

Support Raising Software Comparison

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The overwhelming amount of information managed by ministry staff when they are raising and living on financial support leads to the need for systems to help, organize, and simplify. The numbers show that having a good CRM (customer relationship management) software will save someone about **one day** each month. But where do you start?

There are a number of programs available that are focused on the goal of assisting in that partnership development effort. This article aims to compare and contrast the leading Customer Relation Management (CRM) systems currently available that are focused on support raising and see how they fit with Support Raising Solutions standards and values. The programs reviewed include: MPDX, DonorElf, Support Goal, Karani, TntConnect, and Simple Sam. Each company was given the opportunity to provide a response if they chose.

Please note: All information is correct to the author's experience and does contain some personal opinion; however, our goal is to be fair and helpful in our reviews. Additionally, these softwares are constantly updated and may contain functionality that was not apparent or available at time of testing.

General standards:

Congruent with SRS vision, values, and best practices:

- Spiritually healthy, vision-driven, and fully funded
- Seeing money as a tool to advance the kingdom and appreciating supporters as investing partners in kingdom work
- Commitment to maximizing fruitfulness of ministry with quality and quantity of support teammates
- Meeting people face-to-face, asking with boldness, and surrendering success to God's hands

Adds tangible value, filling a need:

- A system that goes beyond a spreadsheet, self-generating tasks and notifications, resulting in better care, communication, and appreciation of ministry partners, and tracking of donations

Critical Areas:

- Cost
- Contact Info
- Personal and Family Info
- Giving Info
- Relationship Management
- Notifications
- Customer Relations
- Excellence in Functionality and Execution

Snapshot:

	MPDX	DonorElf	Support Goal	Karani	TntConnect	Simple Sam
Cost	Free	\$12-18	\$10-24	\$12-24	Free	Free
Donor Hub Integration	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Complexity	Complex	Simple	Simple	Complex	Complex	Extra Simple
Customer Service	Help site and email	Personal service	Personal service	Personal service	Online forums	none
Internet Necessary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

MPDX – mpdx.org

Pros:

- Well-organized, clean design
- Numerous integrations including Google and various newsletter services
- Easy to find, sort, and update information
- Mobile app
- Free

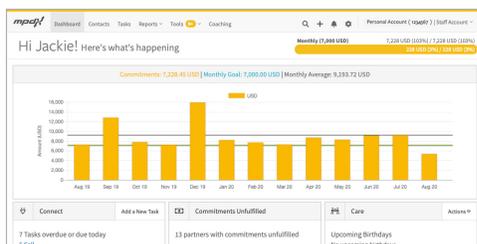
Cons:

- Data exportation is limited impacting platform migration after MPDX

Bottom Line:

This is a great option that leads its competitors with multi-platform integrations and functions.

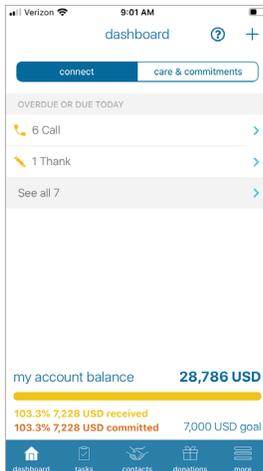
Full Review:



MPDX opens with a clean well organized look that is attractive and immediately presents a short summary of all important MPD elements. Right under the menu bar a 13-month summary graph grabs the user's attention with its happy yellow and simple overview, laying out monthly gifts, how gifts measure up to the user's support goal, monthly commitments, and the incoming support average. This presents a great starting place each time a user logs in. Below the graph are various tiles

highlighting activities, both recently completed and future actions. Some of these are more geared towards someone actively raising new support and would be less applicable to someone in maintenance mode (i.e. calls, appointments, contacts). Either way, the opening page is a well-done summary of current status and tasks. The in-site help feature is well developed as well.

Drawbacks to MPDX include no extra family information fields and limited exporting. Exportation is limited



to the 13-month giving report or contact information (name, address, status, commitment amount, currency, and frequency). This means if a user wishes to migrate to a different system, they will lose all notes and history. During testing there was occasional difficulty loading the Contacts page, which is a common problem with Safari browsers. MPDX was designed to work at low-internet speeds to be useful around the globe; however, that does not leave it free of other internet-related problems.

