



CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Customer Relationship Management

A CRM is a Customer Relationship Management tool. It refers to a system for organizing customer data. Typically, multiple teams interact with a CRM to extract insights from the database related to their goals. Sales, communications, and customer success teams can all benefit from a robust CRM.

Companies have many CRMs to choose from. Choosing the right CRM is about <u>aligning</u> business objectives with technology. First, companies need to understand which customer data points are most essential to achieving their business goals. Then, they need to decide which insights and analysis capabilities can best serve their customers.

CRMs are important because they allow companies to personalize interactions with customers. A CRM can track professional data about prior projects as well as personal data that assists with relationship building. For instance, before making a sales pitch to a previous client, a CRM can reveal exactly how much money they spent on prior projects. The CRM could also include notes on which hobbies or breed of dog the client favors.

Ultimately, a great customer relationship management system helps companies take the guesswork out of doing business. There are many other benefits to be gained by implementing the right CRM, and this document will review them all with a full roadmap.

HALLENGES:			

DEFINING CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Defining Consumer Relationship Management

How do companies use a CRM, and what can it do for them? At a basic level, companies use CRMs to keep track of interactions with customers. A CRM can provide an overview of sales and marketing efforts, which helps inform strategic decisions around prospecting. Many companies use CRMs to maintain existing relationships as well as find and retain new customers. A CRM can help companies sell more products and services by building strong relationships with customers.

There are some essential components that every CRM should include. Most customer relationship management systems include everything a company needs for building strong relationships with its customers. These elements include contact information, communications, purchase history, and lead management. CRMs typically offer analysis techniques so that teams may pull reports and compare goals to results.

Contact Management

The contact management portion has up-to-date information about the customer. This includes the client's contact information as well as any relevant communications like service calls. A CRM can track all kinds of client data, depending on what is important to the company. For instance, this client data could include: client history, current client preferences, client social media presence, past interactions with a client, client infrastructure details, past sales interactions, and more. Lead management provides the company with a way to track individual customers as they move through the sales pipeline, all the way from prospect to up-selling. Forecasting is another powerful tool available in most CRMs. Managers use this mechanism to help motivate their sales teams.

Ability to Communicate

On the back end, customer relationship management relies on a team's ability to communicate seamlessly. As a result, many CRMs include instant messaging between employees, file storage, and email and calendar integration. It's much easier to manage customer relationships if both client-facing and internal communications can happen on the same platform. Synced across a team, and with up to date calendars and contact lists, a robust CRM can have a powerful impact on productivity.

Finally, some CRMs offer segmentation with customized dashboards for different teams. Organizing customer data is one task, but a great CRM must also offer an intuitive and legible presentation of that data. Sales and marketing teams can benefit from segmentation and visually-pleasing data dashboards.

THIS WHITEPAPER WILL PROVIDE A FULL ROADMAP OF THE FOLLOWING:

- An overview of the most popular customer relationship management systems
- The history of the development of customer relationship management systems
- Determining the need for a customer relationship management system
- Variables that impact your choice of customer relationship management system
- Steps for implementing a new customer relationship management system
- Case studies on the effective use of customer relationship management systems





OVERVIEW OF POPULAR CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

We've listed some of the most popular customer relationship management systems below. While all of them share a similar goal, to improve your customer relationships, not all of them are ideal for every business. Some of these systems work best with companies that are small and aren't able to allocate a large portion of their budget to their CRM system while others are packed with features that justify their prices.

Salesforce

Industry-standard CRM, flexible layout and functionality, extensive 3rd party integrations, easy to learn

Salesforce is an industry-standard CRM. There are three major reasons that users value it. First, Salesforce's flexibility allows users to customize the appearance and functionality of their layout. Teams can find a workflow and a page template that works best for them, rather than being limited to a single rigid format. Second, Salesforce offers integrations with many other applications like email, accounting, and marketing. Third, the onboarding process is thorough. Salesforce prides itself on making it easy to learn how to use their software.

