SYNERGY TECHNOLOGY
for complete BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Getting Started with CRM

Considerations for businesses embarking on a CRM project for the first time.

INTRODUCTION

Working with clients who are new to CRM is always a rewarding experience. Time and again, we've seen the transformative effect that a good CRM solution can have.

The improvements in customer service, retention and team productivity when moving to a CRM solution for the first time, or having a truly optimised system, can be gigantic, and it's truly awe-inspiring to be part of that process.

For 20 years we have done nothing but live and breathe CRM. There's nothing we like more than working with clients to define their needs to develop a solution that makes sense to their goals and budget.

While CRM should have an immediately positive impact, the best solutions are built with the future in mind. No-one wants to invest in a CRM system which is under-utilised or obsolete within months. Neither do you want to have to swap and change technologies as your requirements change.

That's why our approach is all about long-term thinking. It's rewarding to partner with clients ongoing to ensure their CRM solution remains fit for purpose as their business grows.

We appreciate that it's a big step to invest in a CRM solution for the first time. Here, we guide you through the process.

Rachael Howard.

Synergy Technology
rachael.howard@synergytechnology.co.uk

FIRST THINGS FIRST

What exactly is CRM?

Customer relationship management is an approach to manage a company's interaction with current and potential customers.

A good CRM solution will act as a 'one truth' repository for all information about your prospects and customers. It helps you to serve customers better by building a more complete picture of the individuals and organisations you serve.

There are lots of benefits to using CRM, especially in a growing business, but they can be summed up as:

The ability to serve your customers better

Your CRM enables you to store information about all interactions in one place. That means anyone dealing with the customer has access to consistent and up-to-date information, so customers can be served better and faster. No need for customers to have to explain their issues more than once, and no need for your teams to look uninformed.

The ability to sell more effectively

Your CRM enables you to target your prospects more effectively and to manage them through the sales cycle. You can deliver more targeted marketing and define what activity gets the best results. You can also manage sales activity more effectively and gain up-to-the-minute management reports to help you track your pipeline and forecast more accurately.

The ability to streamline inefficient processes

Your CRM enables you to streamline business processes by automating manual tasks, helping your teams to improve productivity and profitability. Your CRM solution can ensure the right information goes to the right people at the right time, not only serving your customers better but helping to move your prospects through the sales funnel. It can also minimise information input so that your teams have the right information to hand, and access information in an easily digestible format from anywhere.

A good CRM solution will also remove key risks from within your business, including:

* An over-reliance on key individuals. Your business is at risk if your customer and prospect information is not easily accessible ie. it's stored on a staff member's PC or even worse, in their head!

* Lack of GDPR compliance as a result of incorrect collection, storage and security of customer data.

HOW TO DEFINE YOUR CRM NEEDS

Getting clear about what you need your CRM solution to do is perhaps the single most important step you can take. This stage will define what system you use, how you use it, who you involve in your project and what results you measure.We take clients through a straight-forward three-step process when starting out on our journey to define their CRM needs.

STEP 1: What are your objectives?

More sales, efficiency and higher levels of retention are common goals for customers considering a CRM solution. However, they're not specific enough to enable you to properly specify your CRM requirements, or to measure the outcomes once the CRM is in place and being utilised.

Because of this it will be important to get into the specifics to create a crystal clear picture of where you are now and where you need to be from a data management and business process point of view.

- Are your sales people spending too much time on admin?
- Are your business support teams doing manual tasks which could be automated?
- Are your managers able to gather the information they need about the effectiveness of their teams?
- Can your marketing team get information to the right people at the right time?
- Have you got a clear picture of your pipeline?
- Are you serving your customers well and meeting their expectations?
- Are you managing data in a compliant way?

STEP 2: Which business functions will be included?

CRM solutions can support all areas of your business from sales and marketing through to HR and customer service. It will be important to define which business functions are the highestpriority.

Of course, it is possible to include all or several business functions from the outset, but it's likely your project will be bigger, more expensive and take longer to bring to fruition.Because of this, most businesses will undertake a phased approach, implementing the CRM solution in one or two business areas at a time. This doesn't mean the CRM solution is designed with only those function in mind. Quite the contrary, in fact. It's just that implementation is undertaken in a measured way.

- Where are the biggest gaps/opportunities for CRM to make a difference. For example, do you need to improve retention by getting better at customer service before you enable your sales people to win more new business?
- Who needs to be involved in your CRM project team, and at what stage?

STEP 3: What functionality needs to be included?

Your CRM solution will need to both house your organisation's information as well as distribute information at the right time in the right format to the right audience.

This is where a good, thorough functionality specification is vital. The functionality spec enables us to get into the nitty-gritty, and things become very exciting indeed.

By joining up the thinking between 'what's possible' and 'what would make business sense', your CRM solution can be truly transformative.

