

Business Finance Magazine Q&A

If you were evaluating CRM solutions as a finance manager at a mid-sized company, what qualities would you look for to help ensure that your company gains a strong ROI?

The two most important factors that should determine which CRM solution a company selects are functionality and price. The first thing any company needs to do when evaluating a CRM solution is to clearly define the needs of the company. With so many vendors and solutions to choose from, it is beneficial to write down what your organization is looking for from a CRM solution to make sure you are not paying for features that will never be utilized. According to Gartner Group, 60% of CRM implementations fail due to its complexity and the learning curves involved. This is a result of companies purchasing CRM solutions that are too big for their needs and are full of components that companies will never have a use for. Companies such as Commence Corporation offers a CRM software solution that is easily deployed and is very intuitive, and is aimed at the mid-tier market.

CRM solutions come in many different flavors and the best way to ensure a company achieves a strong ROI is to choose a solution that offers the functionality you are looking for at the best price available.

What metrics would you encourage companies purchasing CRM technologies to identify/measure before and after implementing a solution?

After defining goals that a company hopes to achieve by purchasing a CRM solution, there are several metrics that the company should compare, both pre- and post-implementation. Companies can determine how effective their CRM system is working by measuring the productivity of its workers, the effectiveness of its customer service team and help desk operations, and the organization of its sales force. All of these metrics can be measured in terms of before and after implementation, and can help establish the efficiency of the CRM solution.

How long before companies with new CRM solutions should expect to realize a significant return? What factors affect that duration?

With our product, businesses can quickly realize the benefits of customer relationship management, as it provides the capability to share information and be more customer-centric.

Factors that may hinder the realization of a significant return include a poor or faulty implementation, an improperly scoped project that requires a series of changes or adjustments to it, and poor training for the employees of the company that is deploying the CRM solution.

Are there certain groups of end-users who tend to be more resistant to taking advantage of CRM technologies? What are some methods to help overcome this resistance?

Most users, when comfortable with an existing solution, tend to be hesitant and resistant to change. Particularly sales personnel. With the proper scoping of the project and training, CRM solutions can help sales, customer service, and help desk operations improve their ability to be more effective and efficient in their job.

The best way to help employees get comfortable with any new solution is to make sure they are involved in the implementation from the very beginning. Company executives should make sure they get buy-in from all employees who are going to be using the new system instead of having IT people force feed it to them.

Lawrence Caretsky is president and CEO of Commence Corporation, a leading provider of customer relationship management (CRM) software solutions targeting small- to medium-sized businesses.