



How much do you invest in mastering your Agency Management System?

By Connie Burtcheard

You have heard it before. A good Agency Management Software System will make your agency work smarter and help you focus on the more profitable clients. With the variety of software packages that are offered to the Advertising Industry, all ranging in price and offerings, why are the needs and expectations of the shops across the country not being met?

Once you have purchased your Agency Management Software, your investment in the software will need to continue. Think about the investment you make in getting your creative staff trained on the latest software and techniques. Or, what about how much you just spent on upgrading to OSX? So, just buying an Agency Management Software System will give you just that - - the software.

Wouldn't you like to feel confident that you won't experience the financial losses that can occur from the poor use of bad implementation of your Agency Management System? Even the most user friendly Agency Management System, if used improperly, can cause major financial losses for a shop - in both time and money. This can be a very painful loss - especially for the smaller shops.

Ultimately, the success or failure of your agency management system lies with the people who are using the software on a daily basis and how well they understand the software. Your accounting department may not be filled with CPA's or computer gurus. But regardless of their knowledge of accounting principles or technology, with proper and adequate training they all should be able to learn how to function within the software efficiently.

Some ways that you can maximize the returns on your Agency Management System investment are:

- Develop a high level of communication with the systems consultants. Consultants are an incredible resource for information on the packages they represent and, because of their direct contact with the clients who actually use the software, they will often know the software better than anyone else including sometimes the vendor.
- Have an understanding of the training needs you will have for the system you choose **prior** to installation. This will help you to determine how much time you will need to adequately get your staff up to speed.
- If there is any doubt about how to configure the software's tables, hire a consultant who understands your business. And has a background in accounting and knows the software you are implementing so that they can help configure and setup the system to match your business needs.

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- Invest in keeping your staff knowledgeable of new enhancements and functionality. I have seen shops that have been on the same system for 7 years and were never trained again after the initial training. Everyone said they were doing their job the way that the person in the position before showed them how to do it. Needless to say, they are not using even half of what the system now provides.
- Cleaning up a poorly implemented system can be time consuming and costly. By saving a few dollars today, it may end up costing you much more in the end - both in time, money and inaccurate financial information. As a business owner and/or manager, you don't have the time and energy to deal with such a mess AND run a well tuned company.
- Invest today in getting things setup right. And if everything is setup, invest in a little extra training for each member of the accounting team. It is worth the investment and will pay off in the long run. Remember software changes daily and it is important to support the accounting department's interest in keeping up!