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# Choosing the right client-management package

**A good package will save you time and keep an up to date history of all client contact**

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BY David Edey

*Technology is the key to getting a handle on your client relationships.* That's the view of David Stevenson, president of PowerAssist Technologies Ltd. of Vancouver and Waterdown, Ont. He says a successful advisor needs a contact-management database in order to be effective and profitable.

Stevenson, a consultant in automated portfolio- and client-management solutions, says at the very least a good package will save you the time it takes to keep re-entering client data. Basic information – names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses – once entered into a good package, will form the basis of an up-to-date history of contact with the client.

This means you'll always have current and accurate information on clients, which can easily be tied to other aspects of client contact, such as the calendar for booking appointments and making and recording phone calls, as well as tasks performed within the office on a client's behalf. A good client management system will automatically log all these activities and the contact you have with each client.

As the business grows, Stevenson says, it becomes even more important for advisors to set up processes within the contact-management system. At this point, advisors should be concerned about managing the business – from client contact and marketing to investment management.

The information that should be kept on the contact-management system will depend on the stage the advisor has reached in his or her business cycle. If the advisor is just starting out, basic contact information is important, along with classifying the client by segmentation and investment strategy. With this information, the advisor will have a better idea of who the clients are, where they are and how to contact them.

As advisors advance in their businesses and their needs change, the software package should be able to grow easily with the business. Later, advisors may want to track more detailed information such as individual interests and clients' hobbies. •

Quick access to this kind of information can help in making conversation with clients, not to mention in deciding who to invite to special events. For example, if they want to hold a golf tournament, they can find out right away from the client-management system, which clients like to golf.

Of course, the system will also be useful in monitoring portfolio management. It can help track information such as how much each client has invested and in what. So the contact information already set up in the program helps not only the marketing and relationship-management process but also the portfolio-management process.

But before running out to buy just any client-management package, Stevenson cautions, there are a few pitfalls of which advisors should be aware:

• *Be leery of consultants or software providers who say their packages will address all your needs.* Many advisors have spent thousands of dollars purchasing software, thinking a package was the total solution, when in fact it was nothing more than a good marketing idea.

• *Make sure systems are compatible.* Stevenson believes the creation of one total solution should not be the ultimate objective of software designers. Instead, a more important issue should be whether systems are able to communicate with one another.

• *Make sure the technology matches your current needs – and make sure you know what those are.* Do you need to track prospects? Do you need to help manage growth? Do you need to help manage clients? Do you need client management or portfolio management?

• *Choose the right software consultant*. If you decide to work with a software consultant, look for one who has an understanding of this industry. A consultant who doesn't understand your business can't match you up with the best solution.

• *Think past today*. Another common pitfall is buying for today instead of thinking about the future. Make sure the technology you are using can grow with you. Some cheap software solutions may meet your current needs but won't be able to retrieve the information later on.

• *Don't do it yourself*. Many advisors try to do the technology enhancement, selection and installation on their own – another common mistake. Some advisors spend hours trying to make a program work when they should be dealing with their clients.

*Technology should not be difficult. If it is, you should re-evaluate both your software and your software consultant.*

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