

PROFILE

Type: Independent Foundation

System: GIFTS - Access Version

Modules: AP Link

Abell Foundation captures 50 years of grant information with GIFTS

Background

The Abell Foundation was formed in 1953 by the publishers of the Baltimore Sun, and run there until breaking away in 1986 to run the community programs they have been doing for the last half century, from education to health and human services. Just as The Abell Foundation has grown from a \$100,000 foundation to a \$190 million dollar foundation, its grant management system has changed just as radically. They are a member of ABAG.

A history of user-friendliness

Holly R. Daskalakis, The Abell Foundation's Assistant to the Vice President, came on in 1986 when they first took on MicroEdge's GIFTS grants management software, replacing their system of file cabinets and thirty years of manila folders. "It made things so much easier to have our information in a database rather than in manila folders," Daskalakis says of the early system. They had to enter all the historic grants from the 50's, an intimidating job for Holly, who was a beginner with computers in those days. Still, it was good to finally have "everything at our fingertips," Daskalakis says.

Though GIFTS has evolved and grown over the years, one thing has stayed the same — it's simplicity and ease-of-use. The Abell Foundation uses GIFTS for keeping track of grants, formal proposals, and all of their contacts.

Correspondence and reports

They still use GIFTS to keep track of grant contacts, proposals, and where the grants are in the cycle. But now, with GIFTS' mergeable templates,

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creating correspondence is a snap, too. Addresses and names can be merged into approval letters, cc's, requests for proposals or any other kind of letter a foundation might send.

With 50 years of grant information in their database, Holly also can easily use GIFTS to create extremely effective reports for the board. "We can show how our programs have changed through the years."

The program officers at Abell, though not able to enter information, now have access to very powerful information that also cuts down workload.

They can easily view the entire history of any organization that has ever worked with them, whether they were funded in the past or just sent in a formal proposal.

"Everything I do, everything that comes into the Foundation, goes into GIFTS. It's our Bible."

First class support

Being one of GIFT's first users, they have also gone through most of its upgrades, and MicroEdge tech support has been there every step of the way. "They helped us get up to speed," Holly says, "we really got a lot of support. GIFTS is user-friendly. When you know the Windows platform, it's easy to pick up." Holly reports that on a daily basis she uses GIFTS 80 percent of her time.

GIFTS advantages:

- Easy tracking of grants and contacts
- Centralized database of grant history
- Easy reporting & correspondence
- User-friendly system
- Great technical support