

CRM REVIEW: COMMENCE CRM VS. SALESFORCE

Salesforce is the most recognized name in the CRM industry, but does that mean it's the best solution for your business? The answer depends on your requirements and the size and complexity of your business. This article outlines some of the key differences between Salesforce and Commence CRM, one of the leading providers of CRM software for small and mid-size business.

TARGET MARKET

Salesforce's target market had been large organizations that require comprehensive functionality and scalability that supports several hundred even several thousand users. This sector has become saturated, forcing the company to enter the small to mid-size businesses to continue its growth. The challenge for Salesforce is two-fold. First, it's very hard for one company to be all things to all people and Salesforce is no exception. By design this is a complex product that is hard to use and chock full of features and functions that the majority of small to mid-size companies simply do not require. The company has modified its small business offering with a package that has less functionality and a reduced cost, but this effort does not automatically make Salesforce the best solution for smaller businesses. Customer support costs are still very high and adding additional functionality like Marketing or Customer Service Ticketing can get terribly expensive when compared to other alternatives. Secondly, they may have also underestimated the competition in the SMB community which has a myriad of easy to use low cost programs that are well regarded by industry experts and customers alike.

One of the companies that is quite popular in the SMB sector is Commence Corporation, manufacturers of Commence CRM. The company has been providing CRM solutions to small and mid-size businesses for more than two decades and is well regarded for the level of functionality, flexibility and ease of use of their product.

Commence has several thousand users in more than a dozen countries, but when your customers are not big brand names like Dell or Adidas you don't get much fanfare from industry analysts; and while the two companies now compete in the SMB sector you will rarely see Salesforce and Commence CRM mentioned in the same article. Let's look at the key differences between the two offerings.

FUNCTIONALITY

Both products offer a comprehensive suite of CRM applications that 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 and help desk with frequently asked questions (FAQ) and knowledge base, web forms, full mobile support, social networking, accounting integration, CRM dashboards, reporting and analytics and a customer portal. Commence also offers an integrated Project Management solution. Commence CRM has the most comprehensive offering among companies that target the SMB community.

EASE OF USE

One of the most important aspects of any CRM system is the learning curve and how easy the product is to use. Commence CRM clearly wins this contest. Customers really like the products modern user interface which is

cosmetically appealing and easier to navigate and use than Salesforce. This reduces the learning curve and enables the users to become productive with minimal training.

COST

Salesforce offers several specific product editions in what appears to be an attempt to provide a solution to every size customer and every budget. The offerings vary significantly and can reach over \$300 per user per month. Each edition offers a fixed level of functionality for a fixed price with virtually no flexibility for change. In addition, the lower cost offerings not only limit the functionality you get, but also limit the number of users you may have.

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. Customers can get started at just \$29 per user per month. If cost is a factor in your decision process Commence CRM will provide what you need at a significantly lower cost.

PRODUCT PLATFORM/SCALABILITY

Salesforce has been designed for enterprise level companies. Its platform has proven to support a large number of users with very good performance. It also offers multi-language and multi-currency support which is often required for multi-national corporations. Commence CRM is designed and targeted at mid-size and smaller enterprises of 10 to 200 users. Its architecture is also highly scalable and capable of supporting many users. In addition, there is multi-currency support but there is no multi-language support.

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.

CUSTOMIZABILITY

Both solutions are customizable, but the level of customization and the resources required for customization are uniquely different. Salesforce offers a developer or engineering toolkit that enables professional developers to perform detailed customization of the product. The toolkit is designed for professional engineers which most large organization have on board and adds a significant cost to the overall purchase. Smaller businesses do not have professional developers on staff, nor do they have an interest or need to do this level of customization.

Commence CRM places much of its customization capabilities right within the user interface itself. This enables the CRM administrator or an authorized user to quickly create saved searches, add custom fields, custom views or reports without programmer intervention. With Commence CRM engineering tools are not required.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Both companies provide world-class customer service and have highly qualified staff that offer an array of services from data administration and end-user training, to data migration, customization, and disparate system integration. E-mail and telephone support are available directly from each company’s operations in the United States and abroad. Salesforce’s annual customer support expense is significantly greater than Commence CRM.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Commence CRM and Salesforce 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. Salesforce targeted large organizations while Commence has remained focused on small to mid-size companies.

Both systems provide robust functionality, are scalable, and their cloud or hosting service which protects your data is "best in class." The question is who has a better solution for small to mid-size businesses? If we look at the key decision criteria for this market segment, the answer becomes clear.

COST – Commence CRM is significantly less expensive than Salesforce. This is an important decision point for small to mid-size businesses.

SCALABILITY – Small to mid-size businesses are not concerned with the product's ability to support hundreds of users. Commence CRM can scale to 200+ users so this is not a key decision point.

COMPREHENSIVE FUNCTIONALITY – Commence's functionality rivals that of Salesforce at a significantly lower price. While there is no multi-language support this is rarely a decision point for these businesses.

EASE OF USE – With 20 + years of experience in the SMB sector, Commence understands the needs of this market and has created a CRM solution that offers robust functionality but is intuitive and very easy to use. This is a critical decision point for smaller businesses.

CUSTOMIZATION – While Salesforce requires trained professionals to customize the product, Commence enables the system administrator to do this on their own. This is also an important decision point for small to mid-size businesses.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT (TRAINING & ONBOARDING) – Commence CRM's annual support fees are significantly less than Salesforce. This is another important decision point for smaller businesses.

If you are a small to mid-size business looking for a high quality, robust CRM solution at a cost you are comfortable with, there is no question that Commence CRM is the better choice for your business. If you would like to learn more about Commence CRM, contact our sales department at 1-877-COMMENCE. E-Mail us at sales@commence.com or visit our web site and get a free trial of the product.