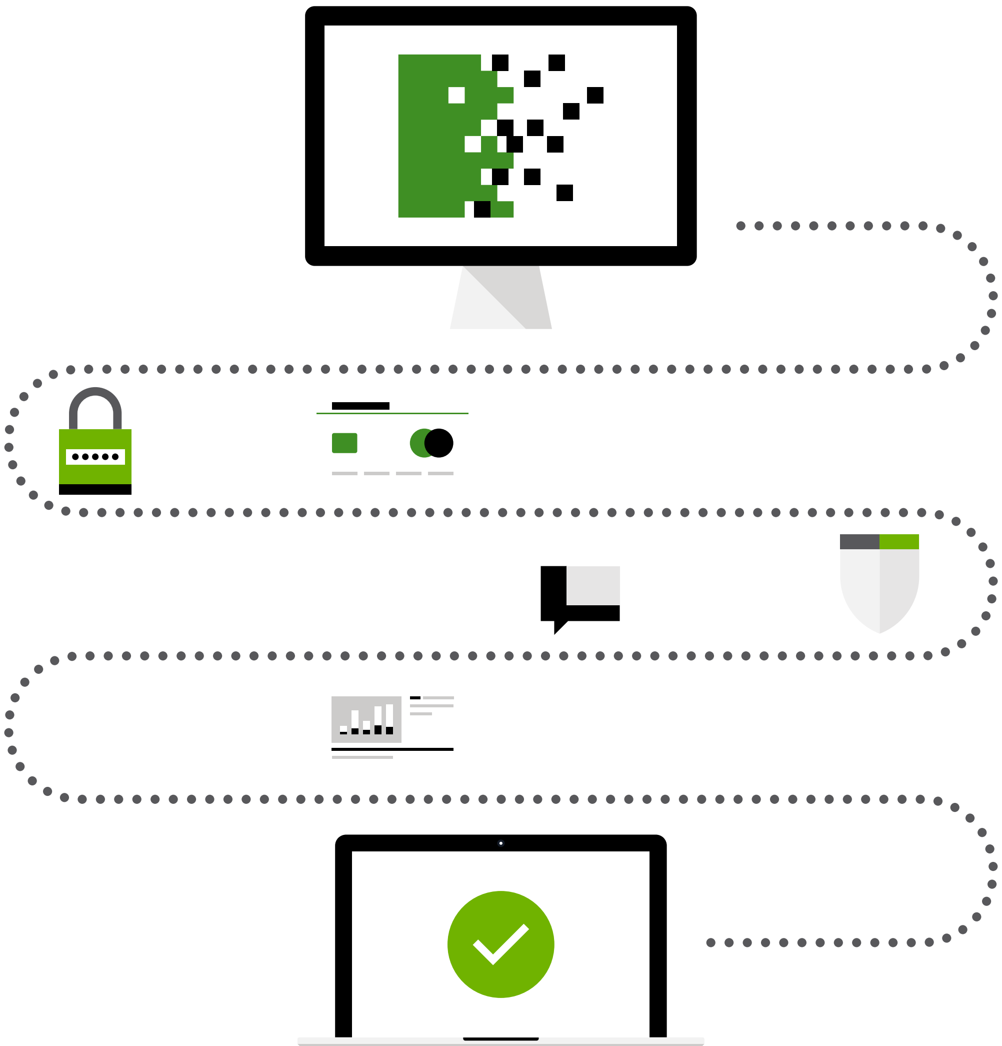
DATA THAT CHANGES THE WORLD

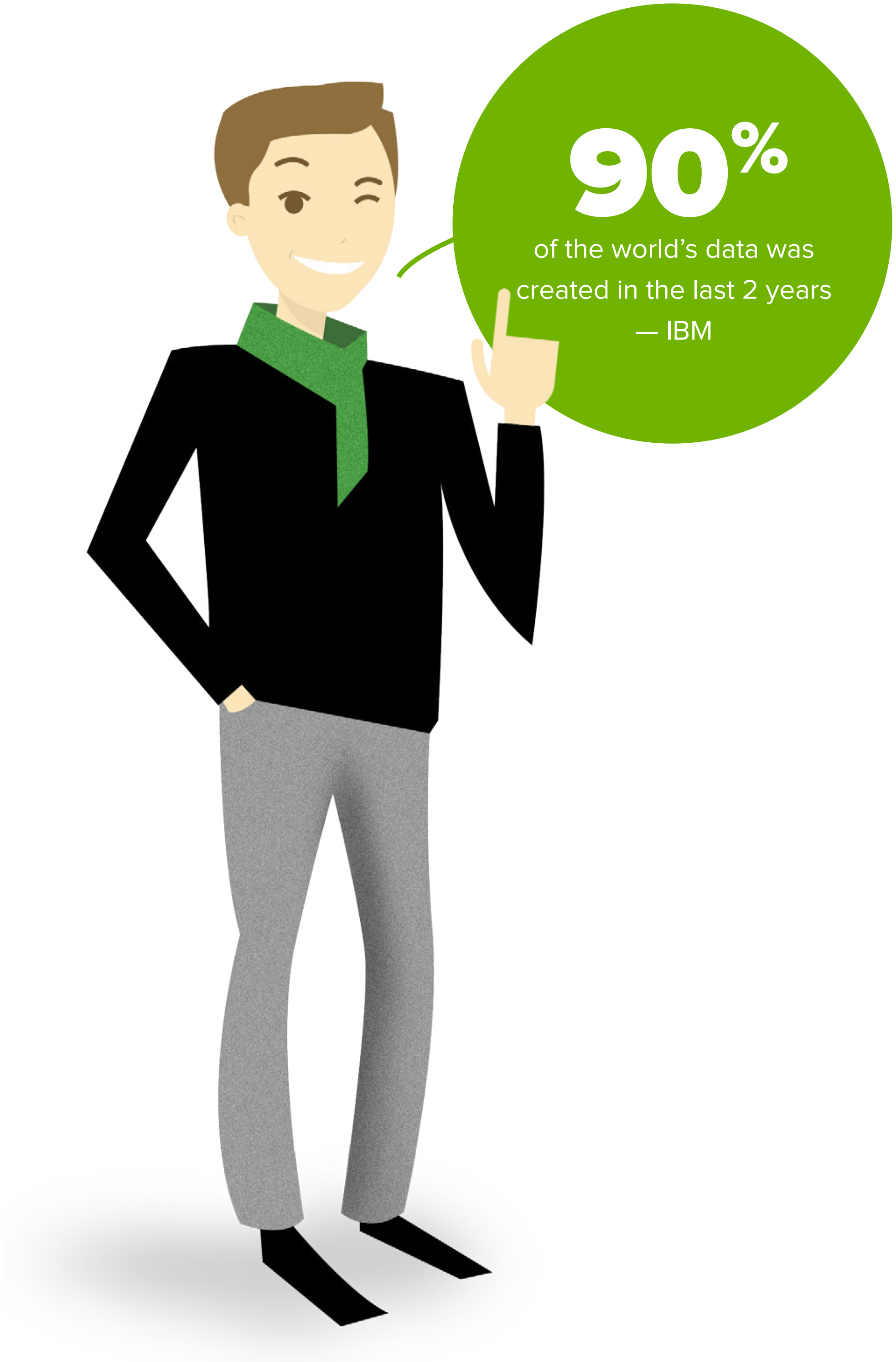
YOUR GUIDE TO BUILDING, MAINTAINING & LEVERAGING AN EFFECTIVE NONPROFIT DATABASE

bloomerang



Build a Powerful Database

You want to make a difference. A big difference. However, to make that happen, you need to energize your existing donors and volunteers around your nonprofit organization's mission — every single day. And, of course, you must regularly generate funds and attract new donors. You can achieve all that by building a database that empowers you to develop better relationships, set realistic goals, deliver clearer reports, and execute great strategies. Ready? It's time to get to work on an effective nonprofit data management plan so you can get on with the business of making the world a better place.



The Big Picture: Database Essentials

There's so much data in the world (IBM is now measuring it in exabytes) that it's easy to neglect the task of managing all the data coming your way. By staying focused on three essential steps in the data management process, you can effectively use it to strengthen your organization and, as a result, make an impact in achieving its mission.

Collect it. Gather data that is relevant to your donors, your organization, and its mission.

Maintain it. Establish a routine to keep data updated and fresh. Regularly seek out new types of data that may improve your reporting.

