

CRM Closes Cost Barriers for Small Business Users

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1.0 Sales Methodology

1.1 Overview

Customer Relationship Management software systematizes and automates the sales process from concept to sales to service. It eliminates the traditionally fragmented approach to managing marketing efforts because all information is maintained in one repository that is accessible instantly for analysis in any given marketing situation.

Customer Relationship Management Systems development and analysis began to take place beginning somewhere in the early 90s. The driving force was the introduction and uptake of e-commerce solutions that pushed customer service demands into the forefront of the Internet boom. The past couple of years have seen a maturity and sophistication evolve in the performance and capacity of CRM systems. It is generally agreed that CRM systems are successful in providing cost savings and efficiency in customer development and customer retention activities. Traditional installations of CRM systems from larger companies are typically beyond the reach of most Small and Medium Businesses because of pricing and maintenance costs associated with larger application installations.

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2.0 Traditional Small Business Management

Many SMBs struggle to meet and maintain market placement and enterprise efficiency in their marketing and sales efforts without the benefit of a CRM system. As small and growing enterprises know, it is imperative to undertake analysis of marketing efforts and to maintain an understanding of the results as part of their business line activities. Typically this has been achieved with the use of a combination of tools, usually a series of inefficient stand alone applications with/or without a paper process. The time commitment to access and analyze information from separate holdings is a drag on company resources and limits excellence in marketing efforts.

The costs of traditional CRM systems have been a proven barrier for SMB until about the mid nineties. The development of on-demand services since then has made Marketing Automation Services a viable option for SMB in addressing the various aspects of their marketing efforts in a cost efficient manner.

3.0 On Demand CRM Solution

Product offerings in better on-demand CRM packages offer an end to end solution, that allows for interaction between Marketing, Sales, Customer Service/Support on the front end and supply chain functionality on the back end. They include such activities as tracking marketing efforts to identifying sales leads and value customers, and integrating the sales team and customer service activities in a seamless integrated platform. Currently, additional functionality available in some of these packages includes integration to the supply chain and billing aspects of the sales process.

By merging data from all marketing streams within an on-demand CRM solution, it is possible to gather information and data together to transform it into useful information. At this point a SMB owner is able to use the service to identify high value customers, identify and correct deficiencies in service and/or support and finesse customer support. SMB can now level the playing field with acquisition of an affordable CRM tool. There are many other opportunities to exploit depending on the level of detail and understanding of your business processes and interest in investing in developing the CRM application.

Customers today expect to have multi channel access to their business partners, service providers, product or manufacturer. This has been a logical evolution with the advent of Internet and the greening of the Internet user base. This user base is savvy and even savage in its expectations, and impulse to move on. It is very important for business to understand the intolerance of this growing user base and to respect the perils of working and marketing in the digital world with inadequate tools.

Because of the willingness of today's digital users to move quickly to the next website, web form, whatever, it is important that any CRM service provider have this insight and provide an application and services that do not alienate this growing segment of an on line customer. The CRM application must be responsive, the service unconditional and the experience for both the SMB customer and the CRM user satisfying. Otherwise, the risk of damage to the SMB product/service can be irreparable or in the least, expensive to repair.

At the same time, this user base demonstrates great loyalty and it can and does generate buzz amongst peers, similar markets and other venues within a typically broad network of associates. There is a great effort at personalization in most on line communities including commercial venues. Business relationships are forged and maintained in digital fashion, and are as real and productive as any other associations. To tap into this genre of loyalty and association is the challenge and reward that is possible with good CRM systems in place.

CRM is not an instant 'fix'. CRM will provide tools that enhance your business processes and offer a bridge into the fast moving and demanding world of the digital economy. It is a solid support to 'offline' enterprises as well, and it is a learning tool for any organization that wishes to advance in their market segment or to diversify into other areas.

4.0 The Right CRM Solution

It is important to find a CRM tool that fits your business objectives and to not attempt to modify business processes to fit the CRM tool. Flexibility in the CRM product is paramount to the success of the SMB marketing investment. Surprisingly, this can be accomplished without the burden of a heavy and expensive deployment of a customized tool. It is possible to find CRM tools out there that provide Data/Information Management, Data Privacy/Security, Customer Service, Training and Analysis all within one standard, on line service. The end result which is a unified view of your marketing situation and the ability to assess situations and respond quickly and decisively.

SMB added functionality and marketing capacity leads to:

- Increased Sales
- Great Customer Service
- Lower Costs
- Acquisition and Retention of Customer Loyalty

It is a fact that CRM services are now accessible to Small and Medium Business (SMB) through a variety of integrated, on demand service providers. The quality and flexibility of the CRM tool bears investigation and comparison, be sure to not the level of support offered to SMB buyers.

Some questions to ask if you are thinking to acquire CRM Services:

1. How much of my time/funds will be diverted from my day to day work to implement a CRM solution for my small business?
2. How responsive is the CRM tool to my business process?
3. Is the tool flexible enough to grow along with my long term goals?
4. Can I afford to acquire a CRM Service?
5. Will I be able to see/understand a Return on my Investment (ROI)?
6. Is there guaranteed training/customer support with the CRM Service?

Of course, there are a host of other questions that need to be answered, but these with a little research in answer to the questions above, you will be on your way to understanding your CRM needs.

Clearly, it is highly desirable for any Small Business to have access to a Customer Relationship Management Service, but within certain parameters. A CRM tool is only advantageous if it doesn't tax a Small Business financially or operationally. A CRM tool must provide a solid and positive experience for the SMB and its customers. And the CRM service must be scalable to accommodate SMB growth.

Any business considering the use of CRM Systems must undertake to do the research necessary to ensure they are getting the best possible solution for their business goals. If you would like further information from Salesboom.com to enhance your research efforts, please feel free to fill in the form below and a representative will contact you to answer your questions.

5.0 Contact Us

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6.0 More Information

For more information regarding our products and services please visit our site at:

<http://www.salesboom.com>