



Economic Developers Guide to CRM – 2022

Author: Tom Wengler, January 30, 2022

CRM stands for Customer relationship management. Initially developed for salespeople, most CRM software was designed for sales teams.

Economic developers have been using CRM systems since the 90's and today, a number of CRM systems are on the market that address the unique nature of running an economic development organization.

This comprehensive guide is designed to help you choose the best system for your organization.

While economic development teams do not operate like a traditional sales team, there are certainly parallels and, having an easy to use CRM system that understands economic development is an important foundation for your success.

- In general, CRM software is designed to track Sales opportunities. Having a database of Companies and Contacts is also a key, foundational element. Companies, Contact and Sales Opportunities represent the 3 main records inside of a CRM system.
- Underneath this layer are the activities (past and future) which are tracked to each type of record. This allows your entire team to have a shared database which houses important information about your team's engagement with companies, contacts and opportunities.
- CRM systems also allow you to attach documents to records. Some CRM systems include Tickets and even Custom Objects. It's important to understand that each object or record is related to other records. In HubSpot's CRM, for example, a contact is related to a company, and potentially to a Project and to a BRE Ticket and event to a specific property.

*For EDO's it may be helpful to have a Sites and Buildings record that stands on its own.

- Some CRM systems have their own Marketing Automation tools – ideally, the CRM will connect to your website, digital marketing tools, and marketing campaigns. This is something to look for when selecting a system. Importantly, it's always best to have a unified software platform vs. lots of stand alone systems that may or may not connect with one another.



- There are a few companies in the US that have developed CRM software for economic developers. This is done in 1 of 2 ways.
 1. Enhance an existing CRM platform. Examples: Microsoft, Salesforce, HubSpot, and Zoho. This is done by companies that have partnered with these software companies. We have done this with HubSpot's software.
 2. Build the CRM software from scratch, from the ground up. This approach is taken by much smaller companies with 1- 5 total employees.



So, let's start at the beginning ... What is a CRM?

CRM stand for **customer relationship management**, and it refers to software that helps companies track interactions with their future and current customers.

The goal of implementing a CRM is to create a system that your sales and marketing teams can use to more efficiently and effectively interact with prospects or customers.

Marketing will often use a CRM to generate leads. This is why having a marketing system connected to the CRM is so important. With this, you can...

- Target companies in your database with ads on linkedin.
- Target contacts in your database, by type, with ads. You can also send marketing emails and track / see who's opening your emails, visiting your website, completing forms and engaging in online chat.
- Run social media campaigns and track post engagement.
- Send direct mail which, when done properly, will drive traffic to your website or landing pages.
- Utilize online chat and chat bots tools – this is often called conversational marketing.

Beyond using CRM for Projects, the CRM could address: talent attraction, upskilling, workforce development, property and site development, community projects, investors / members, incentive compliance, grants, loans and much more.

For instance, anyone using a CRM won't have to hunt through their email to remember where conversation left off. There are a few companies that have developed CRM software for economic developers. This is done in 1 of 2 ways.

Enhance an existing CRM platform.

- **Microsoft, Salesforce, HubSpot.** This is done by companies that have partnered with these software companies. The companies are referred to as Certified Implementation Partners, or Partners.
- **Advantages** – widely supported, powerful and secure backend/world class data centers, online training and support tools. These systems are robust and are constantly being upgraded as a part of your license subscription.
- **What to look for – Insider Tip:** carefully read and evaluate support plans, costs and know the details.
- **The smaller companies won't be able to offer as much as the larger companies in this regard as well.**
 - Make sure that you have the ability lock in the cost for multiple years.
 - Connections to third party tools (slack, outlook, gmail, quickbooks, etc.)



- Support models
 - Searchable online knowledge base
 - Community of users and online tools
 - Social media user groups (Facebook, LinkedIn)
 - Partners that specialize in working with economic developers
 - Online academy with certifications
 - Salesforce – add 30% of your license cost to get Premier Support
 - Microsoft Dynamics Microsoft: Minimum purchase of 20 Professional Direct Support licenses. The minimum for Professional Direct Support is \$180/month and you must buy 20 user licenses on top of this!
 - HubSpot

HubSpot Model

Support options are based on your [product plan](#).

Having trouble logging in? Try these [troubleshooting steps](#).

- CRM Free accounts are supported by the [Community](#).
- All Starter accounts are supported by the above + [email and chat](#).
- All Professional and Enterprise accounts are supported by the above + phone. [Log into your account](#) to request a call or contact us directly:

Select your country

United States ▾

1-888-HUBSPOT x3 (1-888-482-7768 x3)

Please note that not all phone carriers allow toll-free dialing.

	Free	Starter	Professional	Enterprise
Community	✓	✓	✓	✓
Email		✓	✓	✓
Chat		✓	✓	✓
Phone			✓	✓

If you have multiple HubSpot products, your support options are based on your highest subscription. Learn more about [getting help with HubSpot](#).

