

Three Tools to Evaluate Your Impact

Measure your results more easily with these helpful apps.

By Amy Sample Ward

One of the most common conversations I have with nonprofit leaders starts like this: “How do we know if we’re reaching our goals?”

“Well, do you know which data or metrics would indicate the answer to that question?”

“Yes, but how do we access these metrics so we know what they mean?”

For many nonprofits, the issue isn’t too little data but, rather, the fact that information is in multiple locations, without any regular aggregation and review. The data you collect about programs, services, communications, and campaigns can help you improve only if you’re analyzing it within the context of other efforts, timelines, and investments.

Many of the tools you use each day — social media, your Web site, your database — have options to run reports for you, making evaluation easier. Unfortunately, these reports are pulled from one source (translation: one data silo) and probably haven’t been updated or customized to address your questions.

The following tools aren’t perfect solutions, but they’re options to help you pull together data sources to better understand your impact and share that impact with your community.

Sparkwise (<http://sparkwise/>) is an open-source evaluation tool made with nonprofits in mind. With many different widgets to connect your data sources, as well as the option to feed in data from a spreadsheet, you’ll have few hurdles to pulling all your data together in one place. You don’t need technical savvy to use Sparkwise, as it has a clean, easy drag-and-drop interface. You can use the data sets

you upload or connect in various ways to explore the outcomes that tell your organization’s story. You can even add events and other media to your reports to illustrate your work in the context of your community. Sparkwise is free to use, too!

Try it out today at sparkwise

Metricly (<http://metricly.com/>) is recommended by various organizations and includes a free level for basic use. Unlike Sparkwise, Metricly isn’t built specifically for nonprofits, but it does include a similarly diverse set of options for connecting your data all in one dashboard. Carving out the time to set up the data connections and customize parameters for evaluation can be difficult but valuable. Metricly also offers options for regular e-mail reporting so once you’ve set up the account, even if you don’t log in you can still get reports to keep you on top of the metrics that matter.

See if Metricly works for you at metricly.com

Ducksboard (<http://ducksboard.com/>) doesn’t offer a free level, but it does have a free trial period. You should always start with something free to see what works for you and if a paid investment in that tool is worthwhile. Ducksboard, like Metricly, wasn’t designed especially for nonprofits but includes a wide array of data options as well as reporting, alerts, and dashboards.

Start your free trial today at ducksboard.com 

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