

7 RED FLAGS

What to Watch Out for When Evaluating Recreation Management Software

How to spot the most common red flags when deciding on your recreation management software provider.

About Us

Xplor Recreation offers a frictionless, all-in-one [parks and recreation management software](#).

With a modern, easy-to-use interface that scales to any size, our platform lets your community members easily self-serve their needs, and makes your staff's lives simpler. It's a complete solution we've engineered for growth, so you can focus on delivering the service your customers deserve.



Activity + Program Management



Membership Management



Facility Management



Point-of-Sale (POS) + Payments



Cloud-Based CRM



Modern Online Experience



Custom-Branded Mobile App



Self-Serve Kiosk Solution



Data, Analytics + Reporting



Workflow + Automation Engine



Configurable Platform + Open API



24/7, 365 Customer Support



Dedicated Account Management



99.9% Uptime Guaranteed

Table of Contents

- Intro: 7 Red Flags to Avoid When Buying Rec Management Software
- Red Flag #1: Poor Self-Serve Customer Experience
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Red Flag #2: Lack of Innovation
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Red Flag #3: Insufficient Support or Account Management
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Red Flag #4: No Open API Integrations
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Red Flag #5: Limited Payment Processing Capabilities
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Red Flag #6: Deceptive Pricing Models
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Red Flag #7: Hasty Software Implementation
 - Questions to Ask Potential Vendors
 - What to Watch Out For
 - Partnership with Xplor Recreation
- Partnering with Xplor Recreation



INTRO

7 Red Flags to Avoid When Buying Rec Management Software

7 Red Flags to Avoid When Buying Rec Management Software

Choosing new recreation management software is a big decision—one that will affect your staff's day-to-day operations and your community for the next 5-to-10 years. It's such an important relationship, in fact, that we believe it should feel a lot more **like a partnership**. One that you can count on—wherever and whenever—to help make things less complicated and a lot less difficult for you and your team.

Doing your due diligence is key to finding a software partner who can meet your needs both now and in the future—while saving you from having to repeat this *"exciting process"* any time soon!



It's for this reason that our team put together this guide. We want to help you make the best decision possible for your agency by sharing a few major red flags to watch out for when evaluating potential software providers.

IN THIS GUIDE

You'll find insights and practical tips like:



TOP RED FLAGS

Common Recreation Management Software Red Flags



QUESTIONS TO ASK

Things to Always Ask Potential Software Vendors



INFO ABOUT US

What You Can Expect from a Partnership with Xplor Recreation



RED FLAG #1

Poor Self-Serve Customer Experience

Poor Self-Serve Customer Experience

These days, just about everything can be done online. As a result, people expect to be able to engage with everyone and everything, from restaurants to entertainment, directly through the internet—right from the palm of their hands.



And while many industries now offer self-serve capabilities through various smart devices, the majority of recreation management software platforms have yet to adapt. This means that you and your agency could end up with a software solution that is 10—or even 20!—years behind the average user.

To avoid partnering with an outdated provider, look at their:



WEBSITE EXPERIENCE



MOBILE APP OFFERING

An Outdated Website Experience

One look has you saying, “Is that from this century?”

Many recreation management software vendors offer online registration experiences that have not been updated in awhile. Sometimes not since the turn of the Millennium! As a result, their workflows really don't match the modern online consumer experience that the majority of your community members are used to.

Be sure to test every vendor's web experience for yourself to see how it stacks up against your own personal online shopping expectations.

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to the website experience of a vendor's software by asking the following questions:



Mobile Optimization

Is there anything you can do on a desktop that you can't do on a smartphone? Is the experience mobile-responsive and optimized for smartphones?



Online Capabilities

Can we embed your online registration portal directly into our website? What about facility bookings—can they be managed online? Can we brand these modules?



Live Backend Demos

Can you provide our team with a live demo of the backend of your software?



Hidden Costs

Are there any fees associated with offering standard functions like online registration through either the desktop or mobile experiences?



Browser Compatibility

Is your website experience—especially, your online registration—compatible across all browsers?

An Outdated Website Experience

What to Watch Out For

“Mobile-Optimized” Claims

- ✗ Key features, like online registration or member portal, can only be accessed by desktop
- ✗ Current clients’ online registration experiences are unimpressive via mobile

Money for What?!