Build the CRM software from scratch, from the ground up.

- Executive Pulse, Synchronist are two examples.
- These systems are supported by smaller teams.
- **Their advantage** – they deeply understand economic development. While these systems may excel in certain aspects (BRE) but lacking in others – no marketing functionality or ability for you, the end client to configure on your own.



Value of Your Data

Company and Contact Data is Dynamic - Data grows and changes over time.

The longer you operate in a community = an increase in the number and type of relationships. Business and Contact data is dynamic. You'll want a system to manage and maintain this data.

We see Economic Development Projects as the equivalent of a company working in Enterprise Sales - multi-million dollar deals. Can you image a company engaged in multi-million dollar deals that does not use a modern CRM system? You, as an economic development leader, work on deals with Massive Impact and managing the details is a key to your success.



Articles and Resources

A company's data is valuable - the same holds true for you.

Having a list of community contacts, site selectors, and local businesses is a tremendous value and asset in your line of work. Great care must be taken of your data.

- <https://www.dataversity.net/what-is-data-value-and-should-it-be-viewed-as-a-corporate-asset/>
- <https://www.readycontacts.com/the-value-of-a-business-contact-databasehow-much-is-yours-worth/>
- <https://blog.hubspot.com/customers/understand-your-contact-database>

At its core, a CRM is not just useful to large companies -- it's essential for economic developers.

Contacts are the Key

What should CRM Address for economic development organizations?

Contacts are Key.... you'll want a profile of each contact that you work with.

Consider the different types of relationships that you have...

- realtors (commercial and residential)
- site selectors
- consultants
- educators
- local business owners/executives
- engineering firms
- investors
- vendors
- media
- committees

You'll want to see the history, notes, social media profiles and you'll want to see which companies your contacts are connected with.

*Note. Not all CRM systems make it easy or possible to see how 1 person can be connected to multiple Projects, Grants, Companies, etc. **Insider Tip: be sure to see how 1 contact can be associated with multiple companies.**



Companies and Projects

Companies

- Each company will have a profile where you need to be able to categorize the company and see how this company is associated with Contacts, Companies, Projects, Incentives, and any Support Tickets. Knowing the companies in your territory is critical!

Tickets to track Assistance Provided

If you provide any of the following services to local businesses, you may want to track the time, effort and results.

- consult/ mentoring
- workshops
- assistance with loans, grants, special programs
- responding to citizen and business owner requests
- time spent networking / marketing
- disaster relief
- community projects
- collaboration with workforce development - talent attraction

Projects/Deals

- Projects will be grouped by type and Stage.
- workforce requirements - you'll want to document this
- desired property / property requirements - use this to determine if you have or can create a match
- incentives that fit and status (offered, under investigation, negotiation, agreed to, etc.)
- Jobs Created, Capital Expenditure, Jobs Retained, Type of Jobs, etc.
- **Incentive and Project compliance** - particularly valuable if your organization bears responsibility for following up on results vs. promises.



More

- **Grants** do you offer grants? If so, CRM can track grants from application to follow up on results. Do you pursue grant funding, your CRM should help you manage this process as well.
- **Properties** used to track properties / sites submitted as part of a project or RFI response. Your organization may also own, lease or sell properties. CRM needs to be able to track properties. A word of caution - since real estate is dynamic, GIS software tools are recommended. Recommended systems.

Your CRM should have a way to link to these tools below. Alternatively – in addition to these tools, you can create your own website landing pages to house property data.

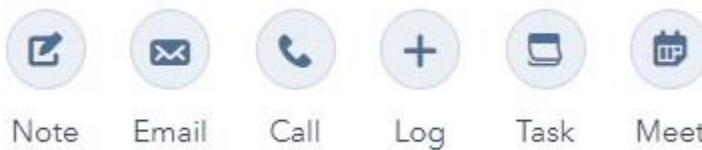




Activities feed KPI's

ACTIVITIES

- Reporting on activities is an easy way to report on activity level and where staff is spending time.
- More importantly, the entire team can see the activities for any Project, Company, Ticket, Contact, Etc.
- Think about how difficult it is to pick up when a key staff member takes another position. CRM makes it easy to keep the relationship moving forward.



Who Should Consider CRM?

The short answer is that any company who seeks to maintain a relationship with their customers can benefit from using a CRM system.

Economic Developers need to track leads and customers across long sales cycles and you'll use the same system for your Existing Industry Accounts as they integrate into the community.

Another way to understand whether or not a CRM system can help your business is to think about the challenges that CRM systems aim to solve:

- Do you have a need for maintaining a central list of information on your leads and existing industry accounts? Does this information live in many different places today?
- Are your contacts and companies regularly interfacing with multiple people on your team? How does everyone keep track of where the conversation with any one customer left off?

