCO is the total cost of owning and maintaining your AMS. Here are three areas to consider as you think about the true cost of a new AMS system:

Initial costs

All software will include initial costs for purchasing and setting up the software. These include software licensing, implementation of the software, and configuring or customizing the software to meet your organization's requirements.

Ongoing (operational) costs

Ongoing costs are the costs to maintain and support the software, which may include software subscription fees, customer support, product updates, and maintaining any customizations and/or integrations.

Hidden costs

If you are not thinking ahead and watching for them, hidden costs can pop up. Ultimately, these unexpected costs can cause you to exceed your software budget and even introduce other new challenges for your association.



The IT Checklist for Evaluating Membership Management Software



As an IT professional, you'll naturally be the one your colleagues will look to for guidance when it's time for a new AMS system. To make it a little easier, here's a handy checklist of factors to consider and questions to ask as you evaluate software vendors.

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Evaluating the initial costs of a new AMS system

The initial costs of a new AMS system typically include software licensing, setup, and customization.

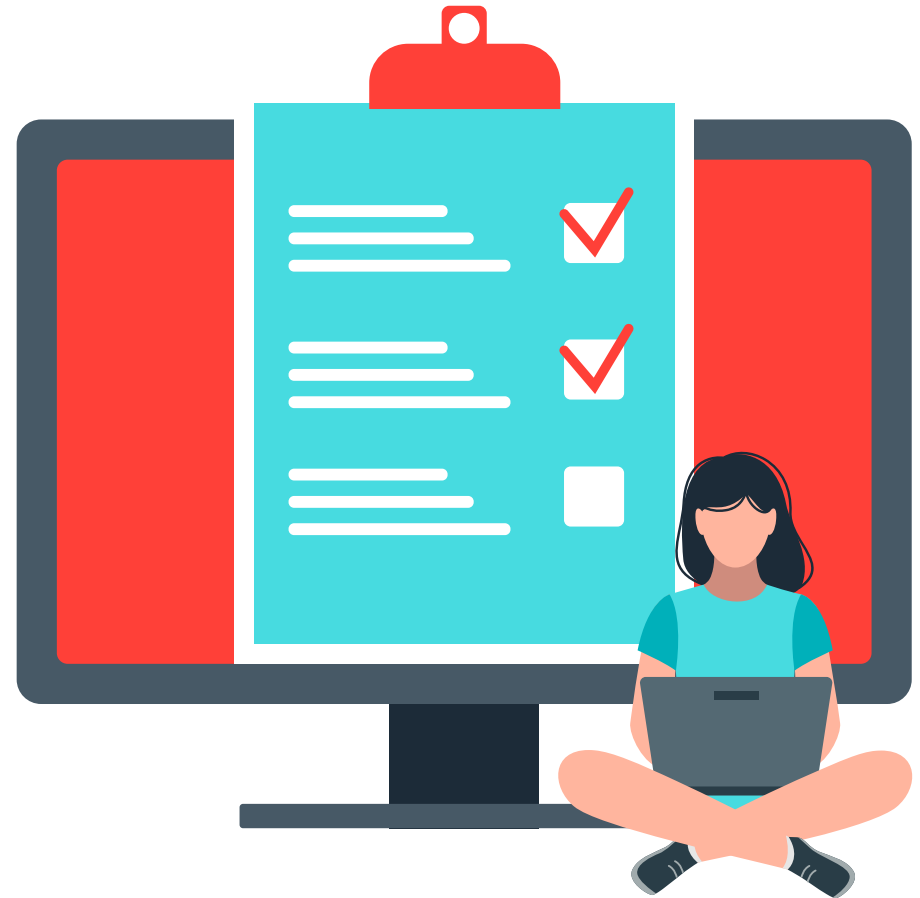
Software licensing

Many software systems offer a subscription model, which charges fees to access the core platform as a Software as a Service (SaaS). With that model, the number of people using your software will typically impact the price. In addition, some vendors charge to turn certain features or product modules on and off.

Ask the software vendor about their fee structure to understand the cost of the software – not just today but also in the future. For example, think about how many users you expect to have in the next three to five years and how user growth will impact costs. Also, consider what functionality you think you'll need in coming years and what the costs will be to turn on (or off) key features or modules to support your organization's goals.

TIP

Aptify AMS is offered with a subscription model that includes a full set of “out of the box” functionality built for large, complex associations and unions.



AMS implementation

Ask the software vendor how they will be involved with the implementation of the software and how much it will cost.

