YOUR GUIDE TO CRM

How to Manage Customer Data, Grow Relationships and Convert Leads into New Business

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Introduction

The term “customer relationship management” (CRM) can sound intimidating to small and midsize businesses. While most marketers and C-level professionals are familiar with CRM, many struggle to define exactly what it means and how it relates to their business.

Simply put, CRM refers to software systems that help companies store data on its customers, track interactions with future and current customers and manage follow-up with prospects.

Who can benefit from a CRM system? Any company that seeks to maintain a relationship with its customers, prospects and business contacts can benefit. That sounds like pretty much all businesses, right? Well, it’s the truth. To be more specific, CRM offers advantages to any business that:

- Seeks to connect marketing to sales
- Needs to organize and track incoming leads
- Looks to streamline and optimize efficiency

Does this sound like you? You’re not alone. There are many things a CRM system can accomplish that should get people across all areas of a business excited—from marketers and salespeople to business owners and C-level executives. In this e-book, we provide you with a basic understanding of what CRM is; business challenges it solves; system features that can help supercharge your marketing and sales efforts; and strategies to build CRM buy-in and engagement throughout your company.

We hope you find this information useful as you think through your business’ customer and prospect relationship strategies. Marcum Strategic Marketing’s professionals are always eager to answer your questions or discuss ways in which our award-winning inbound marketing services can help your business drive qualified leads, expand customer relationships and create raving fans. We have included our contact information in the Conclusion.

Now, onward and upward!

Chapter One

Understanding the Basics Behind CRM and the Challenges It Solves

Defined, CRM is the process of managing and analyzing interactions with past, existing and potential customers. It was originally devised as a means to integrating and automating sales, marketing and customer support. Essentially, it compiles customer and prospect data from your company's website, email and telephone records, as well as live chat histories, social media and more. Through analysis of that data, you can gain valuable insight about those customers and prospects while transparently and effectively managing communication efforts with them.

Knowing what CRM is, how can you determine if it's right for your business?

A good way to answer that is to think about three fundamental business challenges that CRM systems are designed to solve:

1. **Decentralized Data** – Do you have a need to compile and maintain a list of information on your leads and customers? Does this information currently live in many different places? A CRM system can help you combine this information in one centralized location. The benefit? Everyone has access to the same information, allowing you to get a 360-degree view of all of your company's key customers and prospects. Plus, when the information is stored in one location, you will be able to access the specific data you need, when you need it.

2. **Tripping Over Existing Relationships** – Are your customers regularly interfacing with multiple people on your team? How does everyone keep track of where a conversation with any one customer left off? Have you had an introductory conversation with a prospect just to learn that they've already spoken with someone else on the team? A CRM system can help you keep

track of multiple relationships a customer or prospect has within your company. This allows for smoother conversations and an overall appearance that everyone on your team is on the same page and in unison with one another.

3. **Sales Team Productivity** – Do you struggle to gauge the productivity of your sales team? Does the team follow a structured process? Utilizing a CRM system that combines marketing and sales functions can help structure and prioritize follow-up efforts. CRMs that include sales pipelines can also help companies set and keep track of revenue goals.

> At its core, a CRM system is not just useful to large enterprise companies—it is essential for businesses of all sizes.

These are just some of the challenges that CRM systems can help solve. If your business struggles with any of these issues, CRM can unequivocally improve the way you manage relationships and can ultimately drive your business forward.

In our next chapter, we'll highlight four key benefits of a CRM system for your company.

Chapter Two

Four Key Benefits of a CRM System

In our last chapter, we explained the basics behind CRM and how it can help companies solve fundamental business challenges. In this chapter, we'll build on that by highlighting key benefits of a CRM system for your company.

There are many things a CRM system can do that should get marketers, salespeople and business owners excited. Here are four ways that a CRM can make you a more effective marketing and sales machine.

1. **Driving Better Lead Intelligence for Both Marketing and Sales** – Wouldn't it be helpful if you knew when a potential customer was looking at your website? Implementing a CRM system will allow your sales team to know how many times potential customers have visited your site, or if they have ever talked to a member of your sales team. When a salesperson works within a CRM that integrates with their company's marketing software, they're able to access this type of detailed, real-time lead intelligence all from one place.

