CASE STUDY: METROPOLITAN MINISTRIES

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Metropolitan Ministries Improves Responsiveness of Donor Communications with Automated Donation Processing Solution
by LaDawn Milton

Founded in 1972 by 13 downtown Tampa churches, Metropolitan Ministries is a community faith-based ministry that provides answers for poor and homeless families. It offers a wide variety of supportive services to alleviate suffering, promote human dignity, and instill self-sufficiency. Over the years, Metropolitan Ministries has earned the trust and support of charitable individuals, volunteers, businesses, churches, synagogues, civic organizations, schools and collaborative partners. As such, Metropolitan Ministries is becoming known beyond the Tampa Bay community as one of the nation's most effective and innovative caregivers.

As faithful stewards of donations earmarked to help homeless families, Metropolitan Ministries puts great emphasis on achieving its prompt receipting goals, with as few staff members as possible. That's why we view our decision to install an automated gift processing solution from Birmingham, Ala.-based AQ2 Technologies as a fiscally responsible move.

Choosing AQ2 Technologies

Before implementing AQ2 Technologies software, Metropolitan Ministries had been utilizing a lockbox service for about a year. Issues related to processing times, rejection rates and the vendor relationship forced us to begin the search for another solution. That's when one of our new employees suggested looking at AQURIT®, based on the positive experience his previous employer (a nonprofit organization) had with the company and its software.

AQ2 Technologies payment processing solution, called AQURIT®, offers many features tailored for donation processing. Chief among them is the built-in module for courtesy amount recognition (CAR) and legal amount recognition (LAR), which reads the amount on checks and eliminates time-consuming manual keying. AQURIT's automation in this area has helped us significantly increase our gift processing efficiency and reduce staff.

AQURIT® also provides tables that allow us to store the MICR information from the bottom of donor checks, streamlining the process of preparing receipts for donors. For regular donors who send gifts using the same checking account, this eliminates the tedious process of manually cross-matching gift checks with donor ID numbers on file. With this capability, we can mail most receipts within 24 hours of gift processing.

In addition, AQURIT's ability to archive digital images of checks and related documentation has eliminated the need to copy or store paper documents. Archiving images, rather than paper, enables authorized staff with a PC connected to the AQURIT® network to retrieve images of checks and documents quickly. This has significantly improved our ability to research donation information when issues arise on a gift, and has reduced our physical storage space requirements.

The SQL Server database design of AQURIT®, and its use of open hardware and software components, gives us peace of mind that the system will support our growth.

Good Technology, Good Stewardship

Our experiences with Aquracy have all been positive. The software has enabled Metropolitan Ministries to improve responsiveness to customer communications and to more quickly process gifts and thank donors. It has virtually eliminated the batch entry processing and the rejection rates we experienced with our previous lockbox solution, translating into lower costs and fewer processing delays. Aquracy also gives us ownership of the entire check process, with no third-party handling of checks.

Additionally, AQ2 Technologies has helped us better manage our fluctuating volumes. Like most nonprofits, we experience a huge spike in daily donation volumes near the holidays – an average tenfold increase in our case. By implementing AQURIT® at the start of the holiday season, we were able to decrease our number of temporary staff – a savings of $27,936 – while meeting our receipting goal in record time. Moreover, during non-holiday times, AQURIT® allows us to process our workload with just one associate, down from two. This fast turnaround demonstrates that we are appreciative, responsive and efficient in dealing with donations, and may increase the chance that donors will respond again.

AQ2 Technologies backs its software with excellent service. From the multi-day, onsite, one-on-one training during system installation, to the fast resolution of problems as they arise, Aquracy has done as they promised. We are pleased to have AQ2 Technologies join us on the journey ahead.

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