

RECORDS MANAGEMENT: 5 ESSENTIAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING YOUR NEXT SYSTEM

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Choosing the right RMS solution for your organization can be daunting. If you're hoping to make the process less painful and more productive, you must start by asking the right questions.

While there are countless records management systems on the market, not all solutions will be right for your line of business. The purpose of this guide is to show you how to select the best RMS solution for your department and your budget without compromising on the essential features and functionalities you need to protect your staff and bolster your operational capacity.

THIS GUIDE:

- » Explains the basic functions of RMS and provides advice on practical use
- » Encourages you to dig deeper by supplying a list of must-ask vendor questions
- » Examines the essential features your members need to stay protected and informed
- » Empowers you with information to help streamline the selection and purchase process

RECORDS MANAGEMENT BASICS

Effective records management relies on speed and accuracy—both from the members of your department and the information they rely on to do their jobs safely and effectively. There are no do-overs in this business, and timing is everything. It's essential to supply your team with the right combination of tools and technology to get the job done right—the first time. Choosing the right records management system can be vital to helping you achieve that goal.

Records management systems (RMS) are information databases that provide life-cycle data management for internal documents, such as case histories, incident reports, personnel files, and criminal intelligence repositories. Much like any other database, an RMS solution organizes your process and allows you to centralize, view, and analyze information quickly—without hindering comprehension.



Digital records management increases your capacity and enables your department to:

- » Obtain critical information on complainants, suspects, vehicles, and addresses—to quickly facilitate higher situational awareness.
- » Collect data from disparate information systems to gain 360-degree visibility into call details.
- » Manage resources and seamlessly transfer up-to-date information from operations to the field.
- » Conduct in-depth investigations and leverage departmental insights with intuitive analysis tools.
- » Record and store data for audit or further analysis.
- » Reduce errors and eliminate duplicate data entry requirements.
- » Generate, upload, and send clear professional field reports directly from the vehicle.
- » Maintain agility and support mission-critical functions during unpredictable events or systems outages.

On the following pages, you'll find a series of questions to help steer you down the path to successfully choosing the right RMS solution.

WHAT DO WE NEED?

Before shopping for an RMS solution, you must outline your department's needs, as well as a list of clear guidelines for the project. Soliciting member feedback is a must. And many agencies choose to include the program's end-users in the exploratory process.

Start by assessing your current solution for shortfalls and noting the processes that could use improvement. Perhaps the current system is painfully slow or tends to crash without warning. Or maybe, the solution works as promised, but lacks the critical features needed to bring your department into the 21st century. These are all easy-to-address problems. However, without identifying them, you might overlook details which could help cut down on your administrative processes or significantly reduce response times.

For example, many agencies choose to outfit their vehicles with mobile reporting systems. This type of program can help officers maximize their productivity by reducing the time they spend on paperwork while significantly improving the quality of their reports.

Another must-have element of RMS—regional information sharing. Having access to your neighboring agencies' records affords your officers a more comprehensive view of criminal activity in your area and allows for a higher degree of situational awareness. Moving forward, this feature will become increasingly prevalent as the law enforcement community moves to break down data silos and engage in joint efforts to prevent crime regionally.

In addition to mobile reporting and regional search capabilities, you should consider adding the following elements to your list of must-have features:

- » Predictive Analytics
- » Evidence Management
- » Uniform Database Search
- » Case Reporting
- » GIS Mapping
- » Asset Tracking
- » Employee Scheduling
- » Jail Administration Tools
- » Cloud Hosting/Storage
- » CAD Integration

HOW MUCH CAN WE AFFORD?

Now that you've ironed out the details and settled on your list of must-haves, it's time to crunch numbers. While not the most comfortable subject, financial considerations will play an inevitable role in your final decision. When deciding on your budget, it's important to think in terms of gains versus losses. For example, how much can you save as opposed to what you're spending now?

Cloud-based solutions offer a multitude of advantages. Cost savings on infrastructure and maintenance alone can more than make up for the yearly subscription price. Consider the amount of storage taken up by in-building systems as well as the utilities used to keep these areas up and running.