   And this isn't just beneficial to sales; it's beneficial to marketing as well. A CRM will allow your marketing team to see which leads turn into customers. Specifically, you can see what brought them to your website, what pages they looked at and even what resources they downloaded before becoming a customer.

   When a marketer works in a marketing platform that is integrated with a CRM system, they are able to pinpoint which of their efforts and initiatives are working best.

2. **Enabling Better Sales and Marketing Alignment** – Sales and marketing both have numbers they need to hit each month, and when both teams have visibility into one another's metrics they can easily assess each team's progress and identify and remedy issues early in the month.

   Real-time reporting holds both teams accountable to their goals and helps one another work together toward shared outcomes. (It's also worth noting that CRMs are used for customers too – not just leads – so customer service communications and metrics can be easily documented for account managers to reference.)

3. **Helping Sales Prioritize Its Pipeline** – A CRM system gives complete visibility into the sales pipeline, and it helps salespeople prioritize who to call first so they don't miss important opportunities. When sales and marketing set up a CRM, they can identify important criteria and even implement a lead scoring system.

   Organizational systems like these reduce time spent sifting through leads and enable salespeople to prioritize the best opportunities.

4. **Helping Marketers Improve Campaigns With Closed-Loop Reporting** – When you integrate marketing software with your CRM system, marketing can easily analyze the effectiveness of its campaigns using closed-loop reporting. For example, when a salesperson converts a lead into a paying customer, they can mark it in the CRM and it will automatically be noted in your marketing software.

   This allows marketing to do two important things. First, marketing can automatically remove this lead from their lead nurturing sequences, and instead send it customer-focused information. Second, marketing is now able to attribute this new customer to a specific campaign and channel. Mapping marketing activities to sales events is critical for marketing to improve future campaigns.

In our next chapter, we'll offer nine CRM features your company can't live without.

Chapter Three

Nine CRM Features Your Business Can't Live Without

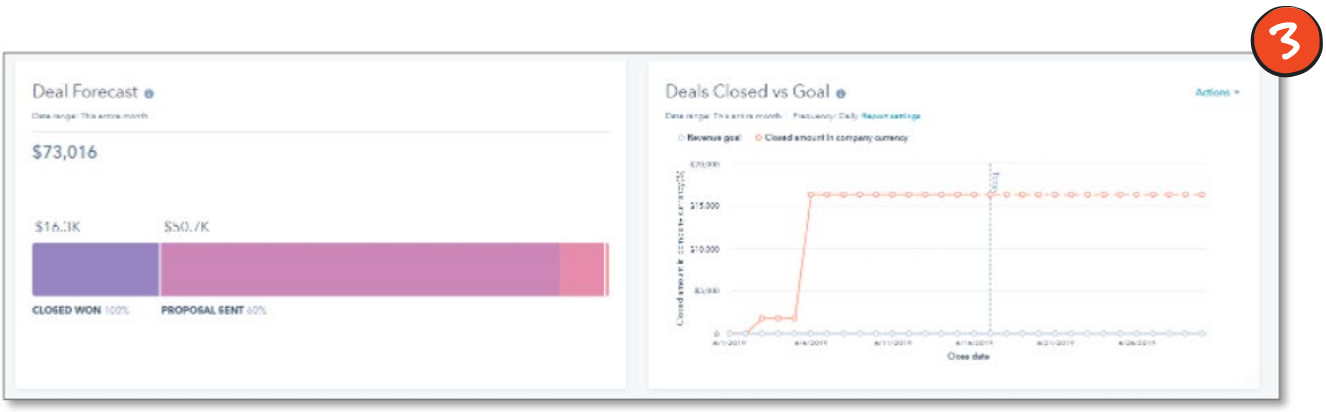
Before all else, a CRM system should be useful to its end-users: salespeople, sales managers, marketers and business leaders. CRM systems have a range of functionalities, but the following nine features are must-haves for any company aiming to organize its systems and improve its efficiency.