Zoho

Flexible subscriptions, intuitive UX, extensive customer support, 3rd party integrations, and secure data encryption

This CRM offers more flexibility concerning subscriptions. Companies can access Zoho with month-to-month subscriptions rather than rigid multi-year contracts. Its user interface is also considerably more intuitive than other CRMs. Zoho offers 24/7 customer support from a team of engineers. It also provides secure data encryption to protect customer data with plenty of options for customizing user access. Users can integrate third-party applications but may need support from engineers to make it work.

HubSpot

Great starter CRM, customizable data dashboards, but limited growth potential

The basic version of <u>HubSpot</u> is free to use, and companies can get started within a matter of minutes. For SMEs, this is a great starter CRM. It offers less functionality and growth potential but it's easy to launch quickly. HubSpot offers data dashboards with drag and drop options to customize reports, though it doesn't include as many variables as other CRMs on this list.

SugarCRM

Extensive functionality, open-source and customizable

This CRM used to be used primarily by smaller companies, but it is now popular among larger businesses with thousands of users. SugarCRM offers many of the same functionalities as Salesforce, but a notable difference is that SugarCRM is open-source. This means that any developer can access the source code, add her own integrations, and customize the software.

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OVERVIEW OF POPULAR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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Pipedrive

Intuitive UX, quite affordable, and a simple but powerful dashboard

With 24/7 support and great training modules, Pipedrive has grown to be a major competitor with Salesforce. It's easy to launch quickly and the user interface is very intuitive. Pipedrive is quite affordable and offers a simple but powerful data dashboard that helps get teams on the same page quickly. This CRM is used primarily by small and mid-sized businesses that prefer a lightweight interface.

Freshsales

Very affordable but limited features

This CRM is one of the most affordable systems on the market today. Freshsales is used mostly by small businesses who don't need the advanced features (or high price tag) of more robust systems like Salesforce. In Freshsales, companies can set up automatic lead generation sequences but they're not as powerful as the ones offered by bigger CRMs.

Insightly

Free up to two users but not many app integrations or reporting dashboards

Mostly used by small businesses and nonprofits, Insightly is free for up to two users. It doesn't provide many app integrations or reporting dashboards, but it can be a great CRM for freelancers or very small businesses who need to start somewhere. Insightly is well rated for customer support and can handle invoice creation, lead segmentation, and sales reports.

LinkedIn

Not technically a CRM but provides powerful free relationship-building tools

While not technically a CRM, LinkedIn offers many powerful relationship-building tools that should not be overlooked. Anyone serious about their business will be active on LinkedIn. Its connection functionality allows users to visualize networks by industry and customize their outreach. LinkedIn is experimenting with a more formal CRM called <u>Sales Navigator</u>. It is owned by Microsoft and can be effectively used at a free level

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THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

An effective customer relationship management system can give employees the tools to make customers feel seen and heard. This can have a dramatic impact on sales pipelines, conversion rates, and revenue. It's clear that the right CRM can make or break a company's relationships with its customers. Amazon is a perfect example of a company with a CRM system that has become fundamental to its business model.

The importance of a company's CRM should not be underestimated. Consider these benefits:

- Cloud-based CRMs can prevent dealing with server issues and version upgrades
- Mobile-friendly CRMs enable salespeople to access customer data across devices
- CRMs have the ability to integrate with other applications like accounting and social media
- Sales and marketing teams can jointly utilize the CRM with separate dashboards (no infighting)
- CRM reports can train teams to value analytics
- A CRM can make social circles visible to understand relationships and support sales teams

However, companies must be careful not to use CRM systems as a substitute for building real relationships with customers. They should continue to pay attention to the humans behind the data. Companies must stay in tune with customers' changing needs and desires so that the business can change with them.

Amazon's CRM is built on a mechanism that tracks a customer's past purchases and recommends similar products. This simple functionality, though complex on the back-end, has resulted in powerful market dominance for Jeff Bezos and the company. Amazon now captures more than half of every \$1 that Americans spend online. Their recommender system has been copied by competitors around the globe, even though Amazon's current CRM was built in-house and is difficult to replicate. It's important to pay attention to the user interface of Amazon's customer relationship management system. Not only is the data content in itself significant but the appearance and user flow are equally (if not more) important to its success. Their checkout system is easy to use which allows the company to offer a huge selection of products without confusing customers.

