

## How Important is CRM to Your Business?



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“...he can find out if the goods were shipped, when they were shipped and where they are now.”

We all know it is important to know how your company is perceived by your customers or clientele. We also know that the level of customer satisfaction is directly proportional to how your business will do in the future. But as a manager or owner the magic question is: How do I measure this and what can I do about it?

CRM or Customer Relationship Management is the term applied for putting software, hardware and networking in place that improves a company's dealings with its customers. In the simplest example, a customer might like to be able to access his supplier's shipping system, so he can find out if the goods were shipped, when they were shipped and where they are now. CRM includes such customer touch functions as help desk, marketing, order entry, technical information and sales automation.

CRM begins when a potential client dials the company number. What happens when the call is answered is critical to creating a new client or keeping an existing one. For example, how many times does the phone ring before the call is answered? Surveys show that in today's world people won't wait any longer than five rings before hanging up. Having a phone system that can tell you how many hang-ups (the real ones) you get is critical to whether your company is going to go up or down the ladder of customer satisfaction.

When the call is answered another critical moment occurs. If they are put on hold the patience level doesn't go much beyond one

minute. So your phone system should allow for the caller to get to the department they want quickly. A telephone 'tree' can do wonders but you can't have too many branches. Four is enough to challenge today's demanding consumer or client. A live attendant is valuable because callers like to talk to a human but if all they do is quickly transfer the caller to a department where they are put on hold for longer than a minute the live attendant isn't serving a very useful role.

When the caller reaches the respondent does that individual have any information on the caller? If the caller is already a client and the respondent has a pop-up screen on their computer showing information on how long the caller has been a client, what their preferences are, how often they call, their contact information and so on then the company has a definite advantage over a competitor without this technology.

CRM depends on two main factors: how helpful the employees are to the customer and how functional the phone system is in moving callers through the system. These will determine a company's ability to retain customers and thereby create valuable revenues.

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