



CRM search » CRM Software Selections » Don't Put The Cart Before The Horse



## CRM Software Selections: Putting The Cart Before The Horse

By Karen Schwartz

★★★★☆ Average rating: 3 (from 30 votes)

### Alarming Percentage of Failed CRM Implementations Attributed to Short Changed Software Selections

Would you buy kitchen appliances before designing your new kitchen? Would you purchase a plane ticket before you have planned your vacation? Of course not. Yet too many companies routinely follow this behavior, investing in expensive new software technology like CRM software and ERP systems before they even know what problems they are trying to solve.

For the third time in as many research reports, improper or short changed *CRM software selection projects* were attributed to failed CRM implementation projects, according to the just released CRM Software 360 research advisory. Other factors included lack of executive sponsorship, weak project management, challenging change management with difficulties in achieving user adoption, over-customization of the software and cost-overruns.

Skimping the software selection project just doesn't make sense, and it's asking for trouble, both from a financial and operational perspective. Let's take this example: A recruiting company COO visits a trade show and gets bowled over by an *on-demand customer relationship management system*. When he gets back to the office, he pushes the order through, excited by the prospect of improving customer service, leads, forecasting, and, ultimately, sales. Fairly quickly, he realizes that while the software-as-a-service CRM system offers a great suite of products, it doesn't include a sufficient quoting module, a competitor information module, any customized applications for the recruiting industry, support for his field sales mobile devices, partner relationship management (PRM) for his business partner channel or packaged integration to his legacy systems.

Clearly, the COO has made a big mistake. By buying the technology before knowing what the company's goals were and the problems they were trying to solve, he got the company into a completely preventable morass.

At this point the COO has a few options, none of them very pleasant. Short of scrapping the SaaS CRM solution — a costly and embarrassing decision, he can either try to create workarounds through trial and error, or he can hire a third party to develop a customized version that fits his needs. Either way, he has increased project risk and wasted valuable time and money.

Before choosing a CRM, ERP or any business software solution, it's critical to understand what you want to do with your customers, understand which processes are customer-centric in the company and which aren't, which processes you are considering adding in the future, and, of course, understanding who your customers are and what they want. Only then should you consider software technology to accommodate and automate those business processes as well as provide the information reporting to help users and managers make more informed business decisions.

To do it right, you've actually got two jobs—knowing what you need to know, and then actually learning it. It's a multi-step process, and skimping on any part of it leads to big trouble down the road. So let's take them one by one.

Knowing what you have to know: There are no shortcuts to in a **successful CRM software selection process**. Well organized project teams must spend whatever time it takes to talk to every stakeholder and affected department to understand, document and gain consensus on what works and what doesn't when it comes to their business processes, as well as understanding how every business process relates to every other business process throughout the enterprise.

Learning what you now know you need to know: You need to know how you currently service customers, and how they want to be serviced. So talk to them. They know what they want, and they are often blunt about it. Talk to your internal department heads in more depth now. What level of technological sophistication do the employees in each department have? Are they accepting of change? What processes are dragging down productivity? What's working? What types of information would help people better service customers and make better business decisions? Once you document, categorize and prioritize the answers to these types of questions, you are in a much greater position to complete a successful CRM software selection project and acquire the customer management system that best meets your business needs.

Only after investing the necessary time and systemically completing the *CRM software selection process* can you expect to achieve the strategic goals of user adoption, improved customer relationships and software technology return on investment. ■■

### Share This Article



“ There are no shortcuts to in a successful CRM software selection project. For the third time in as many research reports, improper or short changed CRM software selection projects were attributed to failed CRM implementation projects, according to the just released CRMSoftware360.com research advisory.

### Related Articles

- [CRM Selection Best and Worst Practices](#)
- [Don't Make This CRM Selection Mistake!](#)
- [10 Steps to Making Effective Reference Calls](#)

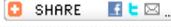
### More Articles By Karen

- ▶ [How to Choose the Best CRM Consultant](#)
- ▶ [Change Management and CRM Projects](#)

### CRM Software Selections

Proper CRM software selection projects are a precursor to successful implementation and production. Fail the software selection and you are likely to incur a downstream chain of technology difficulties, cultural problems and failed customer facing business processes. Fortunately, success is more science than art. The [CRM Selection channel](#) is focused on the science to achieve predictable success.

How would you rate this article?  Excellent  Very Good  Good  Fair  Poor

Categories: [CRM Software Selections](#)  
Tags: [crm software selection projects](#)  
Trackback: [www.crmsearch.com/crmselection.php](http://www.crmsearch.com/crmselection.php)  
Author: Karen Schwartz  
Share: 

### Comments

---

Follow Us

  
Follow Us on Twitter

  
Join Us on Google

  
LinkedIn Community

  
Facebook Community

  
Watch Us on YouTube



 | [CRM](#) | [Sales](#) | [Marketing](#) | [Service](#) | [Call Centers](#) | [Channels](#) | [Resources](#) | [Blog](#)