A major perk of MPDX is the available mobile app! The app does not have the full functionality of the website, but does include tasks, contact information, some basic donation summaries, and push notifications. Along with the app, MPDX is designed for the integrated age, having built-in tools to connect with newsletter programs, a well-rounded coaching report, and even Google calendar integration.

DonorElf – donorelf.com

Pros:

- Overall clean and simple design
- Easy to add pledges for monthly donors (don't have to go person-by-person)
- Good automatic return to previous page when closing a window

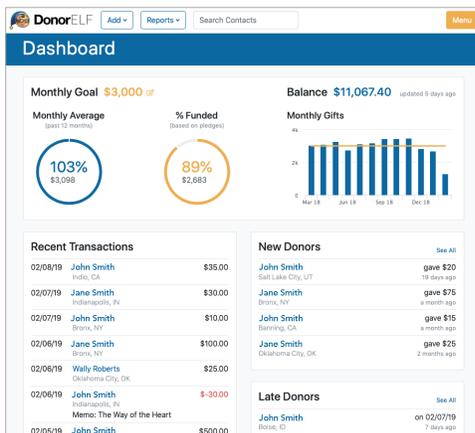
Cons:

- No default date on tasks created
- Only way to filter contacts is by name

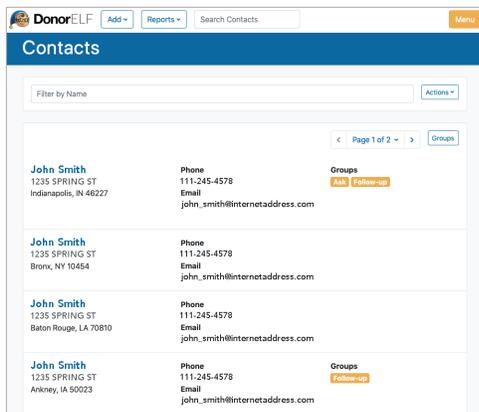
Bottom Line:

DonorElf has all the key functionality with some of the bells and whistles paired down for a simpler, more straight-forward experience. This can either be a huge benefit with DonorElf being easy to use and easy to master, or make a user feel limited depending on their expectations for technology and user-control.

Full Review:



DonorElf was designed to simplify all the data of partner development. The program succeeds at that goal; however, that success is contrasted by a less intuitive interface. The Dashboard, or summary opening page, is well-organized with all the information a user might want as a quick summary. There is a 13-month giving graph as well as some circle progress charts summarizing incoming support compared to pledges, past giving, and giving average. Scrolling down, the user sees all the recent giving transactions, the latest notifications, and other automatic tasks and notices. A special bonus is the coaching report built into DonorElf enabling users to send their coach a summary report with that week's activity and overall status.



Testing the site did show some hiccups in connecting ongoing donation data with imported contacts. There is no help feature on the site providing troubleshooting solutions for the user, but there is a contact feature to request assistance for a problem. There was also a lack of intuitive organization that led to extra searching to find the correct menu or function. Over time, this drawback would be naturally overcome as the user becomes familiar with the program, but it does create a slight learning curve.

For anyone who wants to keep things simple, DonorElf is a fantastic solution. Instead of a plethora of info fields that are rarely used, there are some specific fields and the rest the user

can add as needed, such as important dates or kids and pets names. There are a few areas in which the user has less control of the information, though not significantly limiting for how most people would use the program. The bottom line is DonorElf is very easy to use, has great customer service and is a great product.

SupportGoal – supportgoal.com

Pros:

- Assistive design focused on taking the user through the next step for each contact
- Simple namestorming tool—64 step-by-step prompts
- Phone number on website for the creator
- Has a “contact list” which is a temporary scratch pad to record people you are working through—simple and great for any specific effort of calling, or increasing, but pulls only names from contact list, no other notes
- Can provide access to someone else (not yet a full coach’s dashboard) such as a coach or accountability partner

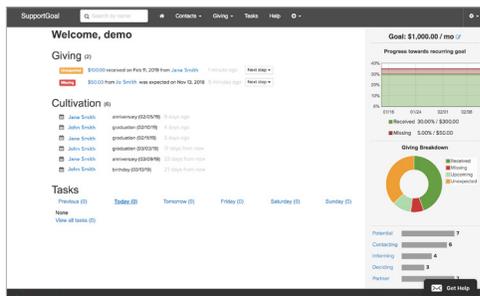
Cons:

