

## Good CRM Practices

Improving the effectiveness of Client Relationship Management (CRM) has been a focal point for many organizations for quite some time. I can't imagine a business model which doesn't have clients or customers somewhere near the front of the equation. After all, if no one needs your products or services, why are you in business?

More often than not, when asked about client relationship management, what first comes to mind is the latest version of some company's software program. This mindset can very well cause us to miss the mark completely about what is truly at the core of a long term client relationship.

When considering the issue of client relationships, there are two simple yet profound concepts which need to be respected:

1. The first concept is to make sure that you are "client focused". When you interact with your clients, do you consciously place your client first? Do you operate with their best interests in mind? Or, have you fallen into the habit of working for yourself and your quota? Placing your client first requires you to focus on their needs as opposed to your inventory.

While you should want to move your clients through the sales process toward a successful close; you need to recognize that your customers are progressing through their own thought process in order to make a buying decision. The earlier you come along side your customers in order to serve them through this process, the more value you will bring to the equation for a long term relationship.

2. At the centre of client relationship management is the word, (and the concept of), "relationship". Your ability to create and nurture client relationships forms the foundation of any long lasting, successful business.

One of the keys in creating relationships is effective communication. The ability to communicate is much more than simply keeping in touch. While technology will increase the volume of communication – people develop rapport and create relationships.

People that have explored the different personalities and human behaviour often share how this new understanding empowers them to interact with clients more effectively. They can now see how others communicate; make decisions; react under pressure or even negotiate based on their personality styles which allows them to adapt a presentation for the client's benefit and increase understanding.

While the thought of truly focusing on your customers and improving your ability to communicate your message are not new; it may be that these two ideas are part of the reason some companies are turning customers into advocates and confidantes, while others are still turning suspects into prospects.

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