

PRACTICAL CRM SOLUTIONS: ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Practical CRM Solutions: Are you on the right track?

1. Introduction

The essentials of responsive business lie in effective customer management. Today, CRM solutions and its implementation can lead you towards achieving the target—gaining customer loyalty and commitment. Words that turn figures into bills depend upon your ability to drive business and customers through your company products. To generate and manage revenues and to 'cash-on' over a sensible and practical CRM software, you may need to be extra careful, and follow a sound implementation policy. A CRM software must do some groundwork to build itself upon, looking up to the specific need of your company, offering features that actually help you in everyday business practice.

The customer is god. An effective CRM is able to please this god by placing him at a level that makes your business 'customer-centric' in the most practical sense. Look around, and you will find successful businesses to have adopted this policy and achieved major benefits. When you unveil your business and look at the whole deal by stepping into your customer's shoes, you would know exactly what to do. With the line of expectations and competition rising high over the shoreline, the winning factors could be some very considerate and sensitive handling of corporate information, delivering an improved experience. Your chances increase with customer loyalty, and you can always bank upon innovation to restructure old modes and discard outdated policies that make your customers shrink their nose.

2. Identifying your customers

The line between a customer and potential customer has grown thinner than ever before. With global locations, businesses have gained new relevance in a fast-paced e-world. Corporate information can be used in different ways, as the concept of customer is no longer restricted to only a particular audience. Your end user could be a vendor, vendor-turned-partner, client, employee, future employee or even your mentor.

Your CRM solution should target all potential groups that rely on your company apart from providing systematic and timely information. This information then has more meaning than ever, because it has the potential to win a customer and establish loyalty with your company name. We already know the importance of building credibility, the most delicate and essential factor driving companies towards better CRM solutions.

3. CMS & CRM: What's the difference, anyway?

It's safe to say CRM is the superior version of CMS for one simple reason - it offers more customer information and control. Its functionality and scope lie far beyond contact management systems. And it allows support and service agents to access the most crucial information to respond to peculiar customer queries in a timely manner. Important data like customer buying habits and interests; sales history, credit card details and important financial data practically arm your marketing personnel to handle information in the best company interests. Delving into information like special offers; terms and deals via systematic reporting allow your sale reps to understand customer habits and sales graph in a more detailed manner. This instant information can be accessed through past customer invoices, sales history and even email propositions.

Your business's customers, on the other hand, also benefit from this targeted approach. They get to hear about the offers and special prices that interest them, and meet their overall objective and budget. In a way,

CRM is the next step to CMS, which offers a quick shot to customer information; CRM is like a detailed record of 'productive' information that can be put to diligent use.

4. Define your requirement: Are you a medium-sized company?

There are software companies selling CRM, who boast of offering solutions that cater to global enterprises. Maybe, but how good is it for you? It really helps to evaluate on pragmatic grounds, your real on-hands requirement. For mid-sized companies, these over-capacitated solutions mean burning a big hole in the pocket, without actually requiring such a solution. You will find many CRM solutions that now flood the market; especially catering to small-to-mid sized companies requiring specific functionalities. The features and functionalities are at par with the best enterprise solution, only at a cost that easily fits into the budget of growing mid-size companies. It makes sense to start at a smaller scale and expand later on, building on what you have, without wasting on a capacity that you do not need now, nor in near future.

CRM solutions built for mid-size companies are loaded with great functionality that can be used right out of the box. Costs and instant implementation play a crucial role in deciding the best CRM solution for average-sized companies. For larger enterprises, like Fortune 500 companies, customization and integration take more time and resources. The deal looks more promising for mid-size companies with a clear need, you could be a 20+ company, on threshold of growth, and you can have the best CRM solution that runs smoothly and costs minimal.

5. Planning it up: Step-by-step

There is some truth in the adage 'Failure to plan is a sure plan for failure'. Most of us have reached where we have with a lot of careful and timely planning. Applying to the sound and most logical code, its not surprising that a sound plan can help more than anything when it comes to CRM solution and its real-life implementation. Discuss investment, costs, benefits and the overall expected ROI beforehand.

Factors to weigh upon:

- Define stakeholders
- Needs analysis and benefit projection
- Setting up the budget
- Planning the costs associated with identifying vendors, testing solutions, implementation, integration, training and support
- Special team assigned for completion and implementation of CRM project

Apart from diligent planning in the above areas, it can also help to discuss with customers. Open up with best business practices for sales and customer service. Segregate data in accordance with each group: sales rep/ vendors/partner/customer service agents. Confirm and reconfirm that your entire data management list is complete. Your potential CRM user is any person who requires and may require information available through the exhaustive CRM software.

6. Preparing for Product Demos

After initial planning and realistic estimation of your company's CRM requirement, you can focus upon potential CRM solutions offered by vendors. It is important to let the vendors learn about your exact area of focus, company's overall CRM-policy and the environment and platform, like having the right hardware and the right operating system available for demo. It will save yours and the vendor's precious time and energy. Defining goals will also help in better realization of demand and supply. Deciding upon the right CRM software may not be easy with the available choices. A reliable scoring system based upon specific areas

that you are looking at, tabulating the scores for benefits and shortcomings, vendor's ingenuity and innovative skills, overall customer satisfaction and reliability can help in arriving at the right decision. The idea is to merit a CRM solution that helps you today, and dwells safely in your tomorrow or at least a long time to pass by.

7. Technology: A crucial indicator

Pay close attention to the technology used in the CRM solution. Be certain that the vendor uses current technology, one that can be verified for the current product version, as deployed today. It is important to insist upon certain crucial factors apart from the functionality and features the CRM solution promises to offer,

- The CRM solution should be web-based for virtually 24/7 access from any point, any time
- Complete integration with back-office systems
- The software should be easily adaptable to your company's growing needs
- The ability to be implemented with nominal expenses
- Easy features: Intuitive and easy to use by all your external & internal staff & partners

A comprehensive CRM solution should take care of the following:

- Marketing campaign management
- Sales force automation
- Customer care
- Contact Management
- Task management/scheduling

A cursory glance at many factors should not ever drive off the primary focus— customer. A timely and regular feedback from your customers depending upon their satisfaction levels should be a clear indicative of success. Ask for constructive suggestions. A good and reasonable CRM solution should provide you with the scope to adapt to evolving customer needs. You can setup standards and metrics to track progress for customer satisfaction, by trailing upon factors like easing sales cycles, improving efficiency, increasing proceeds and lifting bottom-line sale figures.

About Boss CRM

BOSS CRM (<http://www.bosscrm.com>) offers you the most comprehensive Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution to streamline the customer qualification, acquisition and retention process. BOSS CRM helps organizations large and small maximize marketing effectiveness, accelerate sales processes, enable single view of customer, lower operating cost and improve customer satisfaction. BOSS CRM is created, designed and optimized with the marketing and sales departments in mind. Our products and services simplify the customer identification, qualification and acquisition process, allowing your marketing and sales departments to focus more of their valuable time and effort in efficiently reaching the best and most effective customers. BOSS CRM, a division of Sohodo, Inc. is a leading provider of easy-to-use, on-demand applications for contact management, lead generation, online group calendar, tasks management, marketing campaigns, document management and helpdesk. Headquartered in San Jose, California. Sign up for free CRM trial at <http://www.bosscrm.com/free-crm-software-trial.html>