Sage Fundraising 50 Helps Christians "Experience True Mission in Life"

When Chris Clum founded Experience Mission, he was determined to create an infrastructure that would serve the nonprofit for decades to come.

"Many organizations start on a shoestring, and end up with an ad-hoc structure that is very hard to dismantle," he explains. "I took a good, hard look at our strategic direction, and knew the right software system could make or break us. We are a Web-based nonprofit, and our constituents donate, participate, and communicate with us online. So it was essential to have solutions that can easily manage Internet data entry into our back-office functions, which we found in the Sage Nonprofit solutions."

Web-Based Mission Opportunities

Clum dreams big about both software and organizations. A 20-year veteran of worldwide volunteer programs, he noticed the growing popularity of short-term missions. "From 1984 to 2001, the number of Americans going on one and two-week mission trips rose from 50,000 to 4 million," he says. "And although people have truly good intentions, it's typically the volunteers who gain the most from these trips. I wanted to create a new model to double the impact of visits, so that volunteers would be part of something bigger, and provide impoverished communities with ongoing access to resources."

The result was Experience Mission, an online connection between volunteers and communities. Experience Mission carefully selects partner communities in needy areas, and then sets up Internet centers there. Volunteers learn about the communities and sign up for missions online. Then they spend a week or two working and forming faith-based relationships with community members—relationships that are maintained afterwards through e-mail, pictures, audio and video clips. Experience Mission currently has partnerships with villages in Mexico, Jamaica, Appalachia, and on a Navajo reservation, and plans to expand to several new communities in the coming years.

CUSTOMER
Experience Mission, Inc.

INDUSTRY
Nonprofit
Human Services

LOCATION
Port Hadlock, Washington
Number of Locations: One
Number of Employees: Three

SYSTEM
Sage MIP Fund Accounting
Sage Fundraising 50

Challenge
Set up a new Web-based nonprofit organization with infrastructure for the future, including fully integrated online data entry, contact management, fund accounting, and fundraising management processes.

Solution
Sage MIP Fund Accounting for financial backbone, with Sage Fundraising 50 for constituent management and administration to support data capture from Web entries.

Results
Staff of three now services high growth organization through technology-based efficiencies, saving hundreds of hours of office work and tens of thousands of dollars in expenses every year.

Technology Makes the Mission

Since the organization's founding, Sage Nonprofit solutions have enabled Experience Mission to do its work. "Most nonprofits enter data at least twice; once into a contact management system and then again into the accounting system," says Clum. "We don't do it at all. We built a Web front-end that allows data entered online to be delivered to Sage Fundraising 50 for contact management, and to Sage MIP Fund Accounting for financial tracking. Unless someone sends us a check or paper form, we don't have to do a thing. In fact, in our first eight months, we raised $200,000 without hardly a single keystroke. Sage Fundraising 50 and Sage MIP Fund Accounting are saving us hundreds of hours of office work and tens of thousands of dollars a year on extra staff."

Using Sage Fundraising 50, Experience Mission can manage reservation dates for individual or group missions. They can track installment payments for an upcoming mission. When friends and family members contribute support, their donations can be linked to the same cause. "If Susan goes on a mission to Catadupa, Jamaica, Sage Fundraising 50 will tell us that five different people donated $50 each to help her," says Clum. "Those donors' profiles remain in our database for future reference, and we can easily produce additional communications as well as reports for tax purposes."

Better Stewardship

The success of Clum's efforts has been overwhelming. "It's amazing that we could start a Web site in a basement in Minnesota, and have as many as 40,000 people visit it in a single year," Clum notes. "All our programs for the second year filled within weeks of being offered."

To what does Clum attribute the positive response? "A big differentiating factor, I believe, is our use of technology to its fullest advantage," he says. "Internet technology allows us to connect people to other people quickly and at a low cost. And technology like Sage Nonprofit solutions allows us to be good stewards, stretching donors' dollars as far as possible."

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—Chris Clum
Executive Director

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