- ✗ Additional fees for what should be standard functionalities, such as online registration capabilities



Online Web Experience with Xplor Recreation

When you partner with Xplor Recreation, you get access to our innovative recreation management technology that provides:



Mobile-First Design

Our mobile-optimized platform enables a cohesive online registration portal experience across all devices—without compromise.



Custom Branding

Customize and embed our portal directly onto your website, for a seamless experience between your site and our software.



Browser Compatibility

Our platform is compatible with all internet browsers, eliminating friction for your community members when it comes to accessing your offerings.

A Mobile App that's Not Native

Look out for hybrids and ones that simply don't exist.

Did you know that 76% of adults use their mobile phones for making purchases? Of those consumers, 60% prefer mobile apps over mobile sites because of better user experiences.

With that in mind, it's so important to offer your community members a functional and engaging mobile app. This makes it a big factor when evaluating recreation management software partners.

While many platforms offer mobile app solutions, most of them are either shared with other agencies or are "hybrid" apps with limited functionality. And sometimes? They don't exist even yet—and may not for many years to come.

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to the mobile app experience of a vendor's software by asking the following questions:



Native vs. Hybrid

Do you offer a mobile app? Is it a native or hybrid application?



User Experience

Can our community members manage their accounts and browse, register and pay for programs all within your app?



Marketplace Experience

Is the app shared with other agencies or is it unique and custom-branded to our agency?



Workflows + Implementation

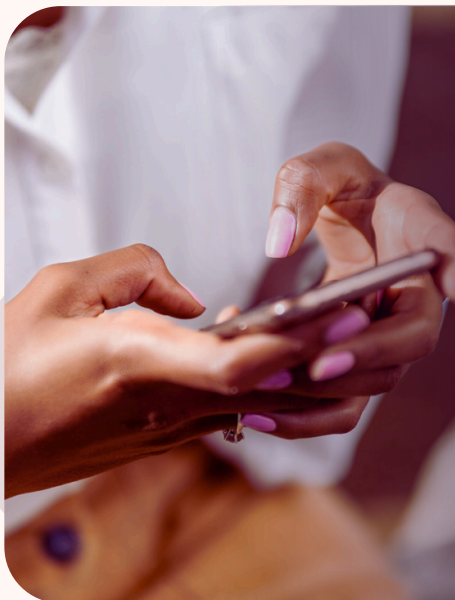
Does our agency need to do any extra work to setup and maintain the mobile app?

A Mobile App that's Not Native

What to Watch Out For

Hybrid Apps

- ✗ Only a portion of the experience is built in the app itself
- ✗ The rest is through a mobile-responsive web page
- ✗ You get kicked out of the app part way through the experience
- ✗ Less secure, poorer performance, and clunkier than native apps



Marketplace Platform

- ✗ A platform that isn't unique to your agency
- ✗ Many other agencies are also listed on the app
- ✗ Community members must search for you every time they use the app
- ✗ Your agency is like one of many restaurants listed on "Uber Eats"

A Mobile App that's Not Native

What to Watch Out For

Unclear Launch Timeline

- ✗ Some platforms claim their mobile app is coming soon
- ✗ Unable to provide timelines on when they'll be releasing it
- ✗ Inability to communicate more details on this functionality

Hidden Costs

- ✗ Many vendors' apps require additional work and service fees
- ✗ Fees often crop up in relation to setup and maintenance



Mobile App Experience with Xplor Recreation

The Xplor Recreation mobile app gives your agency its very own custom-branded native app that empowers your community members to access your offering anytime, anywhere.

Natively built on iOS and Android, our mobile app solution is aligned with the modern, intuitive experience people are used to.

It provides agencies with better performance, security, and functionality by seamlessly integrating into our platform, with no additional workflows or hidden costs.



RED FLAG #2

Lack of Innovation

Lack of Innovation

As years go by in a partnership between an agency and a vendor, a lack of software innovation can be an all-too-common issue. This lack of progress can greatly harm your ability to effectively engage your community and staff.

Choosing the right software for your agency today is just one of many ways you can better connect with those who live and work in your community—now and into the future.

When assessing a particular platform, make sure you really dig into the capabilities of the software. You should also look into the provider's commitment to rapid and continuous innovation.



