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## **CRM is Like an Outboard Motor**

**Is Your Company a Rowboat or a Speedboat?  
And Why Does it Make a Difference?**



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# CRM is Like an Outboard Motor

*A White Paper on the merits of Customer Relationship Management and your company's survival*  
By Rich Hall



## Control, Speed, Visibility

It's as simple as that! Control, speed and visibility. If you've ever rowed a boat you know what I mean. When you row a boat you face backwards, you don't have precise control over the direction you are going and things don't happen very quickly. Much like an outboard motor can fix your boating propulsion woes, CRM can fix the same problems in your organization.

## Control

In a boat, we need to get from point A to point B. While it sounds simple enough, if one oar doesn't know what the other oar is doing, or is not in sync with the other, you'll have problems.

I remember the first time I took out a canoe with my sister and brother, before I knew that the paddler in the rear is supposed to use his paddle as a rudder at the end of his paddle stroke. I'm sure the zigzag route we took was worth a week's worth of laughs from the shore.

Did you ever think that some of your customers or business associates are laughing at your organization “from the shore” about how you run your business? Are you zigzagging? Are all of your oars in sync with one another? While we try not to laugh at some of the unorthodox ways that organizations do things, sometimes it is very difficult.

The reason is usually one of two issues: A) They think they know best (to the detriment of their own organization), or B) They just don't know what the right solution can do for their organization. Either way, they are losing ground.

## Why? Good question!

In MBA schools, we are taught about continuous improvement, always looking for better ways of doing things, asking users and customers – whether internal or external – how we can better serve them. We learn to constantly review business processes, looking for ways to cut waste and increase productivity. But it seems that some managers never get it! I think it's an ego thing. If you are willing to try, however, you can quickly see the return on your investment. You will have the control you want over your organization, you will be better informed, and you will make better decisions about spending, hiring and allocating resources to almost every sales effort, customer service call or project.

## Speed

It's so important, I judge almost every vendor I patronize based on their speed. I judge their speed to answer my question, the speed to deliver what I order, even whether the speed affected their accuracy or not. Don't you? Think about your favorite fast-food restaurant. Some fast food restaurants that our family goes to are very fast and accurate, and some almost always mess up our order and we leave dissatisfied nearly every time. If I leave a message for a salesperson to respond, and they don't, within a day, I'm disappointed and question their customer service philosophy.

What gives an organization speed? The right tools do, of course. Think about an ax and a chainsaw. Would you pay 10 times the price of an ax to buy a chainsaw? I hope so, if you have a lot of work to do and your time is of any value, the ROI would be extremely fast and the chainsaw would pay for itself very quickly.

The outboard motor also gives you that power. If you need to get from point A to point B, what

is the most efficient way to do it? And what will it mean to the people waiting for you to finish? If they are your customers, it will likely mean a lot!

What is speed worth to your customers? Ask them! Does your phone system track dropped calls? How long do your customers wait for a Customer Service Rep (CSR) before they hang up? Have your CSRs do a quick 2-question survey for customers who call in. You may be surprised at what it reveals. Are your customers departing for other vendors? If you don't have the ability to see any metrics, maybe that is reason enough to get a tool like CRM. This will enable you to capture and report problems if you think they may be an issue for your organization.

The bottom line: Is your organization fast enough for your market? Is it giving you a competitive advantage? Or is it slowing you down and losing business for you? You can't complain about the economy, if you aren't solving your own internal inefficiencies.

## Visibility

In the boat, if you are rowing, you are facing backwards or the direction you came from. That's the old way! It's like saying, “But we've always done it this way” or in sales, when I used to keep the customers' records in a milk crate in the trunk of my company car. Who else knew what was going on with those accounts? Sometimes I would get letters of credit or POs or RFPs and no one else knew what they said, where they were kept, or when they were due – unless I told them, copied it, or showed someone! I had to be really good at organization, and I used the photocopier a lot to update records in my files as well as for the CSRs.

The outboard motor allows you to face forward... to see where you're going! CRM works like that, too. In the old days, one employee didn't know what the other was doing; now they can. With an outboard motor, you don't have to keep looking around to see what's going on, because you can see what's ahead and maneuver around obstacles. CRM is like that, too. It gives you the ability to see potential problems, speed up, slow down, make midcourse corrections, etc.

Your decision should be simple. Do you know what is going on around you? Do you have a “dashboard,” or a place to go to see how everything is running? If not, how do your run

your business? Your department? Your tasks? If you still don't see the value in CRM, maybe you are the type of person that would rather run "blind" and see what happens or just hope for the best. You'd rather pilot the vessel with your eyes closed, instead of spending some money to improve your efficiency. But why would any good businessperson run things this way?

Last weekend, I pruned a whole bunch of shrubs with my new electric hedge trimmer. It probably would have taken me four weekends of much harder work with my handheld hedge clippers. But what would it say about me if I chose the manual route? I have too much time on my hands? I'm way too frugal? I'm not too bright? Doesn't the same scenario apply to CRM software and other similar business efficiency tools?

If you are still asking why you should consider a CRM solution and how to justify this system, then we should talk for a few minutes and help you decide one way or another, if it is something that your organization needs.

### Other things that get in the way

Many companies also put their CRM projects on hold as a result of other IT projects, the economy, or because they think what they have now is okay. What priority should you give to CRM? The answer to this depends on how far behind you are. If you have to get across a big lake, you had better rev-up the outboard motor! If, on the other hand, the lake is only a half-mile wide, maybe you can row!

The point is, you need to decide how bad your situation is, how much a new solution would help, and what the payback time will be. If you need help, I suggest that you ask a few vendors to give you a proposal with a section on ROI or justification for the software. I think you will learn plenty in this process about the vendors and how strong your needs are.

#### **About the author...**

*Rich Hall is the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Touchtone Corporation. Rich has over 18 years of experience in sales and marketing and has done extensive research on CRM as well as product development and marketing of CRM products. Rich has an MBA from the University of Southern California and has worked for firms such as TRW, Experian, Parker Hannifin, Pitney Bowes, HNC Software and Cooper Industries.*

Some companies hire independent consultants to make a recommendation. Our feedback from customers who have done this and others who have been through the process is that some consultants steer the project to the solutions they prefer or the platform they do professional services in, so that they can continue to earn consulting or integration fees from you. If your consultant recommends a solution that best fits your needs and further use of their services totally up to you, then maybe they're one of the honest ones.

### So, take the plunge!

Either fire up the outboard and invest in CRM or get out the calculator and pencil and start adding up how much more you're going to lose!

It is fairly easy to see where the benefits of CRM lie in most organizations. If you are close to the processes that turn a prospect into a customer, and guarantees his satisfaction, you know what would help your company be more successful. The next step is to take action to document, justify and convince yourself that the investment in CRM will help guarantee your firm's long-term success.

If your company's operating system is the IBM iSeries (AS/400), then we encourage you to consider the Wintouch<sup>®</sup> eCRM solution from Touchtone Corporation. Wintouch has all of the features you need to capitalize on your investment in CRM, as well as, to service customers better. Wintouch can also quickly connect you to your green screen systems with the simple click of an icon.

But if we are not the right solution for you, we would rather have you choose a solution that is, and we can possibly recommend something. Call Touchtone Corporation for more information at 1-800-786-8663 or visit the Wintouch website at: [Wintouch.com](http://Wintouch.com).