How to Choose a CRM System

When you decide to choose a Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) solution, it is essential that you understand your aims for the project and the benefits that you expect such a system to bring to your organisation from the very start of your selection process.

Prior Analytics have written this guide to enable you to:

- Ask the right questions of your Solutions Partner.
- Identify your initial goals and challenges.
- Build and document your business case for a CRM system.
- Create your project team.

At Prior, we take great pride in helping our customers to choose a CRM system that works for them, so that you see rapid results and a rapid, demonstrable return on your investment. We think that the more you know about CRM, the better decisions you will make. We aim to help you make an informed choice about the options and choices available to meet your requirements and budget.

"In 2018, this is more important than ever. We are now firmly in the 'year of the customer'. We have seen dramatic changes in technology since the rise of the information age, mass adoption of the internet and accessibility to mobile. Now, the traditional marketing 'push' model is being challenged by the realm of social media and customers have a far louder voice than ever before. An effective CRM strategy now relies on a set of sound, repeatable processes facilitated by a system which is capable of enforcing them but easy and fast to use." -
Claire Robinson, Managing Director, Prior Analtyics ltd.

Prior Analytics aims to help you deploy "CRM that works for you".

Understanding CRM

What is CRM?

CRM stands for Customer Relationship Management.

It is a strategy used to learn more about customers' needs and behaviours in order to develop stronger relationships with them.

Good customer relationships are at the heart of business success.

There are many technological components to CRM, but thinking about CRM in primarily technological terms is a mistake. It is more useful to think about CRM as a strategic process that will help you to better understand and meet your customers' needs in order to enhance your bottom line.

This strategy depends on bringing together many pieces of information about your customers and the market so you can promote and sell your products and services more effectively.

How CRM Can Help You

A good CRM solution can help you to serve your customers more effectively.

It can assist you to achieve goals such as:
- Find and attract new customers, nurture and retain existing customers, entice former customers back and reduce the cost of marketing
- Understand the buying habits and preferences of your customers
- Improve your product development and service delivery
- Increase your staff's awareness of customer needs

An effective CRM will integrate your marketing, sales and customer service operations and make it easier for everyone in your organisation to share information.

It will enable communications with current and prospective customers via a range of communication devices – phone, mobile, email and the internet.
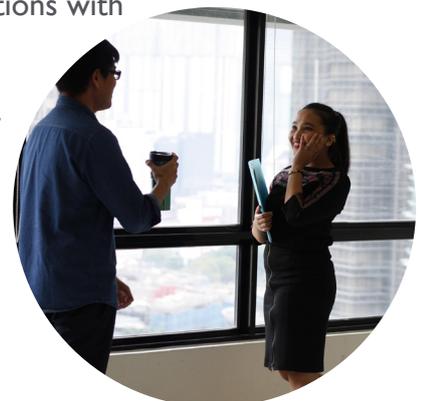
How Can CRM Benefit Your Organisation?

New Sales Opportunities

A CRM system will help you to:
- Classify your prospects,
- Identify your best customers
- Project and respond to customer needs
- Automate routine sales tasks.

Improved Customer Service

Your employees will have complete customer information enabling them to resolve issues quickly and spot new selling opportunities.

Better Decision Making

CRM can provide an overall view of a customer by providing comprehensive reports on customer behaviour and on the results of marketing campaigns and sales activity, enabling you to make better decisions to create long term, strategic plans.

Greater Efficiency

Immediate access to customer information, automated workflow processes and decreased processing time will increase efficiency throughout your organisation.

Getting Started

You will, most likely, need to justify the need for a new CRM system with a sound business case.

You will need to provide information that

identifies the need for CRM, justifies the cost, and demonstrates the value of investment.

Understanding the Core Components of CRM

In order to make the best use of CRM to increase your productivity, you will need to communicate the specific benefits to key decision makers.

These benefits include

Marketing Automation

- Develop, target and implement campaigns
- Manage and analyse marketing budgets
- Maintain lists and track responses
- Analyse campaign results

Sales Force Automation (SFA)

- Analyse your pipeline so you can focus on the deals most likely to close
- Improve lead distribution and tracking
- Effectively process quotes and orders
- Provide remote sales staff with instant access to corporate information

Customer Service and Support

- Capture and track every interaction with every customer
- Improve response time to customers' calls
- Maintain a complete case history with instant access to all previous issues and customer interactions
- Automatically escalate cases if not closed within a certain time frame.

Your Initial Actions

Involve the Right People

Your core team will consist of a project leader and a set of individuals representing the various departments to ensure that there is co-operation and collaboration amongst system users, managers and key decision makers.

Set Your Goals

Your team will need a shared understanding of your CRM goals. Your core team should identify your organisation's objectives.

Examine Your Current Processes

You will need to analyse your existing business processes in order to identify what works and what doesn't so that your new CRM system implements your most successful strategies.

What to look for in a CRM system

Your CRM should be able to:

- Integrate into users daily routines simply and easily.

- Allow all users, including remote and mobile users, to access and use the system in real time from any location on a range of devices - including hand-held devices.

- Integrate with other key business systems for quick and easy analysis and to avoid duplication of data entry.

- Provide analysis of data, both of your customers and your sales efforts.

- Help you to plan and execute campaigns, starting with identifying your targets and leading to a co-ordinated approach involving emails, telesales, print media and any other communication channels, and then capturing the results of those campaigns for action and analysis.

- Automatically drive the sales process by responding to enquiries and setting reminders for sales staff.

- Be customisable. Look for a system that allows you to create and modify all aspects of the system, including fields, screens, tables and security settings.