What to Watch Out For

No Overview or Roadmap

- ✗ Inability to provide a high-level overview of past and planned innovations
- ✗ Lack of knowledge on their company's stance on innovation and improvements

Little Investment in R&D

- ✗ Vendors are not investing in research and development, nor do they plan to
- ✗ Disinterested in improving to meet the needs of their customers and end-users

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to the innovative nature of a vendor's software by asking the following questions:



Past Developments

What are some of the major developments you've released over the last five years and when were they deployed?



New Release Cadence

How often do you release new features?



Upcoming Innovations

What releases do you have planned for next year?



Process for New Features

What is your process for prioritizing new features?



Product Team

Do you have a team that's focused on developing new features?

Innovative Solutions with Xplor Recreation

From our forward-thinking partnerships with solutions like Data Lake to our dedicated research and development product team, Xplor Recreation is constantly evolving our software. We want to ensure that you can breathe easy, knowing our team will support you today and going forward.

You'll never have to worry about simply meeting your community members' expectations—our goal is always to help you exceed them.

This results in more smiling faces, a lot less worry, and an increase in staff time and resources.



RED FLAG #3

Insufficient Support or Account Management

Insufficient Support or Account Management

You and your team work hard to provide your community members with the best customer experience possible. Why should you expect anything less from your providers?



Unfortunately, dedicated customer support and account management isn't always standard practice with some recreation management software vendors. In certain cases, these key support systems either don't exist or will end up costing you a lot more money.

To avoid partnering with an unaccountable provider, look at their:



CUSTOMER
SUPPORT



ACCOUNT
MANAGEMENT

No Customer Support Availability

When you can only get ahold of the bots.

To best serve your community, your software partner should act like an extension of your business. Your vendor should always be available to help you find quick and effective solutions to any problem that may come up. Because even when the bots are friendly, they certainly can't replace the support of a real-live human!

With many vendors offering limited support or charging extra for this service, it's important that you look out for certain red flags when discussing this key deliverable with potential providers.

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's customer support by asking the following questions:



Support Ticket SLA

What is your Service Level Agreement (SLA) for support tickets? How quickly can I expect to hear from you when I have an issue?



Hours of Operation

What are your support team's hours of operation?



Level of Support

Do you offer support around the clock, 365 days a year?



Cost of Support

Do you charge for access to your support team or is it included in your fees?



Accessibility of Support

What channels can we access your support team through?

No Customer Support Availability

What to Watch Out For

Limited Support

- ✗ Support is only offered during limited days and times
- ✗ Seeking support comes with long wait times and extremely delayed ticket turnaround
- ✗ Inexperienced support team

Money for What?!

- ✗ Additional charges for access to a vendor's support team



Customer Support with Xplor Recreation

Xplor Recreation is proud to offer 24/7, 365 (human) support to all of our customers at no additional cost. Whenever you need us, our team will be there to help you sort out any challenges you might encounter.

A partnership with our team means that if you are having issues, you can get our help right away. You'll never have to make your customers wait because you can't get a hold of us.

No Dedicated Account Management

There's no point of contact or proactive communication.

To get the most out of a partnership with your recreation management software provider, regular account management calls are key.

The purpose of these calls should be to proactively review how you are using the software and notify you of any product updates. You should also use this time to communicate any future plans of your agency's that could impact your account or how you use the software.



Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's account management by asking the following questions:



Dedicated Account Manager

Will we have a dedicated account manager for our account?



Meeting Cadence

Will we have recurring meetings with our dedicated account manager?



Hidden Fees

Is there an additional cost for having a dedicated account manager and/or recurring meetings with your team?