- Past the dashboard the visual design doesn’t always highlight the most urgent piece of information
- Contact phases only apply to steps before someone says “yes” to partner, without phases for types of partners or “ask in future” after they’ve already been met with
- Contacts are organized by first name only (potential pro outside of the US)
- Contact page has limited sorting by tags, name, last contact, and if giving recurrently
- Limited reports—giving total for each partner only

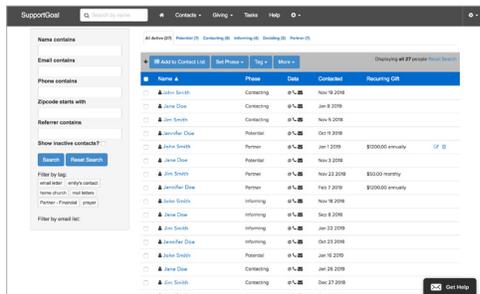
Bottom Line:

SupportGoal gets things done, but requires a shift in thinking. A fundamental purpose in SupportGoal’s design is for the user to never stop raising new support, continually leading the user through the phases of namestorming to partnership. To that end it boasts a few features specific to the initial support raising phase which are not found in other programs; however, that focus might leave some users feeling that there are gaps in other areas of tracking and organizing. This is a philosophical shift that makes this program a bit of a different animal.

Full Review:



SupportGoal starts out looking good upon opening the site. There is a summary of giving, displayed as received, missing, upcoming, and unexpected. The opening page also contains a quick summary of giving and “cultivation” notifications and tasks. The page is not as comprehensive as other softwares which fits with the program’s goal of keeping the user’s next steps clear and simple.



One unique feature is the “contact list” which is a temporary scratchpad enabling the user to pull names from the contacts page. This list is limited to names and not other tasks, but can be helpful to organize a list for a specific day’s calling or note writing. Also of note, the creator of Support Goal offers a high level of responsiveness, even including a phone number on the website.

There is a specific focus in SupportGoal on providing extra tools and features to users who are just starting out in the support raising process. There is a helpful namestorming tool, and the home page includes a simple bar graph showing which stage

of contact potential partners are in (pulled from the phase the user sets for each contact). Having partner categories is not unusual for an MPD software, but SupportGoal emphasizes the pre-partnership phases. The bar graph of potential partners on the main page and the category phases support the focus of the site on developing new partners and might feel lacking if a user is looking for a matching robust organization for contacts once they’ve become partners.

Delving further reveals a few learning curves in the user experience. Tasks and notifications are separated, tasks being only self-created and notifications automatically generated suggestions that the user can choose to act on with a task. The design is well-organized and appealing, but missing some visual design cues that could aid user interface. Also noteworthy is that there is no 13-month giving report which is standard in other systems.

Some hiccups were experienced in loading the site and uploading gifts through a CSV and receiving error messages. However, experience with customer service was fast and even included the creator reaching out to offer help on the unresolved giving notifications that had not been fixed after the first information import.

On the whole, SupportGoal contains the standard expected functionality, although some things such as financial software integration are only available upon request through the creator, but that could be a benefit leading to a more customized experience. The particular recommendation for SupportGoal is in its focus on the initial support raising phases, emphasising ongoing support raising efforts.

Company Response:

“SupportGoal was my answer to two tricky problems: how can I encourage ‘young’ missionaries intimidated by the fundraising process and how can I help ‘old’ missionaries to avoid financial burn-out and leaving ministry[...]

That’s ultimately what led me to create SupportGoal around three core values:

- Simplicity: only do what needs to be done; avoid unnecessary complexity and seldom-used features
- Clarity: help missionaries a) identify where to focus their fundraising efforts and b) easily comprehend the state of their ministry team
- Next Steps: help missionaries adhere to good fundraising principles by suggesting the steps they should be taking with each name and gift

[...] I hope SupportGoal serves as an encouragement and a helpful tool in your journey."

