

The Role of Your CRM System in the Business Development Process

For many in the BD world, their customer relationship management (CRM) tool may be Microsoft Outlook with or without journal notes, a manila folder filled with notes, or a box filled with business cards separated by days of the month and months in a year. This is not CRM!

Poor CRM or lack thereof wastes up to a quarter of your work week. This can be searching for information, redundant steps in your BD process, chasing opportunities that are not alive or perhaps timely. Any BD professional should have an intuitive CRM application that facilitates and automates many processes. Examples of these processes can be: marketing, email, social media campaigns, pricing, quotes, orders, and templates, etc. can be customized and accessed with a few clicks on the keyboard and mouse.

Taking a Customer Directed Focus is what CRM is all about. You can synchronize your entire BD process from future customer, to customer, to fulfillment, to customer service, and finally to customer retention. You can tailor your marketing efforts to your industry verticals, create a one-to-one customer service experience, share information with customers that they actually want and need to ultimately build a brand loyalty your competition will find hard to pierce.

Gain a 360 degree view of your customers and future customers so you can reach out to them at the right time in their buying cycle. This can incorporate their activities in social media and other tracking tools that are available to you. You can increase your productivity, responsiveness, accuracy, and service quality by timing your connections with your customers and future customers. It will also give you that slight edge by branding yourself as being in the right place at the right time for your customers. This will naturally increase your word of mouth referrals.

Manage campaigns over multiple channels to gain rich marketing knowledge through call centers, social media, direct mail, data storage, customer inquiries, etc. CRM organizes and collates the interactions between you and your customers so that you can maximize your BD efforts.

To implement a CRM into an organization is not one of haste. Consultation and homework are necessary to determine the best tool to maximize and support your BD efforts. There are many industry specific tools such as SmartOffice which lends itself to the financial service industry. There are other general tools such as Infusionsoft which is a more general yet customizable application that can fit your needs.

Develop the strategy – Why are you using this tool and what do you hope to gain?

Decide on where you want the CRM to live? In the cloud or on your server? IT will need to be involved so that you understand the pros and cons of access and location.

Choose the project manager – IT will need to be engaged but may not be the best choice for the PM. Choose someone who understands the BD process en- to-end.

Support from the top down is necessary – Is the owner/executives ready to use this tool on a daily basis? If not, it would probably be best to hold on the project in that it is hard to get buy-in if anyone is unwilling to walk their own talk.

Empower the team by sharing power – Are you ready to give them the access to complete tasks? Are you ready to invest in their training at whatever level they are at with technology and CRM? It is not sufficient to give them the manual and let them figure it out on their own.

Select the right CRM partner – Do they have the knowledge of your industry and technical expertise to support your implementation process?

Define your key performance indicators (KPI) that will measure the success? Refer back to the first question; “Why are we using this tool and what do we hope to gain?” What are the KPIs that will answer this question effectively? This can stretch across all sectors of your business beyond the revenue and profit indicators. Social media, marketing, production, accounting, technology, etc. can have each their own indicators for growth.

Phase in the CRM system – scaling the implementation process will be required for success. How might you scale this? It could be done by department, expertise, features of the CRM system your purchase. You are installing an elephant of sorts; take the how do you eat and elephant approach? One bite at a time!

Your CRM can serve to be the engine that drives your organizational growth and business development. Once you invest in the system, invest in your people’s training. The marriage of those two processes can drive your BD efforts to heights you only imagined.