Typical marketing functionality includes:

- Lead management and tracking where leads come from
- Email list management
- Campaign management
- Integration with marketing automation software

Typical sales CRM functionality includes:

- Contact management
- Sales performance management & forecasting
- Lead management
- Quotes

Typical customer service CRM functionality includes:

- Case management
- Online support environments
- Customer support automation
- SLA management

Reporting and analytics requirements also need to be factored in. Typical reports include:

- Pipeline progress
- Discount effectiveness
- Leads by source/offer
- Value and behaviour of contacts by lifecycle stage.

COSTING YOUR CRM PROJECT

All too often, CRM projects are started with great enthusiasm, only to fizzle out because the costs of set-up and maintenance are not properly scoped or understood at the outset.

That is where a good business case comes in. Time spent at the outset to define your requirements and understand where the biggest pay-offs will be instrumental in costing your CRM project effectively.

Factors that will affect the costs of your CRM solution include:

- The extent of the functionality you include – clearly, the more you want your CRM solution to do, the more involved your project will be.

- Whether your solution will be hosted in the cloud or on-premise. If it's on-premise, you will have server and server maintenance costs while you'll have smaller upfront but ongoing subscription costs when it's in the cloud.

- What indirect costs will be associated with your project such as consultancy, staff training, the time of staff involved in the initial project etc.

- Which vendor solution you choose and the extent to which your system is configured to your exact requirements.

COST STAGES

STAGE 1: Launch

Good CRM solutions require investment to get them off the ground, but that should not be prohibitive.

The cost should be in line with your company's current and short-term financial position, which is where an analysis of your goals and priorities is so important.

Additional functionality can be added to your CRM solution as your organisation evolves and brought on stream at the right time when the financials add up.

STAGE 2: Maintenance

Whilst the cost settles once your CRM solution has been implemented, it will still have a budgetary impact as steps will be necessary to maintain the system.

Upgrading an on-premise technology, training new users etc, all have a cost which needs to be factored in at the outset.

STAGE 3: Evolution

As your organisation changes, so too will your CRM needs. Adding and amending functionality, streamlining systems and processes, embracing new opportunities presented by new technologies, all of this requires time and budget.

Whilst investment in your CRM solution should be made in line with your organisation's growth, it's important to have an evolutionary mindset.

It's not easy but your business case should ideally provide an analysis of revenue and cost impacts of implementing (or not implementing) a CRM solution.

Considerations on revenue and cost impacts

When analysing revenue impact, it may not be possible to be entirely accurate, but you should be able to make a very good assessment of the financial impact of adopting a CRM. Look at the costs of operating the particular business area as well as the cost of acquiring and serving your customers.

Also, identify the value of what more you will be able to do as a result of the CRM implementation. For example, will it allow you to serve more customers without having to increase your headcount? Will you be able to divert staff from manual activities and use them in other areas as a result of automation and improved management reporting?

SUMMARY

There's certainly a lot to think about when you're at the start of your CRM journey.

The key steps can be summarised as:

 1. Define your needs

What does your business need to achieve with its CRM solution, now and in the future?
What are the priorities?

2. Decide what business functions will be involved?

Does your CRM solution need to impact across your organisation or will you prioritise particular business areas?
Who needs to be on your project team?

3 What functionality will be most important?

Here's where you join up your thinking between what's possible and what will make the biggest difference to your organisation.

4. Build a business case

Do the analysis so that you get the best return from your investment.

EXPERTS BY YOUR SIDE

You don't need to be an expert in CRM to get a fantastic solution up and running within your business, but you do need to hire the best support.

We've been at the forefront of CRM technology for 20 years and have worked with hundreds of businesses in a range of industries, so are well placed to help and advise you in the early stages of your CRM journey.

Our services include:

- **Consultancy**
  To help you define your requirements and build a business case.

- **Proof of concept**
  So that your project can be affirmed and de-risked before full rollout.

- **Implementation & delivery**
  Complete service to ensure your CRM solution is properly implemented.

- **Hosting support**
  We can provide hosted CRM solutions as well as cloud-based CRM and we can work alongside you if you wish to implement an on-premise hosted solution.

- **Licensing**
  We can administer all of your licensing requirements.

- **Integrations**
  We are particularly good an integrations, joining up your CRM solution and other systems your business relies on.

- **Training**
  We can train your users to ensure high user adoption of the technology and maximum business benefit.

- **Critical thinking**
  We seek to understand your processes and data. We understand how to architect the site to optimise and drive results through CRM software.

We are passionate about CRM and want to help you reap full benefit from the technology.

We aim to be your long-term partner of choice, providing support which is tailored to the needs of your business, now and into the future.

SYNERGY TECHNOLOGY
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Talk to us

Our expert team is available to provide **advice and guidance** on any aspect of CRM.

0345 456 0050
sales@synergytechnology.co.uk

www.synergytechnology.co.uk