No Dedicated Account Management

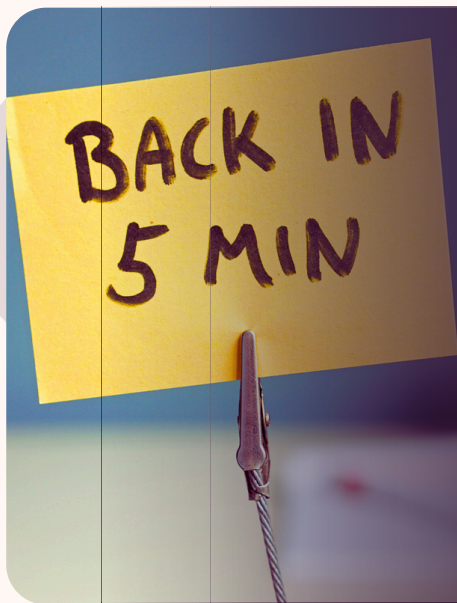
What to Watch Out For

No Consistent Point of Contact

- ✗ Dedicated account management (AM) services are not offered
- ✗ You do not have a main point of contact

The Silence Is Deafening

- ✗ No proactive investment in ensuring your agency's success
- ✗ No plan to help you make the most out of the technology and services
- ✗ Updates to their software are not communicated



Account Management with Xplor Recreation

Our account management team follows you throughout your onboarding and implementation process—and beyond. We want to make sure that you and your team have everything you need to succeed with our software.

After you transition to Xplor Recreation, you will be partnered with your dedicated account manager. You can expect to have regular meetings with your AM, in which they will help you sort through any roadblocks, as well as answer any questions you may have.

Your account manager will also proactively provide you with all the details you need on upcoming innovations and new software releases.



RED FLAG #4

No Open API Integrations

No Open API Integrations

We understand that you may have certain ways of doing things at your agency. This, of course, includes the technology and software you use.

From internal communications to bookkeeping, you and your team are probably most comfortable working with the systems and user interfaces that you know. And while some recreation management software platforms, like Xplor Recreation, offer open application program interface (API) integrations—not all do.



This means that you and your team may be forced to switch to new interfaces due to incompatibility with a vendor's recreation management software.

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's API integrations by asking the following questions:



Open API

Do you support open API integrations?



Integration Fees

Do you charge to integrate our existing APIs?



API Calls

Do you charge for your API calls?

What to Watch Out For

No Integration Options

- ✗ Vendor's API is unable to integrate with external applications

Limited Integration Options

- ✗ Vendor's software can only integrate with certain applications

Money for What?!

- ✗ API integration is an additional cost
- ✗ You're charged for every API call

Open API Integration with Xplor Recreation

Xplor Recreation has a robust, open application program interface that supports user-friendly inter-connectivity with your third-party solutions.

In the past, our clients have utilized our open API capabilities to build integrations with systems like their student management, library management, and city-wide billing.

We also have native integrations with many popular parks and recreation vendors, such as:

- Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) with Single Sign-On (SSO)
- Esri Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Musco Sports Lighting
- SkyLogix Lighting
- Technogym

These integration capabilities help make the transition to Xplor Recreation a more seamless experience for you, your staff and your community.



RED FLAG #5

Limited Payment Processing Capabilities

Limited Payment Processing Capabilities

Many vendors will require you to use either a preferred payment provider or their own in-house solution. The latter usually comes at a significant cost.

It's important to understand what merchant options are available to you, and the rates associated with using them—before you commit to a partnership.



What to Watch Out For

Limited Payment Options

- ✗ You can only use a vendor's in-house payment processor or preferred merchant
- ✗ Much higher processing fees than third-party options
- ✗ Inability to renegotiate rates until contract renewal

Extremely Unclear Pricing

- ✗ It can be nearly impossible to understand what rates some vendors charge for payment processing

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's payment processing capabilities by asking the following questions:



Processor Options

What payment processors do you integrate with?



Transaction Fees

What are the transaction fees for Card Present and Card Not Present?

Payment Processing with Xplor Recreation

Xplor Recreation offers customers the option of using our own processing system or integrating with a third party. Whichever of these is the most beneficial for you and your agency, it's available to you. No questions asked.

Our payment processing fees are also substantially lower than many other recreation management software providers.

We'll never hide our fees from you, and you'll always be aware of what you're paying for.





RED FLAG #6

Deceptive Pricing Models

Deceptive Pricing Models

“If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” Phishing emails promising riches, voicemails claiming you’ve won a cruise and, yes, even some seemingly affordable rec management software, all fall under this category!



With certain providers, pricing can seem much better than it is when vendors do not disclose additional fees until much later—if at all. Customers end up paying substantially more than they thought they would and, sometimes, they don’t even know why.

