

WHITEPAPER

AMS Pricing Checklist for Mid-to-Large-Sized Associations

What organizations should know about costs before buying new association management software



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INTRODUCTION

If you're looking for your organization's next association management software (AMS), one of the first questions you'll probably ask is "How much does it cost?"

And it makes sense. Price is a big factor in any large purchase.

But determining cost can be challenging. Multiple factors go into the cost of a new AMS system. Many costs are predictable if you know what to look for. However, others can hide below the surface. Plus, pricing between any two AMS solutions is not always an apples-to-apples comparison.

When you boil it down, what's important is the true cost of owning the system over time and making sure the software meets your organization's needs.



Your checklist for AMS pricing

This guide includes a checklist of key concepts to keep in mind about pricing and cost as you search for your next AMS, plus bonus tips for keeping your AMS cost from escalating beyond your budget:

✓ Basic AMS pricing concepts: a checklist

- Pricing structure: How will you pay for the AMS?
- Requirements: What do you need the AMS to do?
- Users: Which (and how many) people will be using the AMS?
- Implementation: How will you install and configure the AMS?
- Operating costs: What will it take to manage the AMS?
- Lifetime value – What will the value of the AMS be over time?

✓ Bonus tips for keeping your AMS costs on budget

✓ Get the right AMS for your mid-to-large-sized association



Basic AMS pricing concepts: a checklist

The cost of new association management software is different for each organization because it's based on several factors. So, before you start shopping for a new AMS system for your organization, it's important to understand some concepts about pricing and costs.

Here is a checklist of questions to consider as you begin your search:

✓ **Pricing structure: How will you pay for the AMS?**

There are two main options when it comes to AMS pricing: a) perpetual license, in which you buy the software outright and then own it in perpetuity, and b) "software as a service" (SaaS) pricing, in which you pay X amount of dollars per user, per month, to access the software online. Both pricing structures are based on a per license basis, in which you pay X amount of dollars per user.

The choice between perpetual purchase and SaaS depends largely on whether you want to pay more up front and save in subsequent years or spread payments out over the lifecycle of the system (which can help with budgeting).

TIP

NetForum AMS by Community Brands offers SaaS pricing. The price includes quarterly product updates. Plus, there's no need to pay for additional customer relationship management (CRM) software, as Netforum includes built-in CRM functionality.

✓ Requirements: What do you need the AMS to do?

Like any buying decision, you make the best purchase when you know in advance exactly what you want. That's true with association management software, too.

So, start gathering requirements for your new AMS as soon as possible. Just keep in mind that the longer the list, the more complex the AMS implementation, and the more the AMS will cost.

Here are a few tips on how to streamline your requirements so that you end up with the functionality you need at a lower cost:

1 For each requirement, ask yourself why it is a requirement

Every AMS handles processes differently, so be sure to focus on what your organization needs to accomplish, versus how you will achieve it in the AMS.

2 Stick to the requirements list as best you can

Changes to your requirements once you choose an AMS system and get started on implementation can result in added costs. So, try to stick with your original list. In case you need to make adjustments, be sure to have an approval process that must go through internal project management personnel. This will help to filter out “wants” from “needs”.

TIP

NetForum offers more than 30 product modules and a robust set of configuration tools that allow your team to do everything from updating a page to building full integrations with third-party platforms. Your team can even develop custom functionality to meet your members' unique needs. Plus, the NetForum Client Services team is ready to give you any extra help you might need.



3 Prioritize your requirements

If needed, you can adopt a progressed implementation that addresses your most basic requirements first, and then move on to more complicated processes or unique requirements later. This approach can help you get started with a new AMS solution faster while pushing some implementation costs to a future date.

TIP

NetForum offers three implementation options. Optimized adoption allows you to get started quickly with NetForum out-of-the-box features needed to maximize revenue, save staff time, and enhance the member experience; you can take advantage of additional functionality as your needs grow. Progressive adoption allows you to implement NetForum in steps so that your staff can begin putting functionality to work after each stage. Configured adoption allows you to implement all of the robust features and functionality of NetForum at once.

Using NetForum's optimized adoption, Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians was able to get up and running on NetForum quickly and successfully – even during the organization's annual conference – with time to spare.

NetForum

CASE STUDY

Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians

1 1 hour of daily staff time saved due to streamlined processes and increased efficiencies	60 Less than 60 days post-implementation for CAEP to see a rise in donations	0 0 time now spent on manually updating prorated memberships
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How CAEP breezed through implementation to reinvent the member and staff experience

The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP) advocates for emergency physicians and their patients, advancing the development of clinical guidelines and national standards.

