

## 18 Requirements for Success with CRM

Organizations rarely go it alone with implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategy and its supporting technology. There's so much to consider: business strategies, technology, budgets, operational processes, change management issues, and more.

No matter what type of company, good CRM practices are often applicable to companies in many industries. A core tenet of CRM is **customer centrality**. Companies must instill a customer-centric sense throughout the organization to find success with a CRM initiative and to get the most "bang for the buck". Essentially, companies must not only focus on cutting costs and improving productivity, they must also enhance the experience of customers across all customer touch points.

The following requirements need to be considered to obtain success deserving with CRM:

- **Get Executive Buy-In** Management must believe in a new CRM system and lead by using the system themselves. Support throughout all echelons of upper management affirms the company's commitment to the initiative, which will motivate all stakeholders below management. Success will come for a manager who realizes the value of CRM, understands the problems it's going to solve, and dedicates time and energy to making it happen. It's incredibly important to be hands-on and involved directly.
- **Establish Measurable Business Goals.** Define the specific business benefits that the CRM initiative is expected to deliver
- **Let Business Goals Drive Functionality.** Will the feature help our company better serve customers, improve efficiency in business processes, and lead to results that over-achieve the goals.
- **Avoid automating chaos.** CRM Project leaders need to gain a 360-degree view of their own business first. Which business processes need to be rebuilt or simply need a little touch-up? What derails CRM initiatives very often is the lack of focus on the people and business processes.
- **Consider all the stakeholders affected by the system.** Understand what they stand to gain or lose. Actively involve end users in the solution design. Solicit and act upon end user input by providing WIIFT, "What's In It For Them". A change to being "customer-centric" from product or operations centric involves management of the change process among all users. Make sure employees know what it means to deliver customer value.

- **Align departmental strategies.** . Each department, whether it's customer service, marketing team or sales force, has its own requirements and goals. They are also, however all part of an entity that should communicate a consistent message and brand experience across all customer touch points. Create alignment between customers and the enterprise.
- **Strategy first, technology second.** The software is there to enable implementation of a CRM strategy, not the other way around. Reorganizing business process efficiencies and bolstering revenue are good drivers of a CRM strategy. Find out how your company's customer touch points can maximize those ideas, then give customers applications that work with them.
- **Use as much out-of-box functionality, first.** Then customized for additional needs. By getting up to speed with core functionality you get faster ROI. By learning of the CRM's functionality you'll be able to determine if there is a business process that needs changing or if customization is required.
- **Use experienced, Training CRM consultants.** Your business success comes from knowing what you do best. Likewise CRM consultants live and breathe CRM and know what works and what doesn't. Ask the expert when faced with a problem, whether it's customization, functionality, or deployment strategy. CRM specific knowledge will produce ROI faster.
- **Communicate, Communicate** -Keep people informed of the goals, objectives and progress. People feel better during the management of this big business change by knows what is going on. Communicate the "quick wins" as they occur.
- **Invest in Training.** Training helps to empower end users and helps them become involved. Training should not merely focus on demonstrating how to use the software's features and functionality. Instead, training should teach employees how to effectively execute the business process enabled by the CRM system. Give your end-users as much time as needed with the new solution before going live – it makes the transition much easier. Over time additional reinforcement training will provide additional benefits.
- **Use a Phased Rollout Schedule.** Focus each phase on a specific CRM objective, which is designed to produce a "quick win" – that is, meaningful results in a reasonable amount of time. Smaller, more manageable phases can yield more momentum and higher end-user adoption. You're building a holistic approach, but on a step-by-step process.
- **Start With and Maintain Quality Customer information.** Behavioral data is the lifeblood of CRM. CRM requires accurate customer information so start by cleaning up any migrated data and duplications. Do this before a roll-out. People will have to tackle the tough job of data quality, access and maintenance.

- **Minimize financial risks.** It's important that executives come to grips with the fact that CRM is not a one time investment. As more and more users access the system, additional functionality will be found useful and other benefits become evident. CRM is a journey not a destination.
- **Consider migration paths-** understand where your company is heading. Make sure the software vendor you've selected can provide the additional functionality you might need in two or three years. Select one that will enable your CRM software to grow as your company grows.
- **Plan for disruptions – Companies change.** They make acquisitions or they get acquired, sections are sold off or outsourced, and executives get replaced. When making a CRM implementation, these are changes that management must be ready for.
- **Measure, Monitor and Track.** Once the system goes live, your company must measure, monitor and track the system's effectiveness, with an eye to continuously improving performance. Changing behavior is a long –term process so monitor to track progress.
- **Choose a champion of Change.** When making a full-suite implementation, start with a single department and let the dominos fall into place. Choose a department with a manager who's behind the implementation, realizes its benefits, and whose department will also find the most success early on. Nothing jump-starts a CRM implementation more than a manager who always has that can-do attitude. CRM success can be contagious.