Karani – karani.co

Pros:

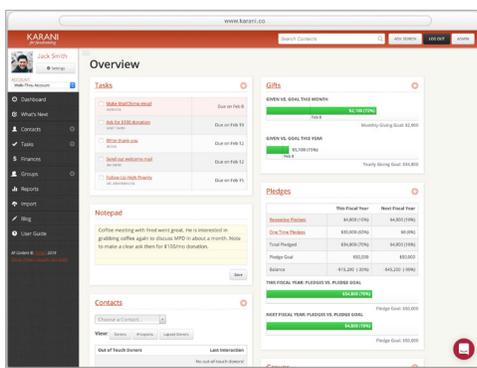
- Incredible customer service—both automated and personal
- Clean, easy to use design
- "Notepad" space
- User can create automatically repeating tasks
- Importing information was difficult, not well-guided

Cons:

- Extremely limited contact filters
- Visual summaries are annually-based, not monthly
- No snapshot visual cues in contact list

Bottom Line:

Karani is a platform in which the cost is matched with incredible service. With a few drawbacks in filtering contacts and visual summaries, Karani shines in the ways the user can set preferences and have a high degree of control to set a personal system of tasks and reminders.

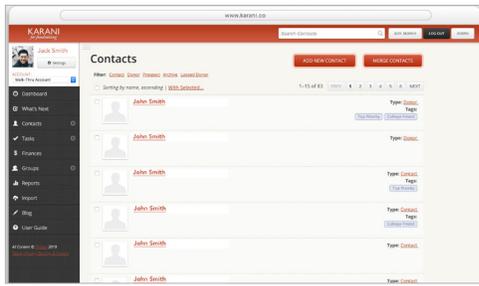


Full Review:

Karani is both nicely organized and stands out in user support. Personal service was immediately offered and the follow-up emails were unique in their care, applicability, and stellar timing. Welcome messages were form emails, but done very well. The follow-up messages were the most helpful, with small suggestions and snapshots of how a tool or feature could be used.

Beyond the personal touch and clearly well-designed system of customer service, Karani is also beautifully laid out as a program. It opens to an overview page with summaries of total support,

top tasks and people to contact. The page features all the desired important information and sets the user up to take immediate action in the way it displays tasks and overdue interactions. A unique feature on the dashboard is a "notepad" to save general reminders or comments. A highlight feature is the ability to set automatically repeating tasks, allowing the user to input their personal approach to MPD instead of relying on built-in automated tasks.



A few hiccups include a cumbersome importation process for contacts and past donations. Additionally, in organizing contacts, there are a lack of filters to highly specify a search parameter and no visual tags or cues in the scrolling contact list.

Possibly the largest drawback to Karani is the unique depiction of overall support on the dashboard page. While monthly gifts are graphed, pledges are only graphed on an annual basis instead of monthly, and individual donors have annual instead of monthly graphs as well. This is a divergence from the typical method of visually summarizing monthly support. With so much of MPD set in a monthly timeline—monthly goals, monthly pledges, many tasks are monthly—that shift may be enough to dissuade people from wanting to use Karani.



Company Response:

“Karani prides itself on customer service, and we’re so pleased that our users appreciate the care we take in that realm. We’re always looking to improve, and we’ll be taking the feedback here and incorporating it into our plans for the future. May you experience joy in your fundraising!”

TntConnect – tntware.com

Pros:

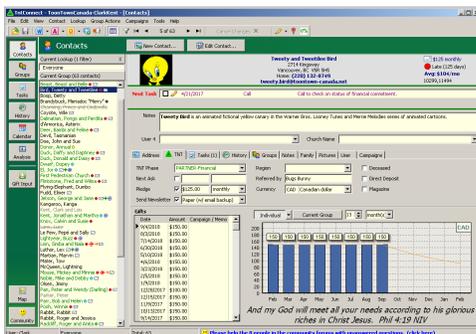
- No internet needed to use
- Huge degree of user control in sorting and exporting
- Free

Cons:

- Overwhelming to look at and learn to use
- Website for help and troubleshooting is helpful, but can be difficult to navigate to find the specific solution needed

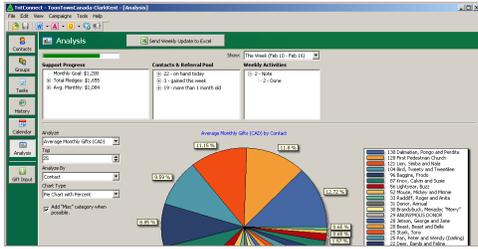
Bottom Line:

TntConnect is a bit of a beast to learn at first and problems are self-solved through trouble shooting with the online guide and forums. However, that same need for confident independent users is what makes the program great for those who don’t want to be tied to limited functions in online-based programs.



