

THE VALUE OF WORKING WITH CRM EXPERTS

CRM Experts Balance Competing Business, Organizational, and Technology Requirements to Drive Rapid, More Effective CRM Implementations Tied Directly to Business Outcomes

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What is the best way to pursue a CRM implementation that meets organizational needs and user demands, surmounts technical challenges, ensures user adoption, and achieves specific business outcomes? To enable a seamless and fast deployment, organizations must focus on selecting the appropriate implementation team. However, there are several project team choices to evaluate when deploying CRM, including teams filled solely with in-house IT talent or technology or business contractors, a broadly-focused consulting firm, or a consulting firm completely dedicated to CRM.

To understand which team will lead to a successful implementation, consider the requirements and myriad challenges to efficiently and effectively implement CRM programs. To begin with, project teams must possess not only the technical capabilities associated with CRM implementations, but the range of additional competencies required to define project goals and requirement. They must achieve consensus with both users and management about what connotes project success, and then deliver against each requirement to demonstrate business results throughout the entire process.

To address these challenges, CRM projects demand well-designed implementation methodologies as they typically require numerous — and sometimes competing — technical, functional, business, and organizational changes. Actively managing all four aspects throughout the endeavor will challenge technology-focused in-house IT staff, contractors trained on a specific business or technology discipline, or consulting companies who cannot bring teams composed solely of CRM experts to bear on each project.

Therefore, the best path to CRM implementation success is to work with a single team of individuals who are highly skilled in CRM technology. These individuals should also have a deep understanding of the corresponding business processes, and draw on substantial industry knowledge and experience solving discrete organizational, business, functional, and technological challenges. A consulting firm devoted to CRM can assemble a team of multi-talented experts, while also enabling organizations to benefit from the entire firm's collective knowledge, problem-solving expertise, past successes, and well-honed best practices. By relying on implementation best practices, CRM consulting firms produce more realistically planned projects; can diagnose, avoid, and overcome CRM challenges; and ultimately, facilitate better user adoption. Most of all, organizations are able to rapidly leverage new CRM capabilities, improve business processes and internal efficiency, boost customer satisfaction, and increase revenue as quickly as possible.

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BEGIN WITH BUSINESS GOALS

Most CRM implementations take longer than necessary simply because companies do not identify their business goals in advance or achieve consensus about what CRM projects should achieve. By working with CRM experts who can clearly outline business outcomes prior to implementation, and select which features to enable or disable to achieve these desired business results; organizations pursue the most efficient implementation path. For example, a company may want to include a 10-year-old business process in its redesigned CRM program, but why exactly does that business process exist? Is it a vestige of former regulatory pressures or discarded practices, and is it still the best approach? CRM-focused consultants will pose such questions and help identify the answers to ultimately select the most efficient and effective CRM processes and implementation program that achieves defined business outcomes.

PHASED PROJECTS DELIVER ON BUSINESS GOALS

CRM success begins with well-designed project plans that are phased, with small, discrete stages. By defining each stage by a specific goal, and tying that goal to a specific business requirement, each stage delivers new functionality and enables companies to more rapidly achieve required CRM capabilities, while simultaneously facilitating the considerable cultural and business changes that CRM often requires.

Smaller initiatives also hold project teams more accountable, since each phase is tied to and designed to achieve a discrete, and already agreed-upon, business goal, not merely a check box within a software-integration timeline. For example, while “increased revenue” may be the primary objective for many companies’ long-term CRM programs, specific outcomes for each phase may include increasing the number of products sold per customer by 50 percent, doubling the number of new customer wins, or tripling call center volume with existing resources. Only project teams composed of multi-talented CRM experts can tap into the wide-ranging technological, organizational, functional, and business expertise required to engineer and deliver each of these small phased steps that achieve these specific business outcomes.

CRM BLENDS BUSINESS AND IT

One notable barrier to CRM project success stems from treating CRM implementations as IT projects. First and foremost — and unlike standard enterprise applications — a CRM implementation is a business project. Companies purchase CRM software to integrate, automate, and support new business processes, add value to existing business processes, provide relevant reporting and analytical insight, and better market, sell, and

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service to prospects and existing customers. By contrast, most companies treat enterprise application initiatives — including ERP and HR or enterprise financial software projects — as IT efforts because they automate only existing, agreed-upon, or well-known business processes, and typically do not demand change from all customer-facing departments.

So, how do companies implement business processes they do not possess, and therefore may not even be able to define? This is another reason why implementation without experts is risky. On the business side, while everyone can point to what an enterprise financial application will accomplish, most companies lack agreed-upon customer management business processes, and therefore do not understand the specific goals they must achieve to implement a discrete process. These include the ability to segment customers, direct tasks typically handled by a call center to the Web, integrate customer feedback into the product-design cycle, up-sell annual maintenance contracts, or execute targeted marketing campaigns aimed at small groups of high-value prospects.

Functionally, any given CRM application may offer six different ways for sales to complete a seemingly simple task, such as locate a customer. Which approach enables an organization to achieve its desired outcome? When helping companies implement CRM, experts use their extensive experience to articulate — from a business and functional perspective — everything from the best way to run targeted marketing campaigns to the most effective way to look up a customer, record a sales lead, or log a customer support call. Besides the obvious benefits, ensuring the correct business processes leads to faster user adoption.