Use it. With all that great data, you can develop short-term and long-term strategies, improve donor communications, accurately and quickly report successes and setbacks, and motivate your team toward your mission.

What's Working? What's Not?

An Internal Assessment

Before embarking on any data management task, whether it's simply cleaning out old information, migrating your database, or giving it a major overhaul, it's important to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your current database management process. Invite several team members for input to make sure you're getting the big picture. While every nonprofit organization is different, this list of questions can guide you to a conversation about areas in your current data management process that may require improvements. Encourage candid conversations and take plenty of notes!

Data Gathering

- ☐ Is the current data we're gathering relevant?
- ☐ Is our data outdated?
- ☐ Are we sure that the data is accurate?
- ☐ How is the data being used?
- ☐ How often is it being used?
- ☐ Should we be gathering more data?
- ☐ Is there any data that we are missing?

Reporting

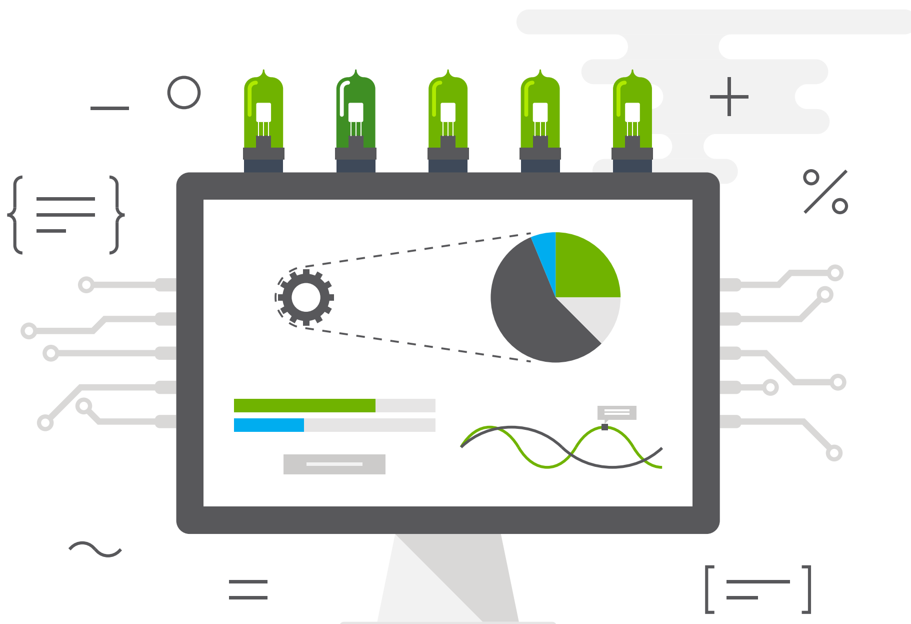
- ☐ How easy is it to access data reports?
- ☐ Are we interpreting the data correctly?
- ☐ What do our reports reflect? (donor retention, donor engagement?)

Data Management

- ☐ Who is accessing the data? How often?
- ☐ Who should be responsible for data management?
- ☐ Do we have a policy on data management?
- ☐ What is our process for analyzing and reporting data?
- ☐ Could we be using the data more effectively? How?
- ☐ How effective have we been in using data to make decisions on strategies, outreach, and accomplishing our mission?

Collecting Data That Matters

While collecting the data for your constituent profiles, the more the better. Some data points may be more ideal for one nonprofit than others. However, the more data you have on your supporters, the better you can appeal and steward them.



Demographics, Contact Info, Giving and Interactions

Some data points you may want to consider collecting and tracking include:

Demographics

Age
Gender
Marital status
Household income
Interests
Occupation

Contact Info

Address
Phone number
Email address
Social media profiles

Giving

Cost of acquisition
Pledges
Lifetime value
Cash/check vs. direct withdrawal
Gift amount
Frequency of giving
Patterns in giving
Number of years as a donor
Upgrades
Downgrades

Interactions

Soft credits
Volunteer activity
Event attendance
Email open rates
Email clicks
Website visits
Direct mail response rate
Board memberships
Follower on social media

Setting SMART goals

You can't reach your destination without a roadmap, without direction. That means setting goals, but not just any goals. You want SMART goals. As you may already know, SMART is the framework many companies use to set effective goals. But sometimes we need to be reminded of what it takes to develop goals and, as a result, incredible strategies that deliver results for your nonprofit organization. After analyzing the state of your nonprofit and collecting relevant data, develop goals using the following SMART system:

Specific – What are your specific goals? Clearly define the goals your nonprofit organization wants to accomplish both on a short-term and long-term basis.