With over 2,000 members, CAEP provides continuing education and fosters research in emergency medicine. To support its members and amplify its mission, CAEP needed full association management software (AMS) capabilities. CAEP chose NetForum optimized implementation to streamline staff operations, enhance the member experience, and advance its mission.

NetForum solutions

- Membership Management
- Fundraising & Donations
- Committee Management

"As soon as we kicked off the implementation the team was amazing. Our Project Manager kept us on track with weekly check-ins. Everyone was amazing and really responsive. We did the implementation through holding our annual conference with 1000 delegates. The team did an excellent job at working around those blackout dates. It was not stressful at all and we finished with time to spare."

Christina Bova
Director, Member Engagement and Advocacy
CAEP

[Read the case study](#)

✓ **Users: Which (and how many) people will be using the AMS?**

With both perpetual and SaaS models, the price depends on the number of people who will be using it. So, be sure to account for how many users you will have now as well as how many you anticipate adding in the next few years.

In addition to the number of users, your staff's attitude about the AMS will impact how efficiently they'll use the AMS and how much money you'll spend over time. So, be sure to plan time and dollars for change management to ensure your users have adequate training and understand the importance of the AMS implementation and its benefits to the organization.

TIP

The NetForum team uses an implementation methodology developed to fully understand your requirements and provide your staff with the skills needed to ensure successful adoption of your new system.

TIP

NetForum offers multiple resources for customers, including a help site and product knowledgebase, various training options, a robust user community, and customer support. NetForum also builds staff training into the implementation process, with general product knowledge training to assist with requirements gathering at the beginning of the implementation, and tailored end user training at the end – making sure your team is on board and ready to go from day one.

✓ **Implementation: How will you install and configure the AMS?**

The AMS must be installed and implemented correctly to meet your needs. As you research AMS options, find out what part of the software is offered out of the box and what will need to be configured, customized, or added. Then, consider how you will staff an implementation team (internal staff, external implementation contractors, the vendor, or a combination) and the time and costs involved.

✓ Operating costs: What will it take to manage the AMS?

Sometimes known as ongoing or maintenance costs, operating costs refers to the cost of owning the system over time. It can look very different depending on the type of solution and technology you choose.

Some things to consider when it comes to operating costs:

1 Upgrade costs

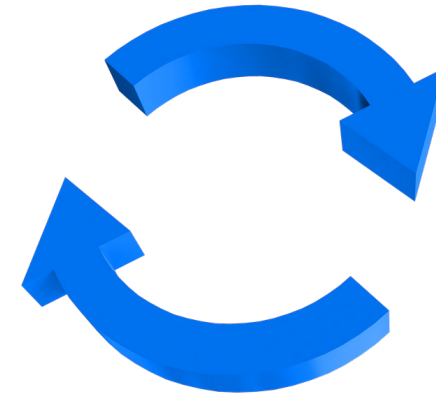
The product will need to be upgraded over time to ensure you are using the latest features and functionality. Consider if you will upgrade the AMS yourself or pay a consultant to do it for you and how often you will need to do it. In some cases, software updates are automatically delivered included as part of the cost of the system.

2 Support fees

Be sure to understand what level of customer support you receive as part of your software fees and what levels cost extra.

3 Hardware and hosting fees

Consider if your organization will host and maintain the software on your own hardware or if the AMS is hosted and maintained in the cloud by the software vendor.



TIP

The NetForum Team knows that associations need to be extra careful with their budgets and control future costs as best they can. With NetForum you'll know exactly what you're getting and at what price – with no hidden costs or charges.

✓ Lifetime value – What will the value of the AMS be over time?

While it's important to know the true cost of owning association management software over time, it's also important to consider the benefits your organization will see from the new AMS.

Be sure to list the ways any new AMS system you're considering can help you meet your organization's goals, including:

1 Boosting membership

by recruiting and retaining members more efficiently and providing a better member experience.

2 Expanding member engagement

by connecting with members in a more modern and engaging way.

3 Increasing revenue

by generating non-dues revenue through sponsorships, events, online merchandise sales, a job board, continuing education opportunities, and more.

4 Saving costs

by using a system that allows you to manage your membership data and activities more efficiently through one system.



TIP

With multiple product modules, a robust set of client configuration tools, and access to industry experts with decades of combined association and software industry experience, NetForum gives you hassle-free technology that makes it easier for you to do what you do best: help your members succeed.

