Redspire

The Ultimate Guide to: Driving business growth using CRM

It's time to cut through the hyperbole and uncover what CRM can actually do for your company's bottom line and future business growth prospects.

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The Ultimate Guide to:
Driving business growth using CRM

For all the talk of creating companies that are customer-centric via 'the power of CRM', one issue remains critical to the board – how the platform will actually drive business growth. It is essential to strip away the hyperbole that typically surrounds the benefits of CRM:

Instead, the focus must be on how the CRM is selected, implemented and rolled out to ensure a successful outcome on a business' investment.

But how should the drivers of a CRM project – typically the CMO, CIO and Sales – create a strategy that is guaranteed to deliver on its potential, on its investment and most importantly, has the proper foundations in place to ensure CRM-powers business growth?
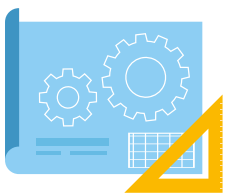
Phase One
The Strategy

Decide what you want from your CRM system in the first place – it will protect your bottom line from financial risk of a CRM failing in the future. That may seem obvious but companies are prone to embracing CRM as a 'silver bullet' for customer management and engagement without strategising what they specifically want from the platform for, leading to project failure.

Before the CRM selection process begins, a company must ascertain how the software will, and, should benefit them by drawing up a requirements document. This should act as the blueprint for the needs that the platform must deliver on.

From automating time-wasting tasks and tracking the details of each project to curtailing the amount of traditional software packages your company uses (and their associated costs), all requirements must be brought under, and covered by, the 'umbrella' of a CRM platform.

Once drawn up, the document should be signed off by all departments so you can move forward as a unified whole, not as individual departments with their own disparate set of demands. This document will be vital for the next stage – selecting the right CRM platform and critically, the right provider for your transformation into a CRM-enabled business.
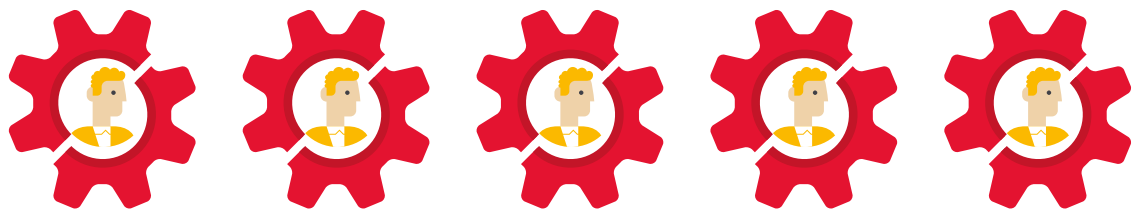
Ask the tough questions and research if CRM is able to provide the answers.
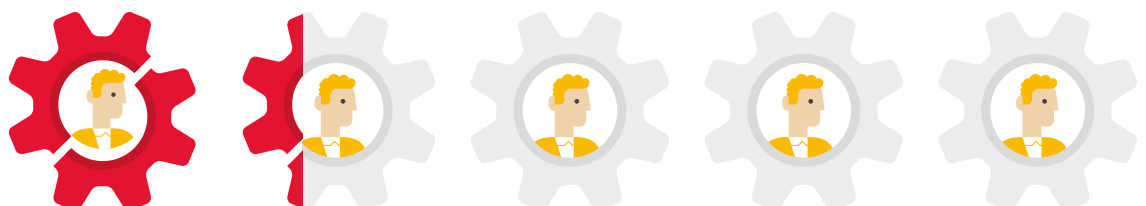
Phase Two
The Selection

The key takeaway is simple – the intended CRM must serve you, your needs and your company's 'idiosyncrasies', and not the other way round. Shoehorning your company's needs into an existing CRM system is a surefire strategy for failure. According to the Merkle Group:

63%
of CRM solutions fail.

To protect your investment, deploy the following selection criteria. Remember, any CRM provider must be able to offer clear insights into the following – if they can't, walk away and source a provider who can:

Flexibility

Ensure your CRM provider allows you to trial their platform before you sign on the bottom line; better still, consider a pay-as-you-go approach so if the platform ultimately isn't the right fit for you, you can walk away – and with the CRM's accrued data set.
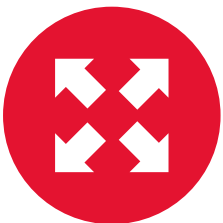
Scalability

As your business grows, the CRM platform must be able to grow with you, allowing you to add extra users easily and 'plug-in' features at low or no cost.

Functionality

As detailed in your requirements document, ensure your intended CRM platform can service your needs. Quality CRM systems can be designed to cater exactly to your requirements whether it be automating a particular work process which is eating into staff time such as lead scoring or the need for certain kinds of dashboards to help identify and digest critical company information.

Compatibility

Check that your existing applications are compatible with the intended CRM software – the integration process can be a time-consuming one and the provider must be able to show that your CRM system and legacy software will be able to work together during the migration phase.

