



When Shopping for CRM, Think Simple

Article published on May 10, 2006

By [Lisa Lacy](#)

Shopping for customer relationship management technology can be difficult for fund shops, but industry players and consultants suggest firms will have an easier time if they think simple.

SalesPage Technologies, for its part, has composed a list of tips for finding the right customer relationship management, or CRM, product. Observers agree the points are fairly straightforward. However, they add that ease of use and personalization are also important when choosing an offering, as CRM requires behavior changes in order to be successful.

"CRM is tough because it's as much about trying to change employee behavior as about changing computer systems," says Bart Narter, a senior analyst at **Celent**.

Platforms, functionality, pricing and service agreements are all important elements to consider when choosing the right CRM, but it helps to have some basic guidelines, said Michael Pessetti, vice president of sales and marketing at SalesPage, in a press release. He was not available for further comment.

The first thing firms should do is assess their business needs, according to SalesPage. An on-premise platform works well for companies with sensitive or confidential data; a hosted solution is better for companies dealing with nonproprietary data.

SalesPage spokeswoman Tricia Jaworski says SalesPage offerings are on-premise only. The company also has mobile products.

Deciding between an on-site and a hosted product is one of the big decisions a company has to make, says Mary Anne Doggett, managing partner at **Interactive Communications**.

"But really the issue is being able to make it user-friendly. One of the primary requirements is for external and internal wholesalers to be able to input quality information," she says.

In other words, fields are not always set up as effectively as they could be to capture information. This is another consideration when shopping around for a CRM product. "The ease of use and the capability of the software [are] really a primary requirement," Doggett adds.

Secondly, SalesPage says to consider budget and time factors. Hosted solutions typically have lower up-front costs and take a few weeks to deploy. On the other hand, an on-site product requires up-front capital and other fixed costs and takes from three to nine months to set up.

Next, SalesPage advises to factor in industry and business size.

Narter warns a buyer against biting off more than it can chew. He says companies should trim goals to ensure a smaller initial success rather than a big project that fails. "Don't try to take a big hulking system and try to wedge it into a smaller organization," Narter says.

SalesPage also says to anticipate future growth and advises to "choose a vendor with a well-stated plan for accommodating future business growth and changing technology needs."

And, finally, SalesPage says to look for a firm that offers comprehensive technical support and personalized service that extends beyond a basic call center.

Narter says companies should reserve more of their budget for incentives and training, which he says is needed to make sure that human behavior changes actually happen.

Todd Christy, chief technology officer of wireless investment software company **Pyxis Mobile**, agrees with SalesPage that strong third-party network support is an important consideration.

In addition, Christy says, "One of the buzzwords we like to use around here is 'Simplicity breeds adoption.'"

Many CRM offerings have the same core capabilities. Success, therefore, lies in the way in which they are implemented, Christy says. He argues against over-engineering and creating products that are too complicated. "We've seen success in simple interfaces," he says.

Narter agrees. He says to focus on behavior rather than "a CRM system that can rub its stomach and pat its head at the same time. Go back to simple technology and pay more attention to the people."

Scott McKain, co-founder of the **Value Added Institute**, highlights the importance of the personal touch. "I think rule No. 1 has to be to always bear in mind that the relationship with clients makes all the difference," he says. "It's not how you use software to manage the information. The more important thing is to get closer to the client."

McKain suggests that companies step back and ask themselves why they are investing in a particular program — whether it's because other mutual fund companies have done the same or clients are clamoring for it or because it's great software that seems like a reasonable investment. Sometimes it's easier to imitate the competition than to be innovative, he says.