On the back-end, Amazon's CRM harvests customer data from every interaction on their website. Each click becomes a datapoint which helps personalize the customer experience and improve the company's selling techniques. Plus, their CRM makes it easy for Amazon's customer support staff to easily tap into the data-rich profile and quickly assist customers with problems.



HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Today when we think of customer relationship management systems we think of software. This leads to the common misconception that CRM is a new concept. However, customer relationships have existed since trade began and the enablement of CRM systems through software is relatively new. Prior to the advent of CRM software businesses used Rolodexes to keep track of their customer relationships and long ago might have had few enough customers to remember them all. The new version of CRM systems enables companies to scale their customer relationships like never before, but the concept is not new.

In 2018, the CRM market grew <u>15.6% in 2018</u> as small and medium-sized businesses adopted these tools. But customer relationship management systems have existed since the earliest days of trade. It is only in recent times that software-driven CRMs have taken center stage, formalizing what successful business owners have always known: customer data is the root of all market intelligence.

Early Merchants and Customer Relationships

The very first customer relationship management ideas came from early merchants. They knew it behooved them to not only understand the supply chain but to remember what their customers wanted. When a customer feels known, they return to do more business. For instance, a medieval merchant might observe that a customer purchases 12 barrels of salted fish on the first day of every month. Anticipating this transaction helps the merchant prepare those products ahead of time, as well as figuring out ways to upsell them. Keeping a record makes it easier to customize the sales pitch. The wisest of ancient business owners took it even further. Early merchants studied the movements and communications of their customers so they could try to sell them any necessary products for upcoming journeys or building projects.

Twentieth Century Evolution

Business practices began to change in the <u>twentieth century</u>. Specifically, the post-War business economy of the 1940s and the Mad Men era of the 1960s saw major changes in customer relationship management when automation and accounting became more available. Salespeople kept customer names and notes in their Rolodexes to facilitate more personal conversations. They used these notes as a manual version of a CRM system. But inevitably, customer databases grew too large for a simple filing system. Another concern was that these hardcopy systems often contained sensitive customer data and were highly vulnerable to theft. Business owners hungered for a better way to give their entire team access to customer relationship management information.



HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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Computer-Driven CRMs

Computer-driven CRM entered the business world with a vengeance in the 1980s and 1990s. No longer purely for contact management, the new CRM systems combined contact information with sales and marketing intel. Kate and Robert Kestenbaum were two of the early pioneers of database marketing. They realized that they could combine sales force automation (SFA) techniques with a contact database to create a powerful CRM tool. This combination laid the foundation for all future customer relationship management systems. After that, many vendors hopped on the CRM train to produce computer software for large corporations. Eventually, smaller businesses were targeted with off-the-shelf programs and options for customization increased every year.

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DETERMINING THE NEED FOR A CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Your company should always be on the lookout for signs that your business should evaluate its CRM system. If your organization is experiencing any of the triggers detailed in this section then you would benefit from evaluating your organization's customer relationship management system.

- Multiple Sources of Customer Information
 Without a centralized source of customer data, companies run the risk of confusing customers.
 Different teams could be working from different datasets with no communication between them. The result is a muddled pipeline with unclear objectives.
- ☐ Difficulty Generating Reports

 If a company is generating data but cannot draw actionable insights, then a better CRM could be the solution. Insights are easy when the CRM provides clear reporting templates, data dashboards, and intuitive analytics.
- ☐ Every Customer Experience Is the Same
 Although every customer should be treated the same, they should not all receive the exact same experience. For instance, customers should be greeted by name. Pitches should be personalized with the customer's industry and a mention of their previous interaction.

 Without personalization options, targeting and upselling are extremely difficult.
- ☐ Inconsistency in Sales Process

 When salespeople are not keeping to a consistent sales process, customers will be confused. A good CRM can streamline your sales pipeline and make visible the essential steps that all employees should follow. Inconsistency in the sales process is a key trigger for implementing a new CRM.