Make sure that you clearly understand what you’re paying for before you sign on for a long-term partnership.

To avoid partnering with a costly provider, look for:



HIDDEN
FEES



LONG-TERM
COSTS

Undisclosed or Hidden Fees

Determining what you're paying for is near impossible.

Many recreation management software vendors provide pricing that only shows the cost of their software subscription.

This "overview" is definitely not an accurate summary of what you'll be paying month-over-month. Instead, by the end of your partnership terms, you'll have paid a lot—like, a lot, a lot—more.



Charges You May Not Know You're Paying

Certain software providers will keep you in the dark about how they charge you on a monthly or annual basis for things like:

- ACH/EFT fees, which can range from \$5 to \$25 per transaction
- Monthly service charges, ranging from \$50 to \$200 per month
- Interchange fees, "handling" fees, surcharge fees, etc.
- Card Present and Card Not Present fees
- Credit card rates
- Automatic annual subscription fee increases
- Add-on modules or services

Some of these additional charges can cost you up to 3.2% of the total transaction.

Undisclosed or Hidden Fees

What to Watch Out For

Unclear Pricing

- ✗ No all-inclusive cost summary of their software and services
- ✗ Unable to find specifics on percentages taken as fees or annual fee increases (look in the fine print!)
- ✗ Hard to decipher what you're actually paying for

“Cheaper” than Most

- ✗ Always pause if a vendor appears to be substantially more affordable than other providers

A Laundry List of Hidden Costs

- ✗ From payment fees to charges for standard support, some vendors charge for just about everything

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's overall pricing by asking the following questions:



All-Inclusive Cost

What is the all-inclusive, annual cost of using your service, including transaction fees and payment processing fees?



Hidden Fees

What modules and services are included in this cost? Are there additional costs for online registration, facility booking, customer support, or account management?



Missing Services

Are there any software functionalities or services that are not reflected in the cost you've provided?

Long-Term Cost of Training on Software

Not everything is included. Even when it should be.

Another important factor to consider when evaluating a vendor is the long-term cost of doing business, such as keeping your team trained up on their software.

Whether you want to ensure your staff is getting the most out of the platform or you have a group of new hires, periodic refresher training is always a good idea.

This can help ensure that you, your team, and the members of your community are getting the best possible experience out of your recreation management software.

Unfortunately, many vendors make their training modules unnecessarily complicated and drawn out, while charging incredibly high fees.

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's long-term training fees by asking the following questions:



Available Training

What kind of ongoing training services do you offer?



Cost of Training

What are the costs of your refresher training courses?



Training Distribution

How do you offer your training sessions? Online, in person, or both?

Long-Term Cost of Training on Software

What to Watch Out For

Unclear Logistics

- ✗ There's little to no information on the frequency or cost of training

Longer than Necessary

- ✗ Unnecessarily long training blocks that result in higher costs

Restrictive Location

- ✗ Only in-person training options, leading to a much larger bill



Fee Structures with Xplor Recreation

Through Clearent by Xplor, Xplor Recreation is able to offer you lower rates than most other recreation management software providers. This is based on our long-standing relationships with North America's major credit card providers.

We are also always transparent about our fees. From your implementation cost to your annual charge, you will always know what you're paying for. Our team will never hide fees from you or claim to be cheaper than we are just to secure your business.



RED FLAG #7

Hasty Software Implementation

Hasty Software Implementation

While you'd never plan to switch software providers on a tight timeline, sometimes, these things happen. If you ever find yourself in this tricky situation, we have one main piece of advice—don't panic! Even if you feel pressure to find a solution, and fast, don't simply sign on with the first provider who says they can get you up and running in three-to-six months.

Why? Because implementing a new recreation management software in that amount of time is simply not possible.



They may be able to get the bare minimum set up in a hurry—but this typically doesn't include several key parts of the actual implementation. In the end, you'll end up paying much more to extend and finish everything properly.

To avoid
partnering with a
hasty provider,
look at their:



IMPLEMENTATION
TIMELINE



DATA
MIGRATION

Super Quick Implementation

In this case, faster is rarely better.

Fast implementation is not only unrealistic but can cause a lot of chaos for your agency and the community members you serve. This is because a hasty transition leaves you and your team very little time to get familiar with the new software.

