



CRM – achieving a “total solution”

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It is safe to say, an effective customer focused management system has somehow missed your busy agenda if you have not heard about Customer Relationship Management (CRM). There are numerous articles, lectures, and software products claiming to provide CRM solutions. Many companies have even gone to the expense of purchasing multiple products and attending endless seminars only to be faced with a failed initiative.

Many believe in the importance of CRM and placing the customer at the forefront of business. One problem incurred is the belief that technology is the simple way to achieve this. Buying technology before having your CRM business goals clearly in mind can lead to disaster for any well-run business.

Imagine a golfer who has selected a putter to get him out of a bunker. With a lot of luck, this approach may work. But if he had selected a sand wedge, his chances of success would definitely increase. Simply purchasing a software product and crossing your fingers may work (if you are lucky). However, going about this in the right manner will ensure your chances of success.

The first concept to grasp is that CRM is not just a theory. Yet, it is not just technology either. CRM is a comprehensive business philosophy embracing both ideas in order to provide the maximum return on investment. One cannot merely jump on the CRM bandwagon, purchase a piece of software, install it onto a PC and assume the business will then profit from CRM. While this scenario seems preposterous to many, this is the very scenario Managing Director of Canonbury Services in London and CRM specialist Claire Cobb has seen on many occasions.

“CRM technology was designed to assist with the Customer Management initiative. We begin with consulting sessions to first learn of the client’s needs, then custom-build a total CRM solution, which is complemented by the use of the software product GoldMine®. Then after the final installation and training, we continually work with our clients through consultancy and technical support. This is an element you definitely won’t get from just any software vendor. When making this kind of financial investment, a company needs to look to experts for help.”

No matter which product you select, few will dispute the importance of implementing a customer relationship management philosophy and total solution. CRM software allows companies to manage the massive yet critical task of maintaining client relationships. However, simply having a philosophy and a piece of software will not guarantee success. A business must select a software vendor who is also a CRM expert and not only able to carry them throughout the entire installation process but continually offer support and consultancy. A “true” CRM initiative will only succeed when all of these components are securely in place.

When approached correctly, Customer Relationship Management has the potential to dramatically alter the way a company does business. There is no doubt if handled correctly; a significant return on investment will be apparent. However, if approached incorrectly, you will most certainly join the ranks of those who have spent a considerable amount of money on CRM without ever reaping the full benefits.

Studies have estimated the overall CRM market beyond 2002 will continually rise at a 3.5 percent compounded annual rate.¹ Better get it correct now before you are left in the shadows of commerce.

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Michelle L. Figg, MA is the Marketing and Public Relations Manager at Canonbury Services Limited in London, England. Canonbury Services are a GoldMine® Platinum Solutions Partner and specialists in Customer Relationship Management. Canonbury champion the "Total CRM Solution" and work with their clients through consultancy, training and the software product GoldMine® to custom-build a CRM package to fit each individual client's needs. Prior to joining CSL Michelle worked as a freelance Public Relations consultant in Kansas City, Missouri. Michelle holds a Bachelor and Masters degree in Communication and also teaches university level courses in Business Communication and Public Speaking.