

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is smiling warmly at a man with short brown hair wearing a light blue button-down shirt. They are sitting at a table in what appears to be a cafe or office breakroom. In the background, there is a counter with coffee-making equipment and a clock on the wall. A laptop is open on the table in front of the woman.

# How Nonprofits Are Solving Big Challenges With Cloud Technology



# Technology: Symptom and Solution

As the world grows ever-more complex, technology has proved itself not only a symptom of that complexity but also a key solution to it. How often have you felt left behind because you don't have the technology other nonprofits are leveraging?

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We all know how challenges come from all sides at nonprofits. From regulatory compliance to recruitment and retention to revenue growth, leaders at nonprofit organizations face a high-stress environment. However, you got into this field because you care about the mission. It's the reason your nonprofit exists, and it's pretty high among the reasons you stick around.

But no matter how rewarding your job is, these challenges keep stacking up and will only become more pressing as your organization continues to grow.

## The Top Challenges

Managing a growing nonprofit requires a lot of effort — often for little pay. Whether it's regulations, revenues, staffing challenges or member recruitment, nonprofits face a multitude of challenges that uniquely present themselves to each organization differently. For example, many nonprofits are challenged by tax reform's impact on finding revenue sources.

A recent Wipfli report sought to discover the most pressing challenges nonprofit organizations face — and thus where there are opportunities for growth. This report, **the Nonprofit Financial Priorities Benchmark Report**, surveyed more than 350 nonprofit leaders and found that from regulatory compliance to managing growth, the landscape is more challenging than ever.

Knowing this, there are many ways that nonprofits can tackle these challenges — enhancing compliance, improving employee relationships and positioning themselves for more funding opportunities. But the biggest opportunity may lie in technology. We'll explore how investing in technology can reduce the pain that goes into running a successful nonprofit, laying the groundwork for a stronger future.

## Cloud Technology Answers the Call

When nonprofits think of their technology stack, often one of two things comes to mind: 1) a disparate stack of tools and spreadsheets that miraculously work together or 2) a system of applications that has been around for longer than you have been at the organization.

However, these applications are holding your nonprofit back. Many nonprofits like yours are finding that cloud technologies are one key step towards comfortable growth, largely due to these three big cloud benefits:

### 1. Full Utilization of Resources

Resource management at nonprofits is an ongoing issue. Donors and grantors expect you to use money in a way that positively impacts the mission. Budgets are tight and the decision to make an investment in technology is a hard sell.

If technology investments are hard sells at your organization, consider what you are “saving” if you keep using your current solution. Whether your current software is outdated or undersized, any cost savings are often lost in the form of decreased productivity and visibility.

Worse, with employee retention and recruitment among the top challenges at nonprofits, manual processes and outdated applications may be among the top reasons your people leave. Employees want to feel valued, and if most of their time is spent laboring away hand-calculating the numbers, they aren't going to feel like they're truly making a difference. Harder yet, as your organization grows, they will continue spending more and more time on the basics as they edge their way out the door.

Cloud technology brings organizations more power for less cost. By automating processes, the technology allows employees to refocus their efforts on achieving the mission, giving them an increased sense of value within your organization. Plus, with advanced reporting, you can better understand and communicate your nonprofit's outcomes faster and more accurately.



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## Client Profile

The Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA) is the leading trade association for global investment bankers, broker dealers and asset managers. The organization advocates on legislation, regulation and business policy on behalf of the industry's nearly one million employees. SIFMA has merged with multiple advocacy organizations during its rich 100-year history and is based in New York and Washington D.C.

## SUCCESS STORY: Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA)

### The Situation:

SIFMA's finance team relied on an outdated, on-premises version of Microsoft Dynamics SL to manage the organization's complex financial processes. Reporting was clunky and difficult, the software offered poor remote capabilities and information could not be released until the books were completely closed out. This created a long lag before managers could get actionable financial information, by which time it was often outdated and unreliable for decision-making purposes.

SIFMA wanted to move to a modern, multi-entity, cloud-based software solution. Impressed by its innovation, growth potential and flexibility, the group chose Sage Intacct and selected Wipfli to help make the transition.

### The Strategy:

Wipfli brought deep knowledge of both nonprofit organizations and cloud technology to the project. The team implemented Sage Intacct while helping SIFMA's finance group successfully overhaul manual workflows. The many changes and improvements included:

- Integrating Sage Intacct with other best-in-class tools, including Stamplicy for accounts payable automation, Concur for employee expenses and Vena Solutions for financial reporting.
- Creating a "one-stop shop" whereby all SIFMA's financial processes flow through Sage Intacct.
- Using process automation and intuitive workflows to allow managers to see approvals via dashboards and view vendor payments and other key transactions.
- Facilitating a paperless environment with backup documentation for auditors.
- Enabling remote access and the ability to hire on-the-ground resources anywhere.

### The Results:

Sophie Usasz, Managing Director, Finance at SIFMA, says, "Wipfli helped us make a complete finance transformation and made our financial performance more transparent across the organization. Coupled with the team's deep industry knowledge and experience, we now have the tools and resources we need to improve productivity and make stronger long-term business decisions."

Eliminating obsolete financial processes has created big efficiency gains while freeing up the organization's resources – in fact, SIFMA has cut accounts payable processing by 50%. That valuable time is now spent building real-time dashboards, expanding reporting and improving month-end close, resulting in improved budget management and faster decision-making to enhance the overall organization. Stakeholders throughout SIFMA are now harnessing the power of real-time information to drive the organization's long-term strategy and growth.

## 2. Stability and Predictability

If one thing is constant in the nonprofit landscape, it's an ongoing lack of certainty that exists. Funding sources could dry up, employees could leave and the regulatory landscape could change. With all of this uncertainty, the cloud brings stability and predictability to customers who use software as a service (SaaS) applications.

Rather than being cornered into capital expenses from the start, lifetime licenses that may or may not get used and dealing with hidden costs that come with managing an internal IT environment, cloud applications offer a predictable pricing environment. An annual charge, often priced per user, is much easier to predict. Better yet, you get control over how many users you pay for and can change this as needed, bringing us to the third reason nonprofits benefit from the cloud.

## 3. Freedom and Flexibility

Stable pricing and knowing your costs is one thing – controlling how much you pay based on what you need is another. As mentioned, the cloud offers a straightforward pricing model. No longer do you have to plan and buy server capacity for predicted growth. You don't need to buy perpetual licenses for these needs either.

Built on an annual pricing model, the cloud allows you to add or remove users when and where you need to do so and get pricing to match. Pay for what you need – no more, no less. With this flexibility in tow, you can focus your efforts and assets on your outcomes and not on unused technology.

**“Today's cloud applications bring you closer to your goals with less risk and more reward.”**

## Changing the Status Quo

Traditionally, nonprofits are much less aggressive at seeking out new technology. There's less room for error in decision-making, more scrutiny over records and books and a greater need to prove your efforts have a positive effect on your mission. In other words, you want to make sure your ROI is worth it.

Cloud applications for nonprofits have spent the past two decades evolving, answering the needs and addressing the challenges of growing organizations, offering proven technology and better functionality alongside predictable pricing. Today's cloud applications for nonprofit organizations bring you closer to your goals with less risk and more reward.

Looking for greater efficiency, better employee retention and sustainable growth? Wipfli's team of experienced nonprofit technology consultants can help you determine what the best technology solution for your nonprofit is.

**Contact us** for a complimentary software needs assessment.