1. **Custom Contact Management** – You won't find a CRM system that doesn't have a contact management capability. If you do, chances are you aren't looking at a CRM. All CRMs allow salespeople to create contact records and store prospect and customer information in a database. However, the systems that truly improve efficiency will reduce and streamline contact data entry as much as possible.

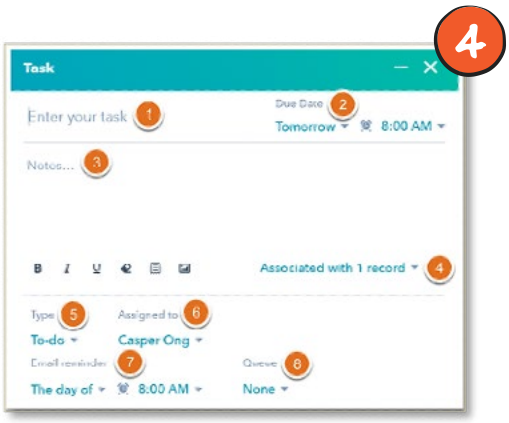
   A CRM should also allow for contact field customization. Every company has different needs when it comes to the type of information it must store for its clients and prospects. Your CRM should be able to accommodate your requirements.

2. **Deal Stages** – Each company's sales team may follow a slightly different sales process—especially when comparing B2B and B2C companies. The sales pipeline in your CRM system should be customized to fit your specific sales process. Whether your company has three deal stages or 15, you should be able to customize this process into the software and attach associated values.

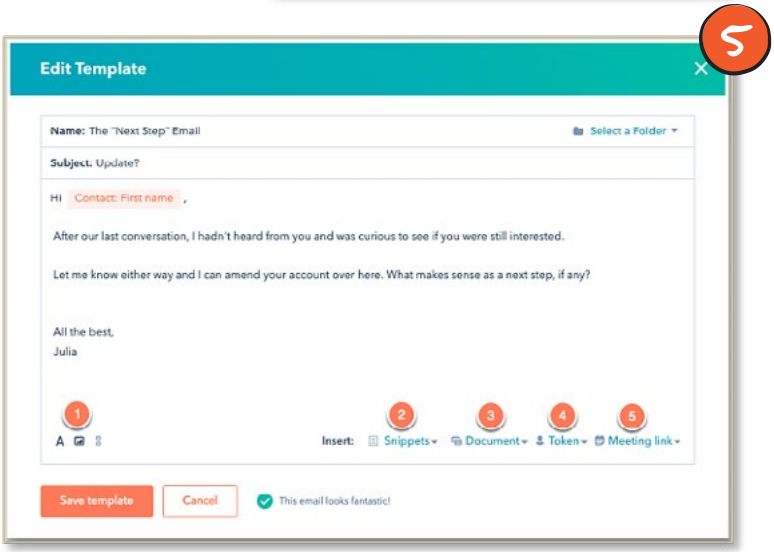
3. Daily Dashboard – Salespeople need visibility into a number of metrics on a daily basis—such as their progress to date against quota, how many deals they have in their pipelines and at which stages and what outstanding tasks they need to complete. Similarly, sales managers and leaders need to be able to view these categories for the aggregated sales team.



4. Task Management – A salesperson who has to toggle back and forth among several systems to view and complete their daily tasks is not a happy person (though this is common). CRM systems that include task management capabilities streamline salespeople's day-to-day workflow and help them keep on top of their follow-up.



5. Sales Content Repository – To cut back on wasted time searching for content, look for a CRM system with an embedded content repository—and specifically, one that allows salespeople to save their go-to pieces of collateral in one place. And it's not just collateral. Writing email copy can be another time-drain for a busy salesperson. Look for a system that also allows the user to file customized email templates, so the sales rep is not reinventing the wheel with every new outreach.



6. Automated Data Capture – One of the primary reasons companies deploy a CRM system is to keep better track of customer and prospect touches (e.g., emails, calls). But, beware: Many CRMs require salespeople to copy and paste their email outreach into the system or even upload call recordings.