■ No Mobile Solution

If salespeople and marketers do any prospecting in the field, then they will need a way to safely and easily access customer data away from their computers. If a company does not provide a mobile solution, lead generation from conferences and sales floors will lag.

- Over-Reliance on Email and Manual Tools
 Unfortunately, many small and medium-sized businesses still rely on handwritten documentation or email threads for tracking client information. This makes it difficult for all members of a team to easily access the most up-to-date information. Over-reliance on manual tools can slow down sales.

☐ Fear of Scaling Fast

A robust CRM can handle large amounts of customer data. But a flimsy CRM is not flexible enough to handle the addition of extra data fields or large amounts of new data. No company should let their CRM stand in the way of scaling fast.



Determining which CRM system is right for your organization can be challenging to do by yourself because it is dependent upon multiple variables. Fortunately, those variables can be boiled down to an easy to digest list that you can use to assess your organization and what CRM system will work best for you!

☐ Size of Company

Some CRMs are better for smaller companies that don't have the budget or the need for complex databases. On the other hand, larger organizations will need a more robust customer relationship management system to handle vast amounts of data. Most CRMs offer tiers of usage depending on how many staff need access to the system. This comes down to budget and to the number of key personnel.

□ Location

For companies that have sizable office buildings and onsite servers, cloud computing is less of a priority. In regards to geography, there are privacy and data laws that need to be considered when selecting a CRM if a company has any clients in the EU (GDPR). For teams that interface with customers in the field and not at a fixed location, the CRM should include mobile capacity and frequent syncing across devices.

Sales Process and Current Inefficiencies

If a company is struggling with a specific challenge in the sales process, they should choose a CRM that offers solutions. For instance, many companies have difficulty integrating sales and marketing teams across thousands of customer profiles. If that is a priority, then a robust CRM like Salesforce could be the solution to handling these inefficiencies.

☐ Skill Level of Team

How comfortable are employees with complex interfaces? Powerful reports are important. However, if the interface is not intuitive or easy to use, then employees may resent the new system and refuse to use it. Don't underestimate the role of usability. 86% of people cited user-friendliness as the most important factor in choosing a new CRM system.

■ Software Integrations

Some companies are already deeply reliant on a specific software suite, such as Google Suite or Office 365. When reviewing CRMs, companies should make sure to find one that integrates with existing applications. Implementing a new CRM doesn't have to mean revamping the entire business from top to bottom. Choose a system that allows for third-party widget integrations to make the transition easier.

Budget

Financial limitations must be addressed.

Depending on the size of the database and how much support will be needed in its implementation, budget must be a primary variable in determining the right CRM. For companies with unpredictable revenue, costly multi-year contracts are not ideal.



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While all CRMs can be somewhat molded to the needs of each company, some CRMs are industry-specific or at least popular among certain industries. For instance, nonprofits typically use Insightly and manufacturing companies often use Maximizer. Companies should consider using the industry-standard CRM for their particular area of expertise. This makes it easier on staff as well as customers.

Support

Will the company need to customize its CRM? Can the CRM company support this? Do they have local partners to help with this? As mentioned previously, some CRMs like SugarCRM are open-source which means they allow engineers to integrate outside applications easily. On the other hand, CRMs like Salesforce have already created integration options for various applications but they're not as customizable. Before committing to a CRM, companies should anticipate the level of support they will need during implementation.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

With these points in mind, how can companies ensure that their choice of CRM offers a substantial ROI?

Companies can use a very basic formula to understand the ROI. By comparing the original investment with the projected return on investment, companies can predict which CRM can deliver the best ROI on their target areas.