Measurable – Just as you clearly defined your goals, develop a standard for clearly measuring them.

Attainable – Are your goals for your organization realistic? Can you actually attain them? If your organization has 500 supporters, for example, getting to 150,000 supporters by the end of the year may not be attainable.

Relevant – Just as important as it is for you to identify attainable goals, you should set goals that are relevant to your organization. Choose those that make sense for your nonprofit organization.

Time-bound – When do you want to accomplish your goals? Set a deadline so that you're accomplishing your goals within a certain timeframe.

Your Data Entry Checklist

An effective data management strategy requires regular maintenance. If you're not setting and accomplishing tasks on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis, it's unlikely you'll be able to generate the reports that will dictate your future strategies. Use this checklist as a reminder of the exercises you should be doing regularly. Keep at it and you'll find that they will become second nature.

Getting started

Many donor databases fail to reach their true potential simply because there is no defined process for data entry. Documenting and sticking to one universal process will ensure that all data is formatted consistently, and will protect your fundraising efforts in the event of staff turnover.

- [ ] Store your data in one place: Avoid multiple spreadsheets or multiple programs (accounting, email, donor database, etc.)

- [ ] Develop standard format and naming conventions for data entry.
  Example: Will we spell out Street or just use St.?
  Example: Will we use a five-digit zip code or a nine-digit zip code?

- [ ] Develop standard guidelines for data entry.
  Example: We will run a search prior to data entry in order to avoid duplicates.
  Example: Only Sally and Jim will enter data (having more than one data entry person is a good idea, but having too many can cause problems).

- [ ] Have a plan for exceptions (there will always be some).
- [ ] Define optional custom fields and adhere to them:
  Delete/merge any duplicate or closely-related field.
- [ ] Train your staff on all the standards that you have created.
- [ ] Schedule regularly occurring reviews of data and procedures.
- [ ] Create donor segments. Develop several donor categories based on factors that can include:
  Frequency of giving
  Method of giving (event, online, direct mail, etc.)
  Number of years as a donor
  Active volunteers?
  Event attendees?
  Social media followers?
  Level of interaction (i.e. email opens, click links in emails)

Your Data Management Checklist

Because organizations evolve as they grow, it's important to re-examine your processes every once in a while (at least annually). You may have an obsolete procedure, or find that there's a slightly better way to do something. Don't be afraid to change if it increases your productivity!

Daily/weekly

- ☐ Enter new data (as needed).
- ☐ Update existing data (as needed): Don't wait to update data if you get a change of address, name, marital status, employer, etc.
- ☐ Back up your data: Some database programs do this automatically, some do not.

Every month

- ☐ Identify and merge any duplicate records.
- ☐ Run reports to keep team members updated.
- ☐ Review fund/campaign activity.
- ☐ Review rolling LYBUNT / SYBUNT.
- ☐ Review overdue pledges.
- ☐ Review your data against your goals.

Every 3 to 6 months

- ☐ Invest in advanced data services, if necessary: Consider phone append (reverse), email append (reverse), birth date append, name append and deceased suppression processing.
- ☐ Revisit your strategic plan. Don't wait until the end of the year to determine if you're hitting your goals. If it's not performing to your expectations, you can make tweaks or changes to ensure that your campaign is a success by year's end.

