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Assuring CRM Success

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Your CRM initiatives are failing or have failed. When laying the blame are you pointing the finger in the right direction? Perhaps turn that finger around so it is pointing at you instead because with some analysts predicting failure rates of up to 70% it's easy to see how companies are throwing their money away and software resellers are laughing all the way to the bank.

Technology is great! In fact, most experts will agree that it is a key component to any successful CRM initiative. But just installing a piece of software will not ensure CRM success. So what exactly can businesses today do to guarantee success?

Managing Director of Canonbury Services and quoted CRM expert, Claire Cobb sums it up best with the following:

"CRM software is like a bucket. You design the bucket any way you like and any way that will best suit your business. However, it is completely up to you what you put into your bucket and how you choose to use it. If you decorate your bucket and then just let it sit there and look pretty all you have is a pretty bucket which cost you unnecessary money and is full of worthless junk."

This is an all too accurate depiction of many of today's CRM initiatives. Lots of pretty buckets with nothing useful inside. So what are these businesses doing wrong? Why are they failing at something that is proven to work?

Not Spending The Money In The Right Areas

Many will attempt to implement a CRM solution and budget the money incorrectly. For different reasons, whether they are financial or parsimonious, funds are often allocated wrongly. Spending £10,000 of a piece of software and then only £1000 to train a select few will result in an expensive database which no one knows how to use properly.

You Must Have Senior Level Buy In

In order for a new idea to work all of the key players need to buy into the concept. If the head of sales does not use the CRM product to aid in closing sales and reducing work time then how on earth can they expect the rest of the sales team to use it? On the other hand, if the sales team actually see high-level executives using the system, reducing work time and increasing sales then they will follow the lead.

The Vision And Goals Must Be Shared By All

We are creatures of habit and resistant to change. Making all the employees see the importance of and feel like they are a part of the CRM implementation will aid in its success. When we feel like we had a say in a life altering decision we are never as irresponsive. Get them involved in planning meetings and pilot studies then watch as they begin to champion this new idea of customer relationship management.

Not Parenting Your System

"When you have a child you do not quit parenting when they turn 18, when they move out, or even when they are 30, married and with their own children. You must treat your CRM system in the same manner," states Claire Cobb.

When a company decides to employ a CRM solution, a project management team will usually be formed to assist in its implementation. However, once the system is into place and the staff are trained they will usually move on to another project. In order for CRM to succeed, the entire initiative (including the software) must be nurtured.

Not Enough Training Or Training The Wrong Way

Understandably, many businesses that install CRM software to begin the solution must do so on a budget. However, skimping on important components like training can assure failure. Quite simply, the employees need to know how to use the software if they are going to be able to profit from it.

Alice Fraser, Head of GoldMine Sales at Canonbury Services, speaks from experience, "when staff are not trained correctly they will not use all of the features the product provides, not be more productive, not increase profits and definitely not see any return on investment (ROI). What they will see is a really expensive database."

Not Selecting The Right Reseller

Good CRM efforts begin with a piece of software. Where and who you purchase this from can make all the difference in your overall success. The key is to select a vendor who is not just a box-shifter. Instead, search for a vendor who is a CRM specialist with a proven track record of success.

"What you need is a vendor who can handle everything from the beginning consultancy to installation to training to technical support," says Claire Cobb. "Our company walks each of our clients through a step by step process beginning with selecting the software and show them the way to make CRM succeed. We even have clients who came to us after failing a previous initiative and we helped to get them back on their feet again."