$ROI = [(Financial\ value\ -\ Project\ cost)\ /\ Project\ cost]\ x\ 100$

Of course, companies must take into account that a new customer relationship management system will affect much more than the sales pipeline. When calculating ROI, a company should take into account the CRM's influence upon many factors:

- Customer perception of brand
- Employee retention
- Lead generation
- Bottom line

The company's choice of CRM should be dictated by the specific areas it wishes to improve upon. For instance, a company may wish to speed up its lead generation pipeline to reduce the time between initial contact and conversion. Perhaps another company is interested in better predictive tools. In this case, the company should seek a CRM that uses AI and cloud computing to generate better insights and help the company pivot faster when something isn't working

As a result, if a company implements the right CRM, it should expect to see results in these areas:

- Improved productivity
- Faster pipeline for connecting customers with the sales team
- Better communication
- Analysis-driven strategy
- Data-centered company culture
- More efficient use of time and resources, including human capital
- Motivated employees
- Satisfied customers
- Closing deals more quickly
- Better insights

CEOs in particular have a lot to gain from the clever use of a CRM system. Social circles are a powerful source of influence in the business world, and a CRM can help a chief of staff understand a CEO's professional networks more easily. CEOs must be able to define their social circles and make them actionable for other key leaders across sales and marketing. There are layers of people who are connected to the CEO. These stakeholders can be sorted by intensity and frequency of interaction, the likelihood of purchase, and propensity to facilitate connections to other customers. A CRM that is poised to take advantage of social circles can help expedite communication and amplify a CEO's personal network to benefit the growth of the company.





Investment

Implementing a new customer relationship management CRM represents an investment. Not only will companies need to train and onboard staff on new software, but customers must be gently onboarded for any new client-facing procedures.

When assessing and implementing CRMs, companies should ensure that they have the budget and capacity to carefully complete these steps. During an assessment, staff and team leaders must be available for testing and reviewing CRM functionalities. IT teams must be prepared to back-up and migrate any existing customer databases. Depending on the CRM selected, implementation may include daily or weekly training modules. It will probably incur a monthly or yearly fee.

The most important outcome of investing in a new CRM is that it benefits both customers and employees. Companies must ensure that they can successfully continue doing business while implementing a new CRM. They should do everything possible to minimize disturbances for customers and to smooth the transition for staff members.

Implementing a new CRM will necessarily introduce changes in workflow and reporting mechanisms. Businesses should make sure that their company culture is strong before undertaking this transition.





How to Determine the Right Customer Management System

At Proxxy, we use a two-phase process to determine the right CRM for each company. It's not just about choosing the right technology. Instead, it's important to focus on the business objectives behind the choice. Our methodology incorporates gaining a view of your organization and using that information to implement the best CRM to drive your business objectives forward.

Quick Overview:

Phase 1: Assessment

Identify sales team grievances, create a feature wish list, ensure necessary integrations are available, include sales team in testing the UX of new CRMs

Phase 2: Implementation

Transfer data, training and onboarding, measure results and check-in



Complete Phase 1:

- ☐ Identify problems working hand in hand with the sales team
- ☐ Create a feature wish list
- ☐ Ensure necessary integrations are available
- Include sales team in testing the UX of new CRMs



Identify problems working hand in hand with the sales team

There is no better source of intel than the sales team that deals with customers face-to-face every day. When a company is assessing potential CRMs, the sales team must be at the table. They can also speak to the user experience of various platforms. During this step, team members can identify problem areas that need improvement.

Create a feature wish list

Now that the team has identified problem areas, they can work to transform that list into a feature wish list. It can be tempting to purchase a CRM with every bell and whistle. But this step is about focusing on the must-have feature wish list. This allows the company to focus on core competencies and eliminate CRMs that do not have what it takes to support the company's goals.

Ensure necessary integrations are available

The company must review which app integrations are absolutely essential. This could mean a Zapier integration or a Google Suite functionality. If salespeople will be on the go, then cloud and mobile are essential.

Include sales team in testing the UX of new CRMs

Finally, the last step in Phase 1 is to test the new CRM with the sales team. Companies should stay open to negative feedback here while taking it with a grain of salt. Every new CRM is bound to present challenges to workflow. Keep an eye out for feedback related to a bad user interface.