Aside from equipment costs, cloud software also affords you to shed expensive service contract costs and free up personnel while enabling 24/7 access to IT maintenance and support.

Additional advantages to cloud-based RMS include:

- » Unparalleled Data Security
- » Guaranteed System Up-Time
- » Disaster Recovery Management
- » Automatic Software Updates
- » Anytime-Anywhere Data Access
- » 24/7 System Monitoring
- » Vendor-Managed Data Compliance
- » System-Generated Reports
- » Managed Data Hosting
- » Predictable Annual Costs

DOES THIS SOLUTION ADDRESS OUR EXISTING ISSUES AND ACCOUNT FOR FUTURE DEMANDS?

With budget and criteria out of the way, it's time to move towards evaluating systems. This process can be daunting, as there are a myriad of records management systems on the market. Customization is a popular buzzword among providers. Yet, if you look closely, you'll see that highly configurable system looks relatively the same from agency to agency. If your requirements change in the future, will your vendor provide dynamic front-end reconfiguration to help manage your growing demands?

The same rings true for claims of futureproofing. All cloud-based solutions offer updates; however, many companies charge an additional fee for this service. Add in the cost of upgrades, and you could be looking at a sizeable bill. Rather than pay extra for a newer version of the same software, look for a solution provider that includes both regular updates and total platform upgrades in your system's annual cost.

Remember, when evaluating the solution's strengths and weaknesses, it's imperative to leave no stone unturned. After spending all this time on planning and fund allocation, the last thing you'll want is a hyped-up version of ordinary and a lingering case of buyer's remorse.

When assessing RMS solutions, make sure you and your vendor agree on the exact definition of these words:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| » Scalable | » Affordable |
| » Flexible | » Managed |
| » Modular | » Mission-Critical |
| » Configurable | » Future-Proof |
| » Secure | » User-Friendly |

IS THIS SOLUTION PROVIDER A GOOD FIT?

Aligning your mission with that of your service providers may be easier than you think. When meeting with vendors, it's imperative to consider the company's background and reputation. Though the company may work with agencies your size, they may cater more to larger departments.

Being at the bottom of a list of priority customers is the last thing you'll want if you run into issues with your RMS platform. Another problem with this type of provider is that due to limited market exposure, they may be more inclined to upsell features that won't work well for your department. Rather than hiding behind fancy presentations, make sure your vendor can supply you with a list of real customers in similarly sized departments.

Equally important, is your vendor's understanding of law enforcement. Does your account manager and software developing team really understand the job? If not, you may have a difficult time explaining why certain functions are critical, and why issues cannot wait until Monday to be resolved. While these factors may seem trivial, the difference between knowledge and understanding can have a dramatic impact on your agency, your officers, and your community.

At the minimum, your service provider should be able to supply you with straightforward and satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- » How many of your customers mirror my agency's size and capabilities?
- » How long has your company been in the software business?
- » Does your company employ former law enforcement professionals?
- » What features do you include with this service and which options are considered add-ons?
- » What level of training and support does your company provide its customers?

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- » How will we migrate my existing data to this new solution?
- » How long does the average set up and deployment process take?

WHEN SHOULD WE TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

The best time to evaluate your resources is before you need them. Of course, if you're dealing with an emergency replacement, time may be a luxury you can't afford. However, barring any extenuating circumstances, you should begin planning your RMS purchase six months to one year in advance. Doing so will ensure you have plenty of time to gain the input of your staff, as well as anticipate any barriers to purchase.

Gaining the necessary buy-in may take some time, so consider meeting with your preferred service providers early. Aside from answering any questions you may face from the purchasing department, a responsible vendor should take strides to help you assess your current issues and develop a plan for improvement. Developing a relationship with a new vendor prior to purchase can make the process less painful and more productive.

If you'd like to discuss RMS solutions, Omnigo can help. Aside from our 25-year history in software development, our staff has over a combined century of sworn law enforcement experience. We pride ourselves in being consultants first and would be happy to assist you in finding the perfect software solution for your department.

To learn more about our service and discuss system options, contact us at 1.866.421.2374 or send an email to info@omnigo.com.

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