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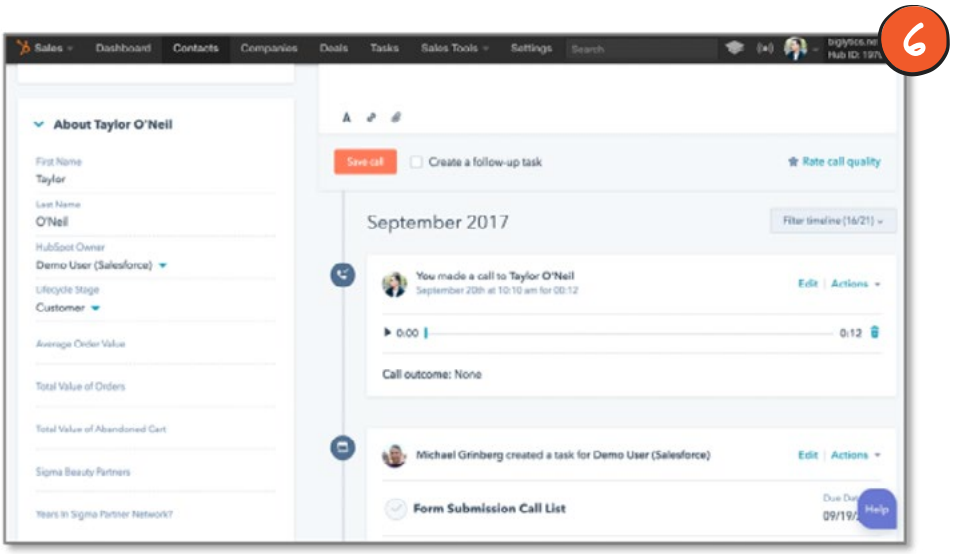
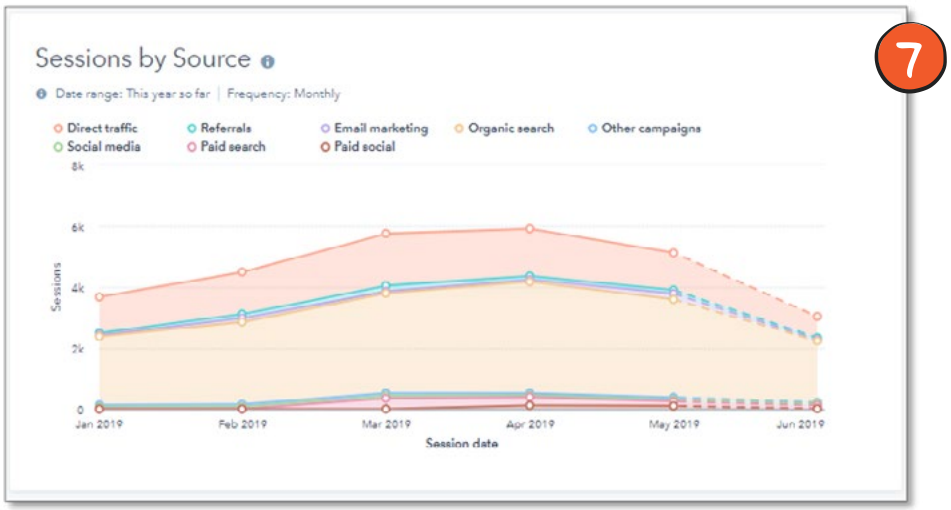
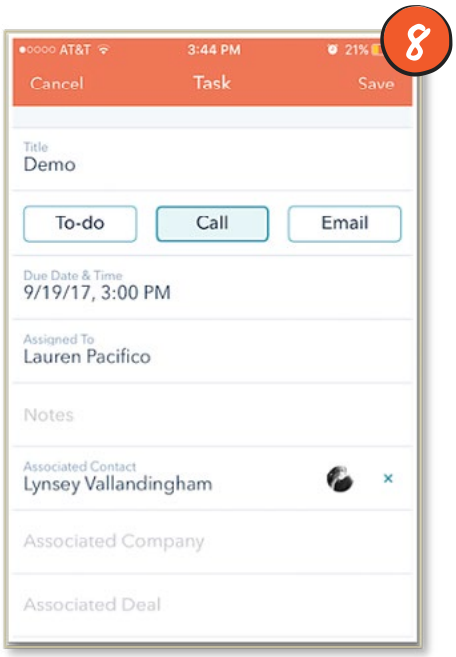
These extra steps can be maddening for salespeople who are making multiple calls each day, and it leaves room for human error. Look for software that does this step automatically. HubSpot CRM, for example, automatically logs calls made and emails sent and posts them in a timeline-like view on a contact's record page:



7. **Reporting** – A CRM system is only as good as the insights it provides. Be sure that your CRM provides reporting features that make it easy to export and distribute the trends that the system reveals.