For example:

- ✓ How will they handle planning and project management?
- ✓ How much will they help with data migration from your old system to your new system?
- ✓ Will they recommend ways to execute your organization's processes in the new system?
- ✓ How will they help to integrate your existing systems with the new AMS system?
- ✓ What training will they provide your staff as part of the initial software implementation?

Answers to these questions will help you to know how much the implementation will cost, and how much time and expertise will be needed from your organization.

TIP

What can we say about what's included with Aptify integration?

Software customization

Ask the vendor about what functionality comes with the system and what functionality you might need to customize or build on your own. This will help you to understand if you might need to hire additional employees or a developer to complete the implementation.

TIP

While Aptify includes the features and functionality that large organizations need, it's also highly configurable to support virtually any business process requirements for your organization.

Ongoing costs

Ongoing costs are those associated with keeping the system running and maintained.

Here are some key aspects to think about:

Subscription fees

Factor in the ongoing costs of subscription fees after the initial implementation of the software. As mentioned previously, consider how the subscription fees might increase as you add employees and members over time.

Customer training and support

Make sure you know how much (and what kind of) training and customer support comes with the software, and what is available for an additional fee.

TIP

Aptify customers have access to a customer support website to file support tickets, view documentation, sign up for training, find information about products and services via the Aptify Marketplace, connect with the Aptify user community, and more.

Product updates

Find out how many product updates the software vendor typically rolls out each year. Ask which updates are included with the subscription fee and which have an additional cost attached.

TIP

Aptify's SaaS subscription pricing model includes free automatic product updates and does not require an external customer relationship management (CRM) license (CRM functionality is included!), giving you the benefit of a cost-effective and predictable pricing model.

Maintaining custom code and integrations

Consider the cost implications of maintaining any customizations and integrations that your team might make to the AMS system. For example, if you pay a developer to customize the software and the code “breaks” during a product update, how much will you need to spend to fix it?

TIP

Aptify automatically handles core product updates, security patches, and feature enhancements while giving you the ability to configure the software to your specific needs without having to rebuild the core system or worry about the software breaking during product upgrades. Aptify also offers advanced APIs that allow you to easily integrate it with other applications while keeping your member data centrally located in Aptify.

The impact of configuration and integration on costs

Aptify includes containers that allow you to implement custom code, plugins, and integrations without altering the core platform – ensuring that product updates do not disrupt your custom configurations and cause unexpected costs.

In addition, APIs and integration frameworks are included to support connections with third-party systems, reducing the costs and effort involved in maintaining integrations.



Hidden costs and other long-term considerations

Your choice of AMS system now will have a direct impact on how you must spend in years to come. The cost to maintain your software at the level required to run your business can quickly increase over time if the software you choose today can't adapt to changing needs.

Make sure you have a full picture of the total cost of ownership of any system by asking questions, such as:

- ✓ How flexible is the software? Will it grow with your organization as your association grows in size or complexity?
- ✓ Will you need to re-implement the system in a few years because the software is too complicated to upgrade?
- ✓ Is the system built on a platform that allows for changes, or will your modifications have to be rebuilt with each product upgrade?
- ✓ Is the software able to support the latest technological innovations as they evolve?
- ✓ What type of training and help does the software vendor provide for the system? Are training options one-time, ongoing, or both? Are courses in-person, online, or both? Is there a community of users that you can turn to for added support and idea-sharing or are you on your own?



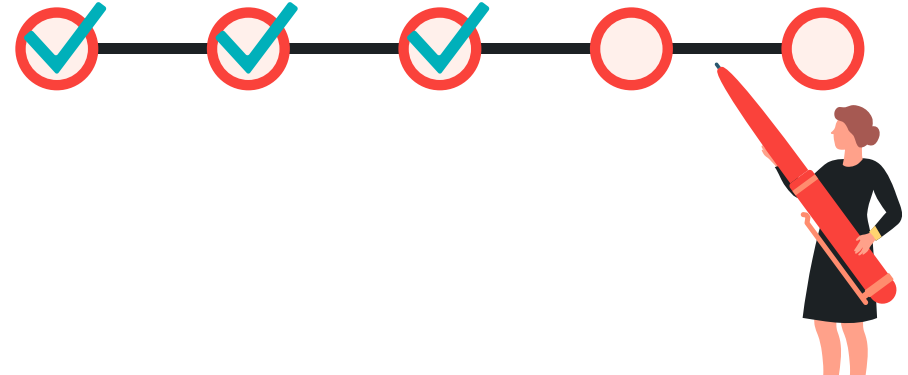
TIP

Aptify has been a leader in technology and innovation in the association industry for more than two decades. The Aptify team is continually adopting new technologies and best practices as they emerge, incorporating them into the Aptify system, and educating customers on how to use new features and technologies.