Future proof your investment

Look for a product that is being actively developed and which embraces modern technologies. Consider the implementation time. The better the CRM system fits your needs, the less time will be required for implementation. Ask your solution partner how long the implementation process will take and what factors increase or decrease that time.

Insist on user friendly software

If your system is not user-friendly, your staff won't want to use it.

To ensure that you select a solution that is logical and easy to use, ask the reseller:

- How easy is it to use the software interface?

- Can the interface be customised to suit the needs of your organisation?

The software that you choose should include a user interface their employees can navigate intuitively. This will lessen the amount of time and money spent on training, and it lead to faster adoption by users. Look specifically for a CRM package that consolidates tasks and data into user-friendly dashboards.

Chosing a consultant

Consultants offer a range of services including strategy development, business process management, implementation and training, and can help you in the following ways:

- By evaluating your needs and suggesting the best CRM solution for your specific situation.

- By saving your company time and money in system installation and training.

- By helping your organisation get the most out of your CRM.

Some CRM consultants are also software resellers. This can give them, and therefore you, a direct line to the vendor and developers.

Evaluate their technical support

You will need to know:

- How quickly they take calls from customers.

- What their hours of operation are.

- What options are available for after hours queries.

- What charges or service plans are available.

Customer care

Look for a company that provides high quality customer care with the resources to deal with product questions, customer feedback, order tracking and software updates.

Top 10 features to look for in a CRM system

- Sales cycle /opportunity analysis.
- A strong mobile capability to work across laptops, smartphones and tablets.
- Open, industry-standard technology.
- Seamless flow of information between corporate systems and remote employees.
- Real-time reporting and analysis.
- Automated workflow.
- Contact and campaign management.
- Integration with Social Media.
- Ability to easily customise your solution to fit your business needs.
- Data security and scalability to accommodate future business growth

Selecting the Right System For You

You will need to evaluate a number of possible CRM solutions on the market and make a short list of the best options for your company.

To help you refine your choice, investigate a number of options by phone and email in the first instance to avoid having to sit through irrelevant demonstrations. Web demos are a good way to get an initial feel for a system.

Pick a shortlist of systems and ask each solutions partner to provide the following information:

- Estimate the licence cost for your implementation.
- Estimate the costs of customising the system for your needs.
- Timeframe for implementation.
- Annual support and maintenance costs.
- What type of software implementation and training will be provided?
- A plan for integrating your back-office systems as required.

Does it fit your budget?

If your first choice costs more that you can afford, reprioritise your list of requirements.

Determine which features that are essential for the success of the project and compare your revised list with solutions that do fit your budget.

Once you have chosen the product you wish to purchase, you might find it helpful to create a document

- Clearly detailing the features of the chosen system and the financial benefits of these features to you organisation.
- The total cost for initial implementation, training and maintenance.

Justify the investment

Once you have decided upon your solution, it can be beneficial to create a report or presentation to explain your choice.

This should detail the features of the system, along with the cost benefits of these features and the resulting long term benefit to the company. It should also outline the total cost for initial implementation, training and ongoing maintenance.

Implementing Your System

You want to make implementation a smooth and successful process. Consider the following guidelines:

Create a blueprint

With the help of your consultant or software reseller create a document that gives the team a pre-determined plan and set of guidelines for reaching your CRM goals.

Prepare for modifications

A common mistake that organisations make is trying to limit modifications to the chosen software

You need the software to meet the requirements of your business, so be prepared to make modifications after installation.

Provide good training

Your staff will need high-quality and thorough training and information on best practices in order to get the most out of the software.

Test before launch

You will want to beta test every system component to make sure it is functioning properly before the system goes live. Enter mock customer data to see how well the system receives and processes the information.

Plan for ongoing evaluation

Your CRM will always be evolving to keep up with your organisation's changing needs. Ongoing evaluation of your business processes with help you to maximise the benefits CRM can bring to your organisation.

8 Helpful Hints for Promoting CRM as a Business Culture

1. Build a case for change. Think about the impact of a CRM strategy on your team – the benefits and consequences of changing or not changing.
2. Schedule regular meetings between all departments to communicate project progress.
3. Build an internal chat portal to deliver information and encourage enthusiasm about what is happening.
4. Welcome feedback about changes and listen to what people have to say.
5. Give individuals time to adjust to the new approach.
6. Support the managers who are leading the CRM initiative.
7. Understand that effective delivery of CRM is a cultural strategy; it will take time for everyone to adjust to new ways of doing business.
8. Involve customers in the company's vision for a customer centric organisation.

About Prior Analytics Ltd

Founded in 1998, Prior Analytics is a consultancy practice specialising solely in the deployment of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and Service Management solutions to a diverse range of customers.

We help you to establish your goals and work in tandem with your own team at every step of the process. We help you to plan, implement, go live, and review on an iterative basis to ensure ongoing success.

Bio

Claire Robinson, Managing Director, Prior Analytics Ltd started delivering customer centric solutions in 1994 as part of the original team that introduced GoldMine CRM to EMEA (Implementations Manager).

In 1998, Claire established her own consultancy, Prior Analytics Ltd.

- Over the last 21 years, Claire and Prior Analytics have:

- Helped over 1,000 organisations implement CRM.

- Trained and supported over 10,000 CRM users.

- Delivered CRM solutions ranging from £500 to over half a million GBP.

- Authored a range of CRM productivity tools that are used by a worldwide audience.

Claire has worked alongside consultancies such as McKinsey & Co, PwC UK and managed the original CRM implementation for RBS in a race to become the world's first 24 hour offshore bank in Jersey.

TALK TO US ABOUT HOW PRIOR ANALYTICS MIGHT HELP YOUR COMPANY.

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CRM THAT WORKS FOR YOU

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