



Become Your Organization's Tech Advocate



Think "Culture" Not "Tech"

Technology in the workplace is a lot like musical tastes. Everyone may enjoy music but not everyone appreciates the same artists or listening at the same volume. Some people welcome technology eagerly, as new adopters. Others resist using any new tool or process.

Adopting new technology in your office requires buy-in from all parties. This isn't a technical challenge. It is a social and cultural challenge.



This challenge varies depending on multiple variables and the personalities involved. You will need to enroll champions. One constant: **clear communication of value**.

The good news is that, with some preparation, you can become your organization's tech advocate. This will reflect well on you because implementing software is a boon to productivity.

How do you get an entire organization humming the same tune? This guide will help you get the entire "orchestra" of stakeholders eager to "play" the software that simplifies your nomination and award program.

But First, The Benefits

As your organization's tech champion you know the benefits of implementing software to manage your application and review process:

Streamlined Workflow

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Wrangling multiple "free" solutions can create a complicated mess. Multiple passwords are one problem; the bigger problem is version control, email threads, and who sees what in shared documents. A single software solution simplifies workflow for all parties.

Automation Saves Time

Moreover, software automation notifies people to keep the workflow moving ahead. Applicants get immediate confirmation on application submittal. Judges know when one round closes and another judging round starts. Funders can check in on the process at regular intervals.

Reduced Work Hours Save Money

These automations add up to a tremendous amount of time savings throughout the process. The admin time savings are clear. Less clear but also important is the time required of judges or special guests, some of which may volunteer to participate. Being mindful of others' time shows respect.

Increased Transparency Keeps Everyone Accountable

Specialized application submission software puts the end-to-end process into one dashboard. This greatly improves visibility for all stakeholders. This makes it easier to address anything that may slow the process.

Cloud-based Software Is Convenient for Everyone

Shifting to cloud-based software is almost always the best decision for an organization. This is especially true when comparing cost and effectiveness of desktop software. More details in our whitepaper, [Grantmaker's Guide to Cloud-Based Software](#).

It's Not Me, It's You

It's easy to understand how software will improve your own workflow. You'll want to make specific notes to share when asked. The above list is a good start.

The bigger consideration is how the software will help everyone else.

Remember, other stakeholders haven't had the same research time as you. Some have entirely different perspectives. Likely, this is a reflection of where they operate in the process. You'll need to do two things:

Be ready to reinforce why you believe grant management software is useful
Focus on HOW you present information to each group of stakeholders

You've got #1 covered. Let's focus on #2.

Compassion and Critical Thinking: Crafting Your Pitch

No doubt you already rely on robust communication skills. In this situation, consider a return to the basics:

- Tell people what they're going to learn (e.g. the specifics of the software's features)
- Teach it (e.g., show a demo)
- Remind people what they learned (e.g., ask for questions and review benefits)

Why this formula? **It works.**

Begin by breaking your information down into digestible chunks.

Imagine one pain point of multiple email threads between judges, for example.
Demonstrate the dashboard. Show how these conversations and timetables are visible.

Compassion and Critical Thinking: Crafting Your Pitch, *continued*

Ask yourself, what is the most beneficial aspect of the software for the stakeholders I'm addressing?

Walk the team through the overall grantmaking process. This will illuminate pain points. It is also an opportunity to show value at each step. Use organizational examples to "make it real".

Benefits Visible Across the Process

Benefits accrue to the entire process when implementing specialized software.

Most team members benefit from:

- Reduced paperwork;
- Up-to-date status reports;
- More data for your organization's mission;
- More time to focus on higher-level tasks such as implementing strategy, strengthening relationships, and investigating new opportunities

Judges and board members benefit from:

- Secure access (with permission) from anywhere;
- Board books/status updates at a glance;
- Reduction of back-and-forth decision-making process steps;
- Greater fiscal efficiencies for future programs

Prepare for Possible Pushback

It is natural that a few people will be resistant to change. Here are some common concerns.

Cost

Acknowledge that cost can be a barrier for very small organizations. However, even when compared to “free” software tools, it is clear a specialized system is superior. Specialized software offers greater productivity and efficiency, resulting in time savings. For most organizations, the software price is a small investment compared to these returns. Explain why your organization should make this investment using examples from your own workflow.

Security

Non-technical people may need clarification or other reassurances. One major benefit to point out: cloud-based services offer multiple, high-level security teams “built-in”. This offers more, not less, security. As a result, the organization can scale up and serve more people. (Additional information in Grantmaker’s Guide to Cloud-Based Software.)

Grantee Resistance

Occasionally stakeholders raise a concern that grantees will resist new procedures. This is especially true if your organization believes that grantees are not “technically-oriented.” Frankly, this is a rarity. Even the most self-proclaimed Luddites generally use email or browse the web. Seemingly half the planet uses Facebook!

Most grantees will welcome software that makes the application or reporting responsibilities easier.

Fear of Change

Anticipate a spectrum of feelings about tech in general and making changes, specifically. Meet people where they are. This proposed change is not the first, nor will it be the last. Remind the team of other tech-related changes that have positively influenced the organization. Some, like using email or storing documents online, are second-nature. Remind them how quickly “new” technology becomes familiar.

You're Ready!

Adopting new technology is not a "tech" issue. It is a culture issue.
Present your research. Show how specialized software can solve problems.
Engage your supporters and go for it!



Application and Review Software

Whether you're starting a submission and review process from the ground up or trying to accelerate growth for an established program, OpenWater can help you:

Attract Applicants

Direct applicants to a website that retains your primary site's branding and is easy to use.



Build Relationships

Make it easier for all parties to communicate before, during, and after the review process.



Streamline the Process

Keep everyone engaged and on task through multiple rounds of review.



Track and Report Results

Make it easier for all parties to communicate before, during, and after the review process.

Request a Demo

OpenWater software helps you and your team manage any **application and review process**.

We help you **attract new applicants, streamline the management process, build meaningful relationships, and report the results.**

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