5 reasons not to build your own AMS

It can be tempting to build a custom AMS system to meet your association's unique and complex needs.

But here are five reasons to skip the custom build and opt to buy commercially available software:



1. Resources

You might have software developers on your IT staff, but you'll need many more to design, build, implement, manage, maintain, and support your own software.

2. Time

Building an AMS system from the ground up can take years to complete. It's not realistic to wait that long for the project to be finished when you need a solution now.

3. Maintenance

Once you finish building the software, it will be up to your organization to keep it running and build new features to meet future needs.

4. Cost

The costs of building your own software add up. They include salary for multiple developers over multiple years; tools for load and security testing; salary/compensation for people to test the software, write documentation, train your staff, and more.

5. Issues

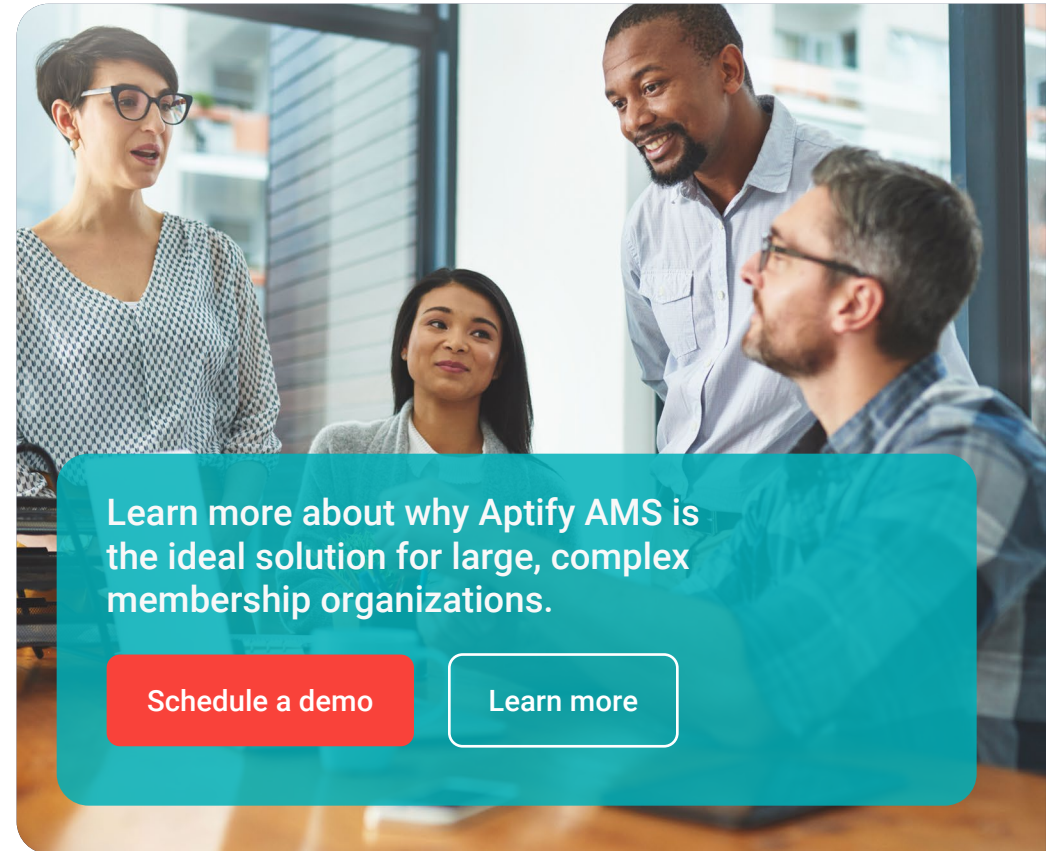
What happens if your developers leave the organization part-way through the project? Or if the software doesn't end up working the way you thought it would? Or if your staff needs more training than you anticipated? You're on the hook for finding a solution – and that will only add more time and cost to the project.

Take the next step to AMS success.

Choosing the right AMS can take your association to the next level and ensure success for years to come while keeping your costs in check.

Aptify is an ideal AMS for large organizations like yours.

It's a system built specifically for large, complex associations and labor unions. It includes the capabilities in this article, and more. Its open, scalable membership management platform provides the capabilities your team needs as your organization evolves.



Learn more about why Aptify AMS is the ideal solution for large, complex membership organizations.

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