Connectivity

Aim for a system that is web-based. It means wherever an employee is in the world, they can access the CRM platform in moments. Another key benefit to a cloud-based CRM solution is you will not need to manually update the CRM software in-house, pay for new licences or concern yourself with installing the latest security updates; the CRM and its provider should handle all this for you, leaving you to focus on running your business.

Usability

To ensure your intended CRM system is used correctly, a CRM provider must have a coherent training strategy in place and be able to demonstrate how they will train staff effectively and efficiently.

Tick the Box!

Create a tick list from your requirements document – and have each potential provider sign off on the requirements you need with an explanation as to how their CRM package will cater for your business' needs. If they are unable or unwilling to do this, then again – walk away.

In-house, Hire In or Partner Up?

The logistics of selecting and implementing a CRM platform can seem daunting, even when armed with all the information you need. Companies have a wide selection of competing CRM platforms to choose from but how and who should you team up with to guarantee the implementation is a success? There are several options available:

Option 1
Using in-house talent; your IT department may already have the required personnel in place who boast the experience required to select, implement and rollout the CRM platform. It is essential though that they have a proven track record; this is not a time for hunches or a 'we'll figure out as we go along' approach.

Option 2
Hiring freelance consultants/ developers to design and implement your CRM platform for you. Hire the right specialist/s and you will have a set of experienced hands to steer the project to completion and beyond.

Option 3
Working in partnership with your CRM provider itself or via one of its accredited partners. This can be viewed as the best of both worlds, where the organisation providing the platform is also on hand at every step to guide you through the rollout, offering an all-in-one inclusive package.

Whichever route you choose to take, it is imperative that you have a core team in-house once the CRM is up and running. They can wrangle your CRM-sourced data on a daily/weekly basis (depending on the size of your business). This can be a team of one or two for an SME or for a larger company, a fully-fledged department in its own right, there to analyse and manage the sheer volume of data that CRM will produce.

Ensure this expense is covered by your budget forecasts or you could find yourself drowning in data and have no clear strategy (or finances) in place to deal with it.
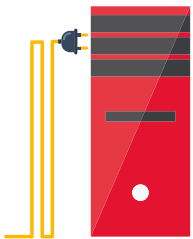
Phase Three
The Implementation & Rollout

The rule of thumb? Don't jump in feet first.

It's imperative that you break down the implementation and rollout into phases:

1. Clean your data before it is entered into the CRM system. The risks of duplicate entries, missing fields and non-compliant data could render your new platform useless. If you're unsure how to achieve this, then hire in a specialist.

40%
How much business data can decay annually.

2. Set up a pilot programme before deploying CRM carte-blanche across the company to ensure that the platform is working correctly with your legacy systems and that departments are brought up to speed gradually, instead of being immediately besieged by the changes CRM will bring.

3. Ensure all those involved in the pilot project are trained – get it right at this stage and not only will you have test driven the platform itself and shown how it has been successful but also create CRM-literate staff who can act as advocates for the platform because they have firsthand experience of CRM's benefits. Bear in mind that:
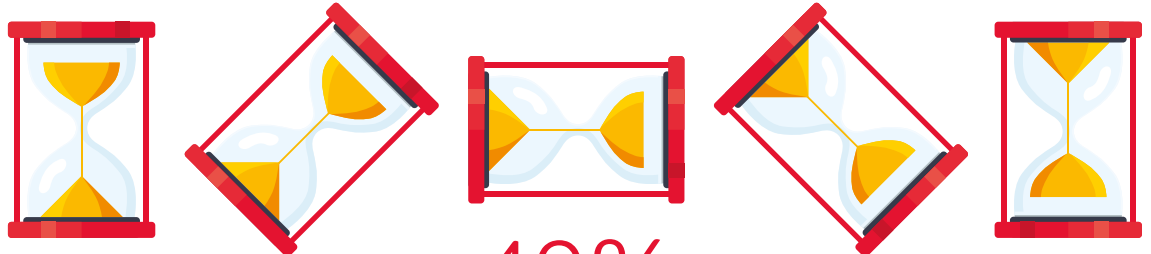
49%

of CRM projects are affected by slow user adoption

4. Ensure you have KPIs in place for the pilot programme. Think sales conversion rates, actions per engagement, response times and more depending on the departments involved during the trial phase – it's the only effective way to measure how effective the CRM platform has performed and how it will potentially boost future business growth once the system has been fully rolled out company-wide. Without KPIs, you risk ending up with no actual quantifiable results at the end of the trial period, rendering the entire exercise worthless.

