

How to choose the right CRM – Q&A answers

1. Which CRM would you recommend for a small arts organisation? We need to have someone we can talk to and get support from when we encounter issues.

Simple and low cost, often for small teams or early-stage CRM adoption:

- CiviCRM: Open-source, flexible, not arts-specific but widely used, especially in charities. Good if you want control and predictable costs.

- HubSpot CRM Free/Starter. Easy to set up and ideal for basic contact management if your ticketing is handled elsewhere.

For arts organisations with fundraising, events, mailing lists and audience development workflows:

- Beacon. Modern, charity-focused CRM with strong usability. Works well for fundraising, memberships, and general audience engagement.

- Donorfy. Widely used in UK charities. Supports fundraising workflows, campaigns, and integrations. Good for organisations where donor management sits alongside audience communications.

- GoodCRM. Designed for arts and cultural organisations, including venues, festivals, and producing companies. Offers event tools, marketing, donor management, and customer service functions.

- CiviCRM with extended configuration. Suitable for organisations that want a more customised system without record-based pricing.

Full Feature - integrated ticketing, CRM, marketing and fundraising in one place

- Spektrix. Used by many small and mid-sized arts organisations across the UK. Combines ticketing, CRM, fundraising and marketing tools. Strong support and suitable for both current and future growth.

- Tessitura. Enterprise-scale system for performing arts centres, museums, orchestras and larger cultural organisations. Combines ticketing, CRM,

fundraising, memberships, admissions and advanced reporting in a single ecosystem.

- 2. Hi, we transferred to Donorfy a few years ago at quite a considerable cost in terms of both money and staff training time. They have since continually changed pricing strategies and now we are limited to just 500 constituents otherwise it doubles in monthly cost to nearly £100 a month, which for our micro charity is steep! So now we are trying to keep under 500 records which renders it almost useless. Any advice regarding not falling into this pitfall again?**

To prevent similar issues, ask vendors for written explanations of pricing models and what triggers cost increases. Confirm whether archived or inactive contacts count toward limits. Request a three-year cost projection based on a realistic growth. Systems that rely on hosting-based or usage-agnostic pricing can offer greater long-term stability.

- 3. How many staff members do you recommend participate in the demo phase?**

A small organisation normally needs one primary CRM lead, one decision-maker, and optionally one additional stakeholder from other departments such as marketing, fundraising, or ticketing. Invite the people who you would need to champion the system, so they can see firsthand the capabilities and point out any flaws that may affect their area specifically.

- 4. Second Q - a pro bono partner creative agency offered to support us with CRM integration if and when we make the transition - is this something you think would be necessary or useful?**

This can be very useful if the agency has experience with CRM systems, arts workflows, or integrations involving ticketing, email, or donation systems. They can save considerable setup time. If they do not have prior CRM experience, their input may be limited, so it is worth confirming their capabilities early.

- 5. Is there anywhere we can start looking for CRMs, a link, database? As well as a 1:1**

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6. What is your view on third-party integration support?

Third-party integration partners are useful when you have multiple systems such as ticketing, email marketing, forms, fundraising, and accounting. They help ensure data moves reliably and automatically. I would always recommend that you look for a CRM that integrates with your third-party systems out-of-the-box, it ensures that all the connections will work properly and won't require additional development, which can increase costs.

7. How viable are the free and open-source systems like CiviCRM and Twenty as a way of having longer term control and fewer constraints? Obviously, there are still hosting and tech costs.

They are viable as long as you have access to technical support. You gain flexibility, predictable costs, and control over your data, but you will need hosting, occasional upgrades, and some technical support hours. Make sure you are able to dedicate the needed time and resources to self-hosting.

8. Is it better to pick the best tools and integrate them or look for a whole solution (as possible) so you can reduce your tech stack?

I always recommend to keep as much within the same system as possible when it comes to CRM, finding a system that can do your ticketing, fundraising and donations will allow for smooth overlap of data and a more cohesive look at your audience, sometimes it's not possible and there are great tools out there that all work together extremely well, but for usability, reduce as many of those bridges as possible.