8. **Mobile** –Tying reps to a CRM that can only be accessed via laptop is bound to annoy them, especially if they're in a role that requires travel. The majority of CRMs today allow salespeople to log on to the application from mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones. Make sure the ones you're considering have this functionality as well.



9. **Integration With Marketing Automation** – Last but certainly not least, integration between your marketing and sales platform is crucial. After all, the underlying concept of "customer relationship management" is to provide a complete lifecycle view into each prospect and client. A gap between marketing automation and CRM can lead to lost information and lost opportunities.

In our fourth and final chapter, we'll offer three strategies to build strong CRM buy-in and engagement throughout your company.

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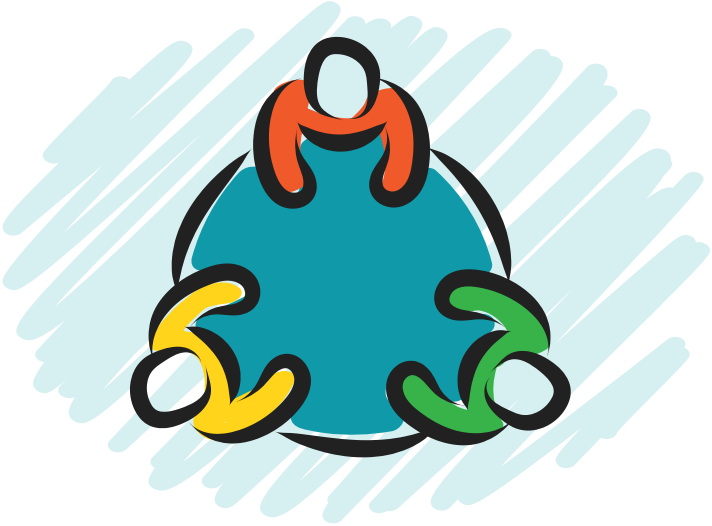
Chapter Four



Three Strategies to Build Strong CRM Buy-In and Engagement Throughout Your Company

Marketers and others within organizations are often charged with gaining buy-in from key stakeholders when it comes to new software, new campaigns and new initiatives we want to implement. To be successful, we must demonstrate how these will positively impact company growth and revenue. The same holds true when making the case for a CRM system, since selecting and implementing one requires substantial investments of time and money for your entire organization.

Statistics show that selecting and implementing the right CRM system for your company is no simple task. No matter the size or scope, implementation can be challenging on many fronts—especially when stakeholders possess varying levels of understanding, tech savviness, buy-in and skepticism. However, if you approach CRM by involving the right people, getting buy-in early on and demonstrating value, you'll be one step closer to ensuring implementation and adoption success. Let's look at these three strategies in more detail.

1. **Involve Sales/Business Development** – The worst mistake you can make in selecting and implementing a CRM system is not involving your sales/business development team. This is a road that will lead to distrust and pushback from those team members. It's important to consult with your sales team at the outset of this initiative to get a better sense of what their processes and needs are. Depending on the size of your team, you may not need to get input from everyone. In fact, involving too many people can potentially lead the process astray and cause poor decisions. However, if you can get a few senior-level sales team members involved early on (even invite them to sit in on demos), you'll create a support system that can help champion both the process and the solution.

2. **Identify and Recruit CRM Champions** – Who are stakeholders in your organization who can and will advocate effectively for CRM? If you can identify a handful of people who already understand and are behind the idea of CRM, they can serve as champions for the initiative and even be a helpful resource as you begin implementation. Perhaps there are team members who have had experience with CRM in a past life or who already understand the impact a successful CRM implementation can have on your company. Gaining support and enthusiasm from those who have already "bought in" will help you build a stronger case in the drive to win over those who need more convincing.

