

# 9 QUESTIONS TO ASK RECREATION MANAGEMENT PROVIDERS

Navigating the software journey is a little easier when you know what to ask.



In software evaluation, there are so many solutions with different feature sets, it can be hard to compare apples to apples. On top of that, software discernment can be complicated by competitors' marketing messages and questionable practices, which can lead to customers buying the wrong software for their needs. All of this creates static in the communication channels, making it difficult for you to sort through the information. We believe that quieting the noise and confusion and confidently making the right decisions begins with asking the right questions of every vendor you're considering.

### 1. How long have you been serving Parks & Rec organizations?

Choosing a recreation management software partner is a long term commitment, so it's important that you assess how much of the vendor's experience relates specifically to your needs—currently and in the future.

If Parks & Recs have not been a primary focus, you may be enticed into using solutions not meant for or proven in your market, or not being supported with continuous improvement.

### 2. How many similar-sized Parks & Recs are you currently serving?

Experience in a specific market can vary not only by length of time, but by scope and size of the organizations served. Every organization is unique, but shares some similarities. Has the vendor implemented and supported other organizations like yours? How many? What percentage of the vendor's current business is represented by Parks & Recs?

### 3. Can you provide specific implementation timelines for other Parks & Recs of similar size?

Experience is invaluable when it comes to onboarding new customers. Vendors who have implemented many customers will know the typical ins and outs Parks & Recs face before Go-Live. Projected timelines will be based on that actual data, not simply on guesstimates, and the implementation process will have become streamlined to accommodate and overcome expected challenges.

### 4. How long have your support team members been helping teams of this size?

Support after the sale is critical to software success. Ask the vendor to disclose the actual amount of Parks & Rec software support experience the support staff and other teams have with organizations like yours.



### 5. Is all promised functionality market-ready?

In the rush to stay competitive, some vendors promote new functionality they're working on as market-ready. This can leave you waiting indefinitely for a critical feature you expected. Ask for references of similarly sized Parks & Rec departments using that functionality right now.

### 6. Is your solution PCI Level 1-Compliant?

PCI Level 1 Compliance means an organization voluntarily met an exemplary standard for passing an exhaustive, external audit for security of payment processing. This compliance level provides the best security possible. What level has the vendor attained?

### 7. Tell me about your datacenter(s) and the level of security you could provide for my data and my customers' data.

Every vendor should be able to easily answer these questions—and more: Is the vendor large enough to qualify for top-tier data protocols? Is your data stored in a private or public Cloud? What is the software's history of downtime (planned and unplanned) per year? Who owns the data infrastructure – the vendor or a third party? What is the certified level of data redundancy?

## 8. Can you provide data and demonstrate the proven success your existing Parks & Recs customers are experiencing as a result of your software?

This is where the rubber meets the road, where the success of the software is validated. Ask for published case studies around different aspects of the software, including revenue growth, participation growth, customer feedback, reduced administration, IT savings, and ease of staff training.

Can the solution grow with you? The vendor should also be able to produce data showing its scalability, such as with successful rush events it has managed.

## 9. Beyond expected features of a management solution, what additional resources and functionality do you offer that supports our organization's goals?

Your software decision needs to be based on more than a list of features and functionality. How is the vendor going to be your partner in solving your business needs? What sets their software and company apart from the competition? For example, does the vendor offer:

- + A consultative business partnership
- + 24/7 Learning/Help Center with guides, release notes, and video tutorials and smart search logic
- + Dedicated, free digital marketing experts with Google Analytics and other certifications
- + Integration with online recreation marketplaces to increase exposure to your programs
- + Advanced reporting and business intelligence
- + Online learning management system for onboarding and seasonal training
- + Yearly customer meetings or roadshows
- + Customer-led user groups

## Ask...and You Will Receive

Asking every vendor the same questions is the best way to understand the sometimes vast differences in vendors and their solutions.

Think beyond the features you need to solve specific issues you're facing. Consider scalability, security, reliability and the power of the technology. Factor in the vendor's reputation, experience, strength and breadth of services. And, finally, understand the total cost of ownership and the value of a comprehensive solution.

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