MODERN APPLICATION ARCHITECTURES

Of course no CRM application stands alone. Accordingly, CRM experts are well-versed in the technologies and modern application architectures required to cost-effectively and efficiently integrate CRM applications and data stores via reusable interfaces — often by using a service-oriented architecture based on Web Services standards.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERTISE

In addition, successful CRM projects require a team leader who can guide a project from specification to completion, while balancing the competing technological, functional, and organizational challenges. Yet, beyond just a CRM-experienced project manager, the entire team must possess extensive CRM experience, wide-ranging technology- and busi-

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EXPERT ADVICE: CRITICAL STEPS FOR ANY CRM IMPLEMENTATION

- *Recruit a Business Sponsor*
- *Launch a Steering Committee*
- *Identify Business Goals*
- *Involve Business Executives*
- *Empower the Project Team to Determine Business & Design Objectives*
- *Implement the Required Infrastructure*
- *Team IT Staff with External Staff*
- *Streamline Application Environments*
- *Pursue Knowledge Transfer & Training*

ALTERNATIVES TO CRM EXPERTS

ness-process skills, as well as a pragmatic approach to combining technology and organizational changes to meet specific goals.

This insight requires that companies work with consulting firms devoted to CRM, which use only highly experienced CRM project managers and assemble project teams comprised solely of CRM experts — not technologists with little or no CRM experience. Furthermore, they are able to share insights with — and for problem-solving purposes can rely on — an impressive number of their peers, who are also CRM experts. For a consulting firm dedicated to CRM, project success is the primary goal. Accordingly, when necessary, these experts can even escalate problems to senior management, themselves CRM experts, to speed resolution.

Consider the alternatives to using CRM experts. For starters, companies can work with contractors, yet although these individuals may charge less at the outset, they are frequently skilled at just implementing a particular technology and have no accountability and few incentives for achieving specified user, organizational, or process results. Therefore, contractors may appear less expensive at project inception, but cost and time overruns are frequent because they lack an unwavering focus on achieving specific business outcomes, ensuring user adoption, or mapping implementation programs to a CRM Roadmap that is based on future needs and direction.

Another option is for companies to tap in-house technology talent. However, while IT personnel may have experience implementing CRM software, they will not have the best practices honed from countless implementations, time to stay abreast of the latest CRM technology changes, or access to peer CRM resources to help them defuse potential problems. They may also be risk being reassigned to other — newly prioritized — projects, and cannot always act as the outside factor frequently required to mediate between users and management.

Companies can also select larger consulting companies with broader offerings. Yet, unlike a firm dedicated to CRM that brings thoroughly trained and expe-

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rienced CRM consultants to project teams, larger consultancies do not offer a single team stacked with CRM experts. In fact, these companies typically have one or two experts guide the project, leading to just a few team members on which to truly rely.

When envisioning a project team, consider what would happen if the CRM team encountered unforeseen difficulties. With contractors, in-house technology staff, or a broadly focused consulting firm, such problems can lead to missed deadlines and significant cost overruns. By working with a consulting firm dedicated to CRM, however, and expert project teams filled with diverse experience and exposure to peer and management resources, companies avoid such problems, and ensure more rapid and successful implementations.

BOOSTING IN-HOUSE CRM EXPERTISE

CRM experts are also helpful when CRM-experienced companies face new challenges. For example, when one large online bank undertook a marketing and analytics project, it assembled a 40-person project team, consisting mostly of in-house employees. While Innoveer contributed just two people to the team, they led the project's technical work, including mapping desired business outcomes and ensuring critical links between applications, functionality, and business drivers.

Besides contributing technical expertise, Innoveer also improved timeline fidelity, as external consulting firms are not distracted by internal politics, and team members are not reallocated to different projects. Hence, Innoveer was able to help the project finish on-time and on-target — something teams composed of only in-house employees may be hard-pressed to achieve on their own.

ENSURE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

In fact, most of Innoveer's clients request integrated teams, composed of external consultants and in-house personnel, and this is the approach Innoveer typically recommends. Not only do integrated teams help reduce project costs; they also ensure crucial knowledge transfer, so that projects continue their pace of high returns following implementation. For example, experts help train business users on today's more "self-service" (less IT-dependent) CRM applications, since business users are expected to set up their own templates, define business roles, sketch workflows, and so on.

Such knowledge transfer may not just be technical, but also functional. For example, one

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Innoveer customer, a leading provider of e-mail security and management services, wanted to set up more effective e-mail campaigns as part of its 360-degree view of marketing to customers. Therefore, Innoveer provided this high-technology company with extensive functional guidance as part of its CRM project, such as which campaigns and how many to pursue, which templates to use, how to segment lists and track prospects within its CRM application, how to define business rules and workflows, and more.

FASTER, MORE EFFECTIVE CRM

The path to CRM success begins by working with a team of experts who understand CRM-specific business needs, are able to manage diverse — and often competing — technical, functional, and organizational requirements, and who draw on each team member's substantial experience derived from numerous CRM projects across various industries. Only teams of CRM experts have the combined skill set necessary to assess a company's strategic framework and vision, expertly design project plans, and implement a series of targeted stages, each of which delivers the necessary business outcomes. By using a CRM Roadmap and building on each successful phase, CRM experts help companies more rapidly and successfully achieve their desired CRM goals: enhanced efficiency, and ultimately, the overarching goal of every CRM initiative, increased revenue and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

ABOUT INNOVEER SOLUTIONS

INNOVEER SOLUTIONS, an award-winning customer strategy and solutions consultancy, provides advanced customer management services to high-technology and healthcare companies, among others, in the areas of planning and strategy, technology implementation, and optimization. The company's deep industry knowledge, broad technical skills, and Multishore methodology enable organizations to address their critical customer-facing issues and achieve an integrated view of all customer information. With an exclusive focus on customer management since 1998, Innoveer has worked with more than 300 organizations to increase their overall business growth, improve internal efficiency, and enhance the customer experience.

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