



# How Are You Managing Your Customer Relationships?

## A Guide to Customer Relationship Management Systems

We live in a digital age, where information and data abounds. Customers are more knowledgeable now than they ever have been. According to Gene Alvarez, managing vice president at Gartner, the leaders in customer experience design their program from the viewpoint of the customers, with an eye for their motivations and goals. The brand is then built around that.

How well do you really know your customer? Are you currently tracking your customer data? Do you have a CRM software solution in place? Over the past five years, the domestic CRM systems industry has grown at an average annual rate of a whopping 12.9%, and *IBISWorld* expects this tremendous growth to continue, albeit at a slightly slower pace (11.1%) over the next five years to reach \$25.5 billion in 2020. Market demand is being driven by small businesses, who are looking for a better way to effectively control customer experiences.

While there are giants in the land that have historically catered to large enterprises, such as Oracle or Microsoft, now there are a number of systems that target small businesses. According to Business-Software.com, the top 10 CRM solutions for small businesses include:

- Netsuite
- Insightly
- Zoho
- Nimble
- Workbooks CRM
- Infusionsoft
- Salesforce
- Batchbook
- Contactme
- Claritysoft

All of these vendors offer relatively affordable options with a multitude of key features, which include but are not limited to: contact management, task management, social integration, data import, analytics, email integration, and mobile accessibility.

While having a high-performance CRM system is important, *CRM Search* cautions that it is the actual use of the application that ultimately leads to improvement. Successful implementation requires continued support by the company's leaders as well as individual employee buy in. It is important that leadership sends a clear message of the overall expected goals and outcomes for customer experience improvement with the use of the system.

It is also important to do your due diligence when selecting a CRM vendor. According to *CRM Search*, one of the common reasons a system implementation fails is because the solution was not a good fit for the company. Evaluate your needs, and use tools like Business-Software.com's comparison reports to identify which solutions have the most features that will benefit you.



Having a system in place to manage and collect data on your customers, not only helps increase the level of customer service, but also helps you target your marketing message in a way that truly resonates with the needs and goals of clientele, thus creating loyal customers. The Temkin Group found that loyal customers are five times as likely to continue purchasing your products or service offerings, are five times more likely to forgive mishaps or mistakes, and are four times as likely to refer your company to friends and colleagues.

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