

Why Invest in CRM? White Paper

Ask yourself the next time you talk to one of your customers, do you know everything about that customer right now? Do they have any support issues, what is the status of their orders, are there opportunities pending? If they ask you a question will you be able to access that information immediately and from anywhere in the world?

These are questions that require immediate answers when you are interacting with your customer, whether it is on the phone, in person or the Internet. Companies are struggling with these issues daily and if the information is not in a centralized, easily accessible location you run the risk that the customer may not receive the information they are seeking from your company.

In today's business climate customers expect answers to their questions immediately. If you have access to that information from anywhere in the world your customer will have a positive customer experience and customer loyalty will be increased. It is a known fact that the cost to obtain a customer is 10 times higher than to maintain and keep existing customers. Customers have many choices today and to find companies that can provide products and services similar to yours is easy. They can make a change if they don't have a favorable customer experience with your company. That is why it is so important to provide outstanding customer support and to retain your customers. Customer retention is the key to growing your business. If you have your information in a centralized CRM system that is customized to your requirements, you can capture and retain the information that enables you to provide top shelf customer support.

The ability to record information that is relevant to your product and service provides you with the information to give your customer a great customer experience. The ability to access this information anywhere in the world is also a key to supporting your customer. If your sales team is onsite they can access information that is pertinent to the customer they are visiting by accessing a web based application that can be accessed via wireless devices such as PDA or cell phones or if they have access to a computer to access that information onsite. The ability to provide this type of information increases customer loyalty.

The only way to accomplish global access affordably and effectively is to deploy a web based CRM application that is customizable to meet your business needs. With a simple contact management application that may reside on a number of different computers you will not have the ability to have access to all the information that you need. The person responsible for that computer has the information but it is not being shared. If the information is not centralized you are at risk of providing the wrong information to your customer or worst you have to get back to the customer later with the information. This causes your personnel to lose credibility with the customer. If the customer is paying a certain price for your product or services you are at risk of providing the incorrect price for that customer and you may lose that customer.

From a support standpoint trying to solve a new problem becomes easier if you have a solution to a similar problem online. Capturing information about what version or

product your customers have becomes a challenge if you have to access multiple systems to obtain that information.

What if the customer has talked to someone about this problem already in your company and you ask the same questions again. The customer begins to wonder if this company really cares. With an integrated web based CRM system you can access that information and provide the type of support that your customer is expecting.

The customer's experience is greatly enhanced when you can communicate with your customer and provide a level of support that increases your value to them. This type of support helps retain customers and makes them feel valuable, letting them think that you care about their needs. Another benefit is that a centralized web based customizable CRM system allows you to create an online knowledge base. It has been proven that up to 80% of support issues have been encountered already and if that information is saved you can quickly and accurately answer the question. If you can answer your customer's question on that first call the confidence your customer has in your company increases tremendously, thus improving your relationship and improving customer retention.

The web is also increasing in importance in how you support your customers. They are looking for other ways to communicate with your company. Instant messaging, e-mail, and web base support forms are becoming an acceptance method of communicating with customers.

These types of contact methods provide you with a way to serve your customer properly. A workflow process may need to be established that is customized to meet your business needs. Ownership of issues and responsibility for issues needs to be controlled, monitored and managed. A CRM software solution can allow you to define a workflow to meet these business requirements.

To support your customers you need to develop the processes and workflows and provide them with outstanding customer experiences. The real challenges are the methods and technologies that you use to get those customers in the first place. The ability to automate starting from the moment the prospect first requests information from your company gives you a method and process to convert that prospect into a customer. To be able to capture and route a prospect to the right sales person in real time greatly increases the conversion of that person into a customer. A system that allows you to feed those leads directly into your customizable CRM system provides real time access. The ability to process that lead using a customizable workflow process allows you to determine if the leads is an actual prospect. The conversion of that lead into a prospect and finally a customer requires the ability to capture and record information and make that information available immediately when you come in contact with that prospect. The same rules apply for support customers. You need immediate access to pertinent information to answer questions and provide answers to sales questions.

As your sales teams work with prospects, the ability to see where the customer is at in the sales cycle becomes critical to closing business. The ability to define a process that requires steps in a workflow helps your sales team ask the right questions to move that sale closer to a close. Not only does the collection of that information help the sales person to close the sale, it also enables management to provide accurate forecasts. Workflow capability enhances your company's ability to close more sales in a shorter period of time because all of the required information can be gathered in steps.

The ability to customize the application to meet your requirements is critical to the success within your organization. If your employees feel the system has been customized for your business they will feel more comfortable using the system. No one wants to use a system that doesn't reflect your business requirements. The customization needs to start at the lead collection stage all the way through the support stage. One of the most important reasons you would purchase and install a CRM system is that you want your employees to accept and use the application. If it is easy to use and understand, acceptance and use will be higher. For web based solutions you can also have a distributed sales team or support or sales people working from anywhere on the globe.

To provide outstanding customer support and to automate it using a customizable CRM system is the reason you invest in a system. In today's business climate you can't invest in a heavy weight system that takes a year to implement. You need a system that is easy to setup but also highly customizable. You need to invest in a solution that is also powerful, web based and has workflow. You want it customized to meet your business requirements, web based in order to have access from anywhere in the world and workflow efficient in order to control and manage your processes within sales, support and marketing teams in your company.