5. Debrief all those involved with the trial run – what worked? What failed and why? What can be learned or dismissed before rolling out the system across the company? Adapt your strategy accordingly before moving on to the 'going live' phase where you will actually start reaping the benefits of your CRM investment – of which there are many…
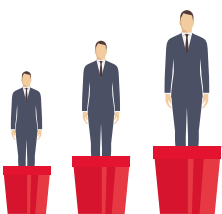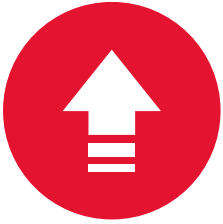
Phase Four
# The Benefits, The Pitfalls for Business Growth

Top 7 Business Growth Benefits of a Properly Implemented CRM Platform
With the right selection, implementation and rollout strategy in place, businesses can expect to enjoy significant benefits that will drive both growth and revenue:

1. Boost the quality of your leads

CRM enables you to track the very best leads, reduce sales cycle time and improve conversion rates, all measured in real time and terms.
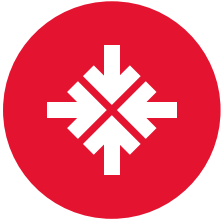
2. Bring your channels together

Take your disparate marketing channels and combine them into a single omni-channel where all customer touchpoints and emerging trends can be monitored and acted on to quickly capitalise on business opportunities.
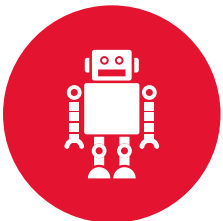
3. Bring department together

Break down silos that can hold departments back, increasing efficiency and reducing the time taken to deal with customers/clients.

4. Secure your business

CRM offers your company a true all-in-one ecosystem that can be exploited, all while keeping your data compliant and safe.

5. Automate where possible

By automating time-consuming admin tasks, it means that staff productivity and efficiency is boosted; they'll spend more time growing your business rather than being distracted by 'busywork'.

6. Do business wherever you are

Whether in the office or out in the field, cloud-based CRM enables businesses to exploit any leads no matter where they are, ensuring that no potential customers slip through the net.
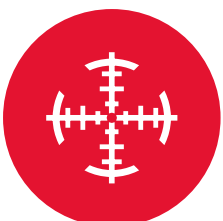
7. Target customers with precision

Wherever the prospect is in the sales funnel, CRM allows marketers to monitor their activity and send out the right content at the right time and in the right format to boost the chances of landing that sale.

A Question of Priorities

To ensure that your CRM platform continues to deliver, it is essential that you maintain a vigil on the priorities of your CRM platform on several fronts. As part of your requirements document, you will have drawn up a lengthy list of needs – these must be treated as your priorities now and in the future and strictly adhered to.

The possibility of shifting priorities or 'scope creep' can cause confusion for end users/stakeholders and dilute your CRM's effectiveness, undermining your CRM strategy in the process. While priorities should be allowed to shift and evolve over time, their evolution must be as structured and thoroughly vetted as that initial requirements document to ensure all departments stay on the same page.

At the other extreme is a total lack of prioritisation – inevitably at the beginning of CRM's roll out, all eyes are on its implementation and success. As time passes though, it can slip down the business' priority list, and be expected to 'just get on with it'. This slip in focus is a key reason for CRM failure as departments take their eye off the ball, leading to a drop in advocacy and user uptake; the platform in effect becoming a chain and ball for business growth instead of a boon.

Such a lack of focus will affect every aspect of your CRM strategy too – from data cleansing and effective lead creation to user advocacy and workflows. To ensure that the platform remains at the top of its game, constant monitoring and adjustments must be prioritised and built into any budget plan.

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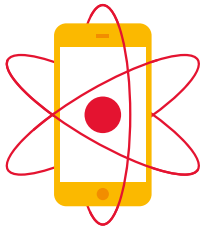
Phase Five

The Future

As CRM continues to expand across the business world, it's perhaps important to remember why you're making the financial commitment in the first place:

According to Gartner, the CRM market
<u>will grow into</u> a...

$36 billion

market worldwide by 2017.

It means more and more companies – from the biggest to the smallest – are embracing the potential of CRM, giving them a genuine and profound edge over their competitors.

And according to Nucleus Research, for every...

$1

spent on investing in a CRM platform, <u>the ROI is...</u>

$8.71

And in terms of business growth, that makes CRM a real ace up your sleeve.

Takeaways

Create a requirements document that all departments sign up to; everyone must be on the same page before a CRM strategy can move forward.

Ensure that your intended CRM platform will not only provide you with the functionality that you require but is also compatible with your existing legacy software.

Determine who will be responsible for the implementation and rollout of the platform whether it be carried out in-house or via a third party consultant.

Undertake a pilot project of your CRM platform initially before rolling out the system across the company; it is vital to spot issues within a contained trial rather than once the CRM has gone live.
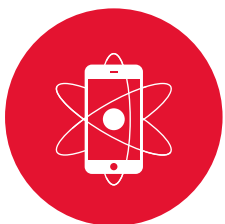
Fully exploit all the benefits of CRM but ensure that the platform remains a priority for the company in the future – or else expect the benefits to slowly dwindle.

See how Golden Charter partnered with CRM experts Redspire to boost the response rate to their targeted communications eight fold.

Learn more