3. **Demonstrate Value Early On** – One way to combat pushback is to demonstrate the value of CRM at the outset of your selection process. To do this, it's important to understand where your team falls short—whether it's multiple sales team members reaching out to the same contact without even knowing it, everyone working off their own "book of business" in Microsoft Outlook or some other issue. In all cases, you need to be able to identify these challenges and demonstrate how CRM can directly improve and streamline your current processes.

Conclusion

We hope this e-book has helped you understand the basics of CRM, the many benefits it offers your company and strategies for gaining buy-in and driving engagement throughout your company.

If you're interested in learning more about CRM and integrating optimal CRM systems in your company, Marcum Strategic Marketing is here to help. To start the conversation on how our HubSpot Consulting Services can help, contact Sarah Chula at sarah.chula@marcumstrategicmarketing.com, 202-227-4348 or fill out our contact form here.

About the Author

Sarah Chula
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As an account executive, Sarah works closely with clients to help them identify and achieve their marketing goals and objectives. She is heavily involved in the brainstorming, strategy and planning for client engagements. As the liaison between clients and our creative team, Sarah is the glue that holds projects together. She is responsible for the day-to-day management, coordination and execution of her clients' marketing campaigns, all while tracking budgets and costs, and ensuring that projects run smoothly.

In addition, Sarah holds her HubSpot Inbound Marketing certification as well as the HubSpot Growth-Driven Design certification.

Sarah is a proud Cleveland sports fan and usually can be found with her nose in a book.

About Marcum Strategic Marketing

Marcum Strategic Marketing is an award-winning, full-service marketing and digital agency that delivers proactive marketing solutions for businesses and professional service firms across the country. A division of Marcum LLP, our service focus – covering strategic planning, branding, web design and development and inbound/digital marketing – helps clients build awareness and brand preference in the markets they serve and drive leads that boost revenues.

Learn More About Our HubSpot Consulting Services

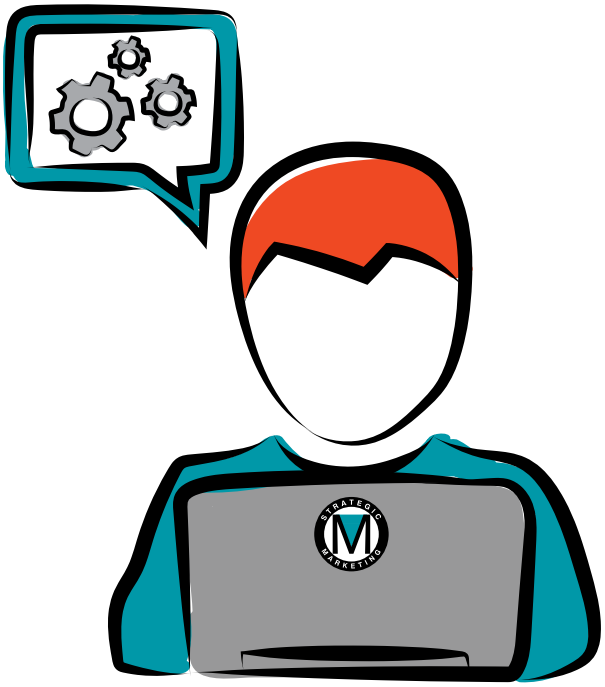
HubSpot's inbound marketing and CRM software can play an integral role in helping you to connect marketing to sales. However, with so many tools and features, creating a strategy that incorporates everything can be difficult—if not overwhelming. Whether you are just getting started with HubSpot and want to hit the ground running or are an active HubSpot user seeking improved results, we can help.

Marcum's HubSpot certified inbound marketing specialists will guide you through the implementation process, ensuring that you are set up for long-term success.

As a HubSpot Certified Platinum Partner, Marcum Strategic Marketing is positioned to help you execute every aspect of your inbound marketing campaign.

Whether you are a B2B or B2C company, our team of inbound marketing specialists are experienced in managing the types of campaigns you require to help you maximize your inbound marketing investment.

To learn more, contact Sarah Chula at sarah.chula@marcumstrategicmarketing.com or visit us at www.marketing.marcumllp.com.



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