

Buying a Database: Assessing What You Need

Evaluate Software Packages

The goal of this process is to demonstrate and review a variety of database packages and to evaluate whether any software package will meet your organization's criteria, as identified in your database plan.

1. Review /Demo Database Software Packages / Programs

Have technology team (decision-makers & future users) review the most appropriate databases. In order to complete this task you will need:

- *Demo Disks* (request that the distributor provide you with a copy and support documentation)
- The *Software Assessment Checklist* (below)
- Your completed database plan

2. Determine Which Database You Will Use

- Get agreement on the software you want from all individuals of the technology team
- Identify whether you will buy or build your database
- Identify the cost of the database, including software, hardware, staffing, development and training
- Develop a schedule for completing this project

3. Software Assessment

Here are some basic criteria to explore prior to making the final decision on your database. At minimum the database you consider should have the following attributes:

Yes	No	Criteria
		It allows you to sort and view information in a variety of ways.
		It can work with the computers you have (Operating System, RAM, large enough hard drive, etc).
		It can import and export data to and from the most-used software packages for both P.C.s and Macintosh computers (FileMaker Pro, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel, etc.). That means that at the very least, it can export data as d-base or text.
		Staff who will be using the software feel it is easy to learn and use.
		Has database overview, sample database structures and documentation on how to use.
		It allows staff to change existing view screens, and even create new ones (users should be able to change what information they see on screens as needed).
		It allows the user to change, add, or delete fields of information.
		It can be networked (people can access the information from more than one computer, if the computers are networked).
		It allows the database point person to set up security measures (i.e. limited access, limited ability to modify the database, etc).
		It has relational capabilities. (Adding a record to a portion of the database will add the same record to ALL other areas of the database where appropriate, and vice-versa).
		Staff can generate personalized reports, letters and mailings.