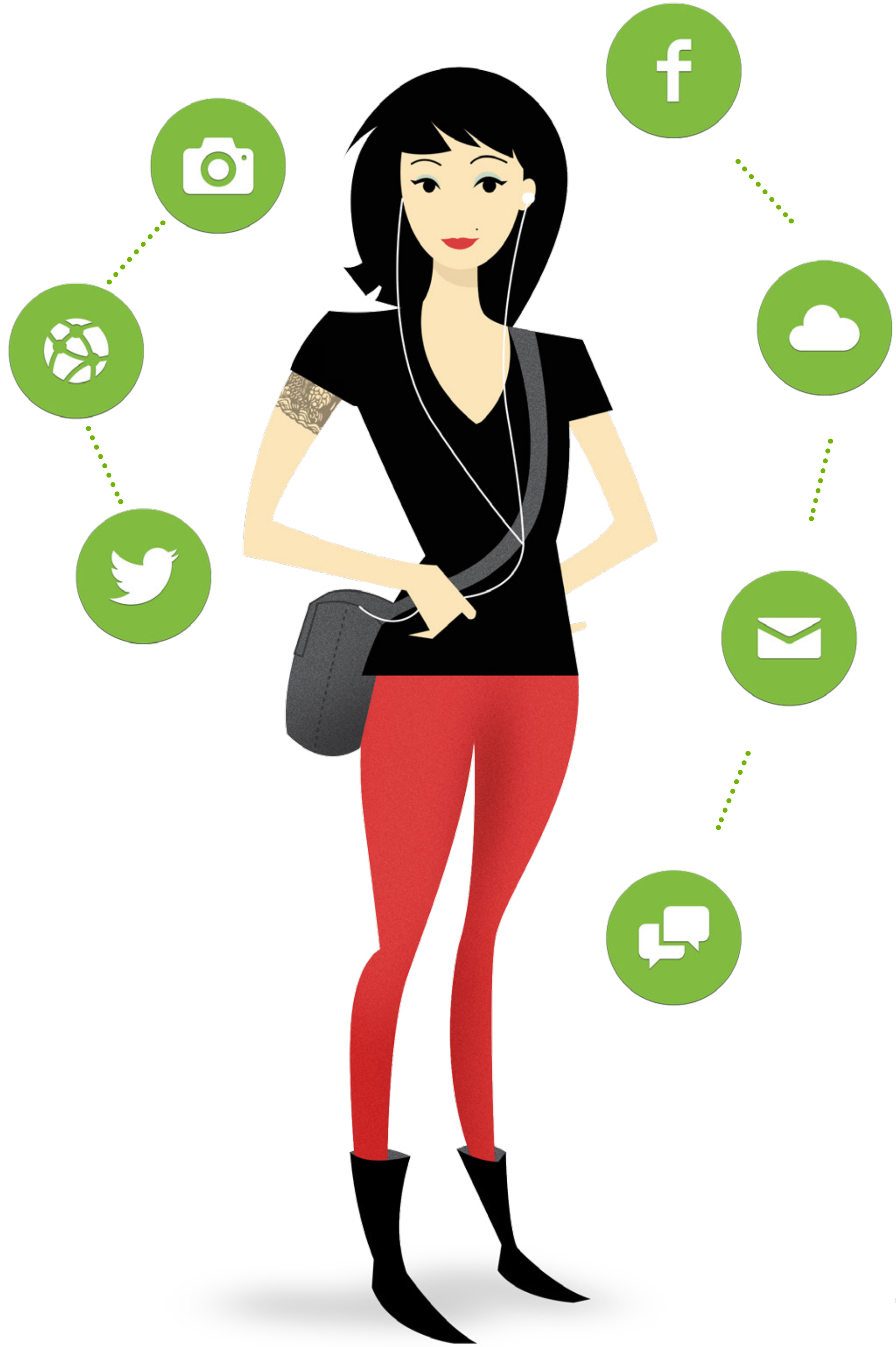
Every 12 months

- ☐ Run an NCOA. A whopping 17% of Americans move each year — don't miss out!
- ☐ Purge your donor list. If you're like the average nonprofit organization, around 88 percent of your donations are generated by about 12 percent of those on your donor list. Don't waste efforts on those who are not engaged. Remove the names of people who have not donated to your cause in two to three years, except former volunteers and board members.
- ☐ Develop an in-depth report for your donors to show them how their donations are making an impact.
- ☐ Check businesses on your donor list to see if contact information needs to be updated.
- ☐ Review and update the organization's data management policy. If you don't have one, develop guidelines to ensure that the data gathering, entry and maintenance process is consistent no matter who is handling the task.
- ☐ Train your staff on any updates with your donor management software to ensure that it's being used effectively.

Conclusion

By properly establishing and maintaining an effective database, you're able to set the foundation your organization needs to accomplish its mission. It gives you the right tools to develop insightful reports, powerful strategies, and impactful messages for your donors. And that's just what your organization needs to keep making the world a better place!

Click here to find out how Bloomerang can help you manage your donor data.



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