See NetForum in action:

[Request a commitment-free demo today](#)

Bonus tips for keeping your AMS costs on budget

✓ Get clear on what's included with the product out-of-the-box

AMS systems vary with regard to what's included with the base product. Be sure to fully understand what features, functionality, and modules are included with the base price of the product and what will require added fees.

✓ Ask for a price estimate for all charges

It's not uncommon for associations to invest in new association management software only to be hit with additional, unexpected costs down the road. For example, a vendor might offer a lower-than-average software or per-user cost and then try to make up the fees during implementation in areas such as data migration, product integrations, training, and project management. They might also charge high prices for product upgrades and related services in the future. Avoid hidden costs by asking for a price estimate that includes all items related to the AMS.

✓ Keep your requirements list in check

Remember that the more requirements you add, the more the project scope grows. And the bigger the scope, the more time and money will be required for the implementation team to define, build, validate, and deploy each additional feature.



✓ Ask for help from the software vendor

Experienced vendors should be able to help you make smart decisions in your move to new association management software, so be sure to ask them for advice. For example, ask your vendor to help you make the right decisions when it comes to what and how much data to migrate into your new system. Minimalism with data conversion can save considerable costs in the implementation process.

Also, be ready to embrace change and have open discussions with the vendor. This approach often helps the vendor to suggest ways of accomplishing what you need in the AMS that will save you time and dollars down the road.

✓ Consider a multi-year contract

By committing to multiple years up front, you might be able to lock in pricing at the current level and ultimately gain savings in the future.

TIP

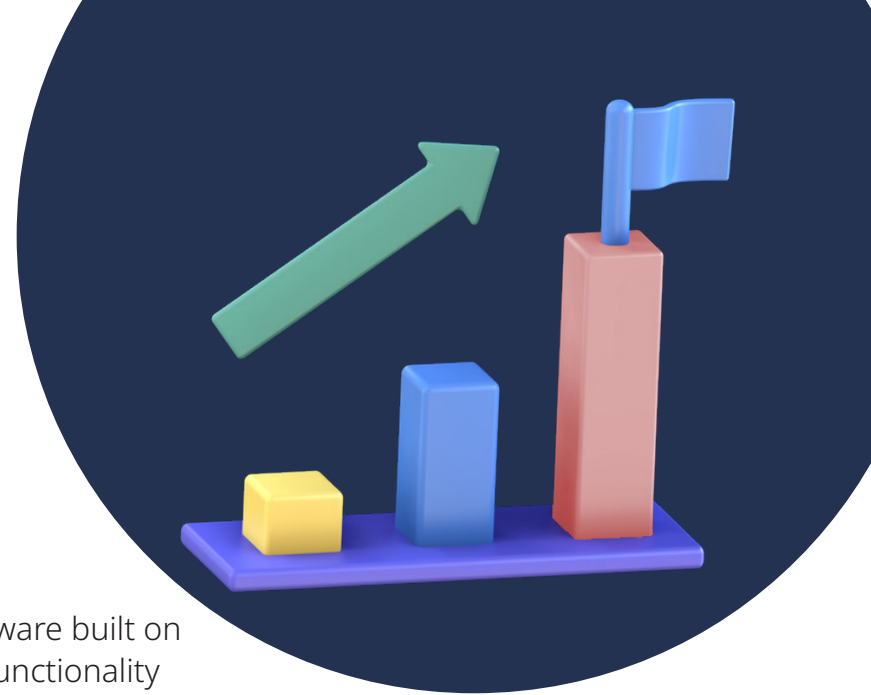
Because NetForum AMS is hosted on Microsoft Azure, you get best-in-class security, 1 TB of document storage to increase system speed, multiregional global backup disaster recovery, and 99.9 – 99.99% uptime, exceeding industry standards



Get the right AMS for your mid-to-large-sized association

Your choice of AMS is instrumental in the success of your organization. Be sure to invest in modern technology to deliver the experience your members expect, while working within your budget.

NetForum by Community Brands is robust association management software built on Microsoft Azure for mid-to-large-sized organizations. It offers extensive functionality to help you maximize revenue, save staff time, and delight members – without technical complexities. It also integrates with Community Brands solutions for learning management, career center, events, fundraising, and fund accounting. The products work together to help your team operate efficiently and effectively, while driving membership growth, engagement, and revenue, as well as enhancing member value.



Learn how NetForum can help your organization move forward.

[Request pricing](#)

[See all features](#)



NetForumAMS.com