Full Review:

TntConnect is the forefather of most, if not all, MPD software. As such, it is a program working to solve every problem at the price of becoming complicated and sometimes cumbersome to use. There is a bit of a learning curve at first and many people would find TntConnect overwhelming. However, once the user has crested that mountain, there is a high degree of user control. There are 200 fields to filter contacts, blank personalizable forms, and any piece of information can be exported and manipulated



outside of the software. The information is all right there instead of requiring the user to search through numerous different pages. It is worth noting that instead of customer service, help is offered through a user forum, with the creator being active in responding to needs along with other users.

The program opens not to a general summary page but right to the contacts. The design might not be the clean minimalist picture of modern programs and apps, but it is undeniably functional. It gets the job done! This might be the ideal for someone who wants the most control over what they can do with the information contained within the program, while the least desired interface for someone who is easily overwhelmed navigating technology.

Simple Sam – simplesam.com

Pros:

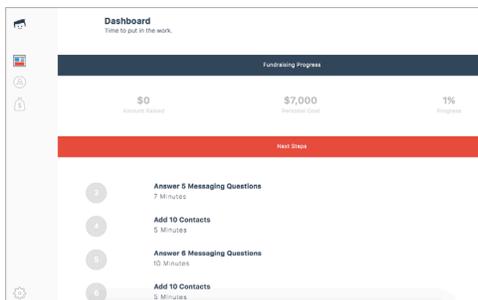
- Easy to use

Cons:

- Mentions adding contacts in bulk, but no link or any information about how to do that
- Geared towards someone raising support for first time. Very step-by-step (add 1 contact, now add 10, write a life change story).
- Limited use and cannot export data to migrate to full system later.

Bottom Line:

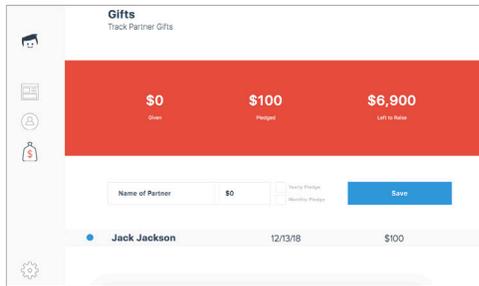
Simple Sam is an assistant for those just starting out in support raising who are namestorming and contacting people. There is no functionality beyond that, nor even a way to migrate all the contacts to another system after using Simple Sam.



Full Review:

Simple Sam, as its name states, is indeed simple to use. From signing up, to the user's first actions within the program, mere moments pass. There is no learning curve with navigating the menu or finding information. The program opens up to the main page that changes only slightly between the four toggle buttons on the left.

This straightforward and simple design works because this is a one-trick pony. There are a total of 16 "messaging questions" that are presented step-by-step about mission and calling—essentially a digitized worksheet one could expect at most basic support raising training. Beyond that, Simple Sam holds names and how much they give. There is nothing else, not even a place to put when a call was made or when follow-up needs to happen. There does seem to be plans to grow the program to have more functionality and even an app at some



point, but extra features were not available at time of testing. In essence, Simple Sam is a vision worksheet and a step-by-step address book. There is also no way to export any of the data to a more robust system once support maintenance software is needed. This might be a nice tool for people needing extreme simplification of starting steps; however, this software isn't truly helping, expediting, or adding anything to the process of partnership management.

Company Response:

"We are working on both additional import tools and full export tools for each of our core features."

Conclusion

At SRS, we are firm believers that you should care for your ministry partners, and these softwares are examples of some of the tools available to make that care simpler. At the end of the day, go with the program you will actually use, no matter if that's because it has all the bells and whistles or because it has none of them. The best program in the world is useless if you don't use it consistently. Don't try to manage all the pieces of financial and communication information without help—just go with what will actually help you best.

Don't forget to check out the comparison chart on supportraisingsolutions.org/resources!