Without enough time to learn the basics of how to use the platform, staff are typically unable to serve community members to the best of their ability.

Often, this leads to increased wait times, unanswered questions, and a lot more friction for your agency—resulting in both your team and your customers becoming incredibly frustrated.

Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's implementation timeline by asking the following questions:



Implementation Timeline

How long is implementation estimated to take from start to finish?



Implementation Process

What does the implementation process and schedule look like?



Client Requirements

What are the requirements from our agency for you to proceed with implementation?



Implementation Costs

Will we incur additional fees if implementation takes longer than planned?

Super Quick Implementation

What to Watch Out For

Less than 6 Months

- ✗ Beware of implementation timelines of less than six months
- ✗ Clients often end up paying more to extend implementation

Out-of-the-Box Solutions

- ✗ Shorter implementation typically means less custom software
- ✗ Adjustments to software are not available
- ✗ When adjustments are possible, customization costs much more



Customization with Xplor Recreation

Before our team demos our software, we make sure that we understand the priorities of each agency we talk to. Our team wants to understand your goals and what you're trying to accomplish to ensure that everyone is aligned before we enter into a partnership together.

Our ability to customize workflows for your agency means that once everything has been implemented, you and your team will be set up for success.

We take our time understanding your organization, so you can launch our software within your community with peace of mind.

Unclear Data Migration Process

There's zero guidance on what to do with your data.

Regardless of whether you want to migrate your data from your old platform or start fresh, when talking to a potential new software partner, make sure that you discuss this key part of your transition.

Without it, you and your team will be left to figure things out on your own in the thick of launching a new platform.

Unfortunately, not all recreation management software providers include this important consideration in their implementation offering.



Questions to Ask Potential Vendors

Uncover possible red flags when it comes to a vendor's data processes by asking the following questions:



Data Migration Experience

Have you conducted data migrations in the past? What is your process?



Migration Costs

Are there any fees involved in migrating our data from our old platform to yours?



Client Expectations

What preparations and deliverables are required from our agency?

Unclear Data Migration Process

What to Watch Out For

No Data Process

- ✗ Transition to your new software becomes stressful and chaotic
- ✗ Lost data and friction for your community members

Money for What?!

- ✗ Data recommendations or migration costs a lot extra

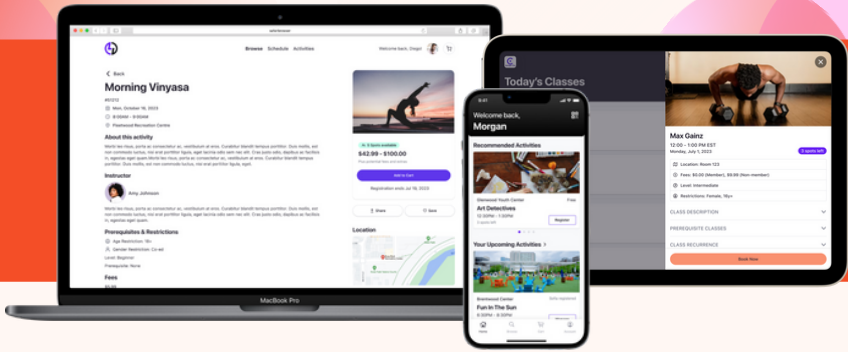


Historical Data Management with Xplor Recreation

Over the years, Xplor Recreation has performed data migration from over 35 different platforms.

While our team recommends starting fresh as a best practice, Xplor Recreation can help you with your data management—regardless of the implementation approach you choose.

If you'd like to migrate data from your old system, our team will build a tailored migration plan for every one of your locations and sites. This plan will follow the trickle-down principle to minimize downtime for your agency, so you can focus on what matters—bringing joyful experiences to your community.



Book a demo call today!



STEP 1

Schedule your demo call with our team.



STEP 2

Transform your parks and rec operations.



STEP 3

Start serving your community even better.

[Book Your Demo](#)



“It’s like going from an old Nokia brick phone to a smartphone. The Nokia still does the basic things you need it to do, but the quality and user experience just isn’t there. We decided it was time to ditch the 90s Nokia phone and get ourselves onto something more modern, fluid, and innovative.”

John N. Spencer - City of Ocala ([Full Case Study](#))