Complete Phase 2:

- □ Transfer Date
- ☐ Training and Onboarding
- ☐ Measure results and check-in



Transfer Data

Now that the team has agreed on the right CRM, it is time to undergo the data transfer. A data scientist or IT engineer should oversee this process. First, back-up any existing customer and sales data. Then upload and categorize that data in the new customer relationship management system. Teams may need to create new fields and adjust report mechanisms to align with their needs.

Training and Onboarding

It is now time for a comprehensive training and onboarding process. Companies should not skimp on onboarding. They may feel as if testing is enough to give team members a sense of the new system. Instead, training should be a well structured and managed process with measurable deadlines and due dates to ensure that the whole team is on board by an agreed-upon time.

Measure results and check-in

As with every successful project, the implementation of a new CRM should be measured to ensure it is delivering the desired ROI. It can take some time to see results. But once onboarding is complete and a reasonable amount of time has passed, companies should be experiencing clear benefits that are directly attributable to the new CRM.

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Companies that have used the right customer relationship management system have experienced benefits like greater efficiency and higher revenue. This is true across industries, from publishers to custom ski makers and many more.

Let's take a look at some real-world examples of what companies can gain from the successful implementation of the right customer relationship management system!

Case Study 1:

Kenilworth Publishing is a veteran company that wanted to stay ahead of its competitors and continue to grow. They needed a CRM that could help:

- Keep employees on track with deadline management
- Strengthen client profiles to improve and increase prospecting

Kenilworth Publishing underwent an assessment phase where they reviewed both Maximizer and ACT! CRMs. They ended up selecting Maximizer. Now, the company has been using Maximizer for many years and has achieved great results. Thanks to its endurance, new staff are able to quickly learn from senior staff which reduces support costs.

Some of the benefits that Kenilworth's CRM delivered are:

- Ability to produce more publications with less staff
- Save hundreds of thousands of dollars in salaries
- Easily pass bi-annual media audits
- Reduce lost advertising income by thousands annually

Findings

This case study illustrates the advantages to be gained when a company chooses the right CRM for its industry and sticks to it over the long-term.



Case Study 2:

Founded by young entrepreneurs, Parlor Skis is a small business that produces custom skis. They realized their need for a customer relationship management system when rapid success pointed to the need to scale. Parlor Skis needed to grow quickly, and they sought out a CRM that could manage both sales and production. The time for email-based customer relationship management had come to an end.

Parlor Skis needed a CRM that could:

- Track complex variables during the production of custom skis
- Build relationships with customers to encourage repeat business
- Create loyalty with a branded and delightful customer-facing platform

The founders evaluated their options and selected HubSpot CRM. Now Parlor Skis has a centralized hub for all customer communications.

HubSpot CRM has resulted in important benefits for Parlor Skis, including:

- More focused and productive conversations with clients
- Greater efficiency in manufacturing pipeline

Findings

Small businesses should follow the example of Parlor Skis. Scaling quickly is a major hurdle for small companies, and the right CRM can help facilitate growth. This company carefully selected a CRM that could deliver on its two most important goals, and now they are reaping the rewards with a 200% increase in leads and a 400% increase in sales compared to the previous year.



Case Study 3:

Scratchpay is a company based in California that offers POS financing within vet offices. They target pet owners who have to unexpectedly pay for care and need quick financing. Scratchpay was facing problems with manual data tracking. Sales reps were manually entering phone calls and there was no easy way to review the quality of those calls.

The Scratchpay team needed a CRM that:

- Emphasizes user experience with a visual account management system
- Supports phone call tracking with automatic logging and recordings

They researched options and selected Pipedrive with a fully-integrated phone service called Kixie. The new CRM has helped Scratchpay grow and increase its services. The team now enjoys:

- Automatic call logging in Pipedrive
- Automatic contact creation
- Advanced statistics available through Pipedrive and Kixie integration

Findings

Sometimes, all it takes is a smart app integration to maximize the potential of a CRM. This relatively small fix has resulted in major rewards for Scratchpay, including a 13% jump in customer satisfaction with phone support, and it's a great example of thoughtful assessment and implementation.

