

What to Look for in a Data Collection Software

STANDARDS

Certified by NASSCO for PACP, LACP, or MACP. The software does not need to be certified for all of the collection formats, but it does need to be certified for the collection format you want to use. Check the NASSCO.org website to find out what the latest certification standard is and what software products meet the requirement.

CCTV VENDOR

Make sure that the product you want to use has a built-in interface for the inspection system you intend to use. With an interface it is possible to caption text onto the video and to have counter information automatically enter the correct fields in the software program. If there is no interface you will be manually entering more information and it will take longer to complete a survey.

COLLECT DATA

NASSCO makes sure that all of the correct codes are available, all of the fields are there, and the software validates the information entered for correctness. Make a list of other features you may want like: create multiple surveys on a pipe, maintain asset and survey information in the database, make fields mandatory so the user cannot leave them blank, simplify repetitive functions like entering the user name and certificate number, what video formats are available, does it interface with your Asset Management or Work Order Management programs, does it import asset information into the database from GIS or other sources.

REPORTING

Find out what kinds of reports are standard or built into the software product.

SHARE DATA

The NASSCO certification ensures that you will be able to share PACP data between software products by testing the required import/export function to the PACP-LACP or MACP transfer file. (If you cannot import and export from the software product it is not NASSCO certified). How easy is it to move data from your truck to your office network. Does the software have backup functions to move or copy the database files or will you be required to manually move folders in Windows Explorer. Are there methods to share digital information with someone who does not have the same software product.

CONSOLIDATE DATA

Will you be able to merge or consolidate information from multiple sources into one database? What if you need to move just one survey to another database or project, can you?

MANAGE DATA

How are movies stored and named. Can you create your own naming convention for the movies or pictures. Is there a built-in process to move movies to a network location?

SUPPORT

What are the support hours for the software product? Do they offer training classes on site or via the web? Do they offer a support program to keep you updated with the latest software version and capabilities?

REFERENCES

Ask for references and call them. Learn how responsive the software provider is when there is a problem. Find out if you get to talk to a person quickly to resolve your problem. How long does it take to get an answer or returned phone call? All software programs will occasionally have problems but you want to make sure that the provider cares about the customer and tries to help them as quickly as possible.