

CRM REVIEW OF SALESFORCE.COM

COMPARE COMMENCE CRM VS. SALESFORCE CRM

This report reviews two industry leaders in the CRM sector and compares several critical decision points that differentiate the products. If you are considering either of these solutions for your business, the information below may help you with your decision.

Salesforce.com is certainly a well-recognized name in the CRM industry. It's a fine company with a good product that has built a reputation for addressing the requirements of enterprise level corporations. Commence Corporation has an equally impressive track record, but has spent the past two decades supporting the needs of small to mid-size businesses. With the Fortune 1000 becoming saturated, Salesforce began marketing downstream to smaller organizations where Commence CRM has been a popular choice; hence the competition.

FUNCTIONALITY

The first criteria people tend to look at when selecting a CRM solution is the products functionality so let's start here.

Both products offer a comprehensive suite of CRM applications and functionality that is more robust than competitive offerings. They include: account and contact management, e-mail integration, group calendaring, activity management, lead management, lead qualification, sales automation, marketing campaign management, a document library, customer service i.e. help desk with frequently asked questions (FAQ) and knowledge base, web forms, mobile support, social networking, CRM dashboards, reporting with analytics and a customer portal. Commence also offers an integrated Project Management solution, while Salesforce.com offers a more robust reporting engine, supports multi-language versions, and offers more choices for disparate system integration.

Advantage: Salesforce.com. Both products offer a comprehensive set of applications for automating front office business processes, but Salesforce.com gets a slight edge for enterprise level functionality.

PRODUCT PLATFORM

The product's platform or architecture is often overlooked during the decision process, but is critically important for scalability and system performance. If you have heard about or experienced CRM solutions that operate slowly and take too much time to run queries or reports it is because they have a dated or poorly designed platform.

Both Commence and Salesforce.com use industry standard technology designed for scalability and reliability, but at different levels. Salesforce.com has been designed for enterprise level organizations and can support a large number of users. Commence CRM has been designed for the mid-market and is

targeted at companies of up to 250 users. Both products perform very well and can be scaled to a large number of users.

Advantage: Salesforce.com if you have hundreds of users, otherwise no advantage.

EASE OF USE

One of the most important aspects of any CRM system is user adoption and how easy the product is to use.

Customers like Commence CRM's user interface and have commented that it offers an attractive layout, is cosmetically appealing, and easier to navigate and use than Salesforce.com. Commence has incorporated the ability to perform a number of repetitive tasks right within the product's home page or dashboard. This reduces the learning curve and enables the user to quickly enter and access data without leaving the initial screen. Salesforce.com's user interface is known to be a bit overwhelming and cumbersome to use.

Advantage: Commence CRM

COST

The current economic environment has businesses of all sizes seeking value in the products and services they purchase and price has become a driving factor in the CRM sector.

Salesforce.com offers several specific product versions in what appears to be an attempt to provide a solution to every size customer and every budget. The offerings vary significantly and range from \$20 to more than \$300 per user per month. Each edition offers a fixed level of functionality for a fixed price with virtually no flexibility. In addition, the lower cost offerings limit the functionality you get, and the number of users you may have. The entry-level version, for example, only supports a maximum of five (5) users. If you wish to add an additional user, you must then upgrade to the next higher version for all users. This often represents doubling or tripling the overall annual cost of the system.

Commence CRM offers much more flexibility. Customers can select a specific version of the product or select just the applications they require for their business. Because Commence CRM is modular in design, customers are not forced to purchase functionality they do not need or wish to pay for. Commence CRM price points are very attractive and start as low as \$19 per user per month and range up to \$65 dollars for the enterprise edition. This represents more than a 50% cost saving over Salesforce.com.

Advantage: Commence CRM

SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT

While cloud computing has taken the market by storm not every company wishes to store their data in the cloud. Some prefer to implement their CRM system in-house or on premise.

Certain businesses are either legally precluded from hosting their data outside their own “four walls” or simply are not comfortable doing so. Many mid-size and larger companies also have the IT infrastructure and resources to host a CRM system on premise and prefer this deployment model. Commence CRM may be deployed as an on premise CRM solution or hosted via the company’s cloud based environment. On premise deployment is not an option with Salesforce.com.

Advantage: Commence CRM, due to the flexibility of deployment via the cloud or on premise.

DATA SECURITY

One of the most important aspects of engaging a provider of cloud based CRM solutions is the comfort of knowing that your data is properly secured and protected.

Both firms offer a hosting service that is “best in class” and far superior to many lower cost solutions whose price points simply do not allow for this level of service. Data security is constantly changing so it is important to check with both solution providers and learn what updates and enhancements they have made to ensure the utmost protection of your data.

Advantage: None, both offer best in class cloud hosting services.

CUSTOMIZABILITY

There is no “one size fits all” that works in the CRM space. Customers need to know that the product they select can be tailored to meet unique or changing business requirements. Every CRM solution provider says their solution is customizable. The question is by who and at what cost.

Both solutions are customizable, but the level of customization and the resources required for customization are uniquely different. Salesforce.com offers a developer or engineering toolkit that enables professional developers to perform detailed customization of the product. The toolkit is only available with the higher cost product offerings and adds an additional expense per user. In addition, the toolkit requires professional development expertise to utilize.

Commence CRM provides the system administrator with a nice array of customization features that they can do without programmer intervention such as; setting security or role permissions, adding custom fields, generating custom reports, modify or tailor how data is viewed as examples. Adding unique tables or additional application functionality does require programmer intervention.

Advantage: Salesforce.com. Their developer’s toolkit, while extremely expensive and requiring specific programmer expertise, offers a higher level of customization than Commence CRM.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Both companies provide world-class customer service and have highly qualified staff that offer a host of services from data administration and end-user training, to data migration, customization, and disparate

system integration. E-mail and telephone support is available directly from each company's operations in the United States and abroad.

Advantage: None. Both companies offer excellent high quality customer service.

THE FINAL SCORE

Both Commence CRM and Salesforce.com provide customers with a compelling reason to select them as a partner for Customer Relationship Management software. Both have a long history in the CRM sector and a proven track record for delivering a world-class CRM solution. Both systems are scalable to a large number of users and their cloud or hosting service that protects your data is "best in class."

Enterprise organizations tend to favor Salesforce.com who, in addition to demonstrating their ability to address the needs of large multi-national organizations, provides developer tools that enable professional engineers to extend the functionality of their offering. In addition, Salesforce integrates to a wide variety of other applications.

Small to mid-size companies tend to favor Commence's slick navigation and ease of use and like the ability to customize the product without programmer intervention. Commence CRM is considerably less expensive than Salesforce.com and does not limit the number of users by edition. Commence has a proven track record in the industry, offers more functionality than similarly priced products, and is viewed by customers as very good value.

There are many options in the CRM sector, but when you compare each company's track record in the industry, scope of functionality, cloud-hosting services, customizability and quality of service, these two are among the best.

Take a moment to learn how Commence CRM can help you to become a more efficient sales and service organization by watching our video series, talking with one of our experts, or taking a free test drive.