If you answered yes to any one or more of the above questions, chances are your business could benefit from a CRM system.

4 Benefits of a CRM

There are many things a CRM can do that should get marketers, executive and economic developers pretty excited. Here's how a CRM can make you a more effective marketing and sales machine...

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 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 you work 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. More specifically, you can see what brought them to your website and what pages they looked at before becoming a customer.

When a marketer works in a marketing platform that is integrated with a CRM, the marketing team can figure out which of their efforts are working best.

Better Sales and Marketing (Smarketing) Alignment

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 as well.)



Benefits of a CRM

Help Prioritize Deals in the Pipeline

CRM not only gives complete visibility into the sales pipeline, but it also helps sales people prioritize who to call first so they don't miss important opportunities. When project managers 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 enables the team to prioritize the best opportunities.

Closed-Loop Reporting Lets Marketers Improve Campaigns

When you integrate marketing software with your CRM, marketing can easily analyze the effectiveness of its campaigns using closed-loop reporting. When a deal is won, the company status changes from Prospective Account to Existing Industry.

This allows marketing to do two important things:

First, marketing can automatically remove this lead for their nurturing sequences, and instead send it customer-focused information.

Secondly, 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.



8 Must-Have CRM Features

Before all else, a CRM system should be useful to its end users.

1. Contact Management

You won't find a CRM that doesn't have a contact management capability. If you do, chances are you aren't looking at a CRM. All CRM systems allow you to create contact records and store prospect and customer information in a database. However, the best systems that truly improve efficiency will reduce and streamline contact data entry as much as possible. Judge this feature with ease of use in mind.

2. Deal – Project - Opportunity Stages

Most CRM systems can be customized to operate on a specific sales process. Whether your company has three deal stages or 15, you should be able to program these levels into the software and attach associated values.

You might also benefit from having multiple "pipelines" so that your team can manage each opportunity using unique stages for the opportunity type.

It should also be easy to move a deal along the sales process, from one stage to the next. In HubSpot CRM, advancing a deal is as simple as dragging and dropping:

The screenshot shows the HubSpot CRM interface with a pipeline view. The pipeline is divided into four stages: Prospecting, Qualification, Decision Maker Bought In, and Negotiation. A deal card for 'Frances' is being moved from the Prospecting stage to the Qualification stage. The left sidebar shows filter options like 'All deals' and 'Reset filters'. The top navigation bar includes 'CRM', 'Contacts', 'Companies', 'Deals', 'Tasks', 'Settings', and a search bar.

*Make sure the system you are using can be customized to your needs with ease. Ideally, you will have the power to customize the system without having programming talent on staff.



3. Daily Dashboard

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

4. Task Management

A person who has to toggle back and forth between several different 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 your team member's day-to-day workflow and help them keep on top of their follow up.

5. Content Repository

According to Docurated's State of Sales Productivity 2015 study, office workers spend 31% of their time hunting for or creating content. To cut back on wasted time searching for content, look for a CRM system with an embedded content repository. Look for a system 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 suck for a busy sales person. Look for a system that also allows the user to file away 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 decide to adopt a CRM is to keep better track of customer and prospect touches (emails, calls, etc.). But, beware: Many CRM applications require people to copy and paste their email outreach into the system or even upload call recordings.

These extra steps can be maddening, and it leaves room for human error. Look for a software that does this step automatically. HubSpot CRM 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

Many HubSpot users have seen productivity increased by 15% when they had mobile access to CRM applications. Tying reps to a CRM system 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 CRM systems today allow people to log on to the application from mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones -- make sure the ones you're considering do as well.

9. (We threw in an extra one) Integration with Marketing Automation

And last but 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.

Conclusion

To reap the full benefits of a CRM, you have to choose one with the features that are right for your business today and that can grow with you as your business evolves. Think about your company's growth goals and consider both your short-term and long-term needs when investing in a CRM platform.

Picking the right system, implementing it, and enforcing best practices around its usage will pay dividends as your company continues to grow and scale.



ABOUT US

Convergence, LLC specializes in working with Economic Development Organizations.

www.Convergence-CRM.com

Chattanooga, TN

423.309.7483

Tom Wengler

Founder and Managing Partner

To determine your software requirements, we've published this [online tool](#) which is an easy "get started exercise".

Tell us what you'd like HubSpot to do for you.

Click to Watch a [Short Video](#) - How this One Form Helps You Find the Right System.

Use our HubSpot checklist below to see how HubSpot can help you and your team.

Our organization covers the following aspects of economic development:

- Economic Development
- Chamber of Commerce
- Workforce Development
- Talent Attraction
- Student Recruitment
- Tourism
- Business Incubator
- Business Accelerator
- Community Development

Core Functionality Needed

- Contacts Database
- Companies Database
- Economic Development Project Management