



It's All about the Customer

How to align people, process, and technology
to develop customer relationships

GoldMine[®] 
Creating Customers for Life[®]

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Competitors nipping at your heels? Planning to introduce new products or services? Do your plans include new markets? New geographies? New channels? New competitors? If any of these situations describe your business, you'll need a CRM system that can align people, processes, and CRM technology to develop prosperous and profitable customer relationships. There are three factors that determine how well your CRM system can do this:

- **Speed of Customization.** Can it be configured as quickly as your business and its market requirements change?
- **Depth of Productivity.** Is it just a tracking mechanism, or can it actually help sales reps close more business?
- **Breadth of Support.** Is it limited to the sales pipeline, or does it improve the overall quality of the customer experience?

Let's consider these three issues, using FrontRange Solutions GoldMine CRM as an example.

SPEED OF CUSTOMIZATION

Today's markets move fast. When your business situation changes, you can't afford to wait weeks or months for your CRM system to catch up. Your CRM implementation should be able to reflect the nuances of your business without requiring expensive recoding. Unfortunately, many CRM applications require a trained programmer to make any but the most trivial changes. Such coding is time consuming, and the process becomes even lengthier, because before the changes can be rolled out to users, the new code must be tested. If your IT staff is overburdened by other projects, you'll have to wait in line for your changes. By the time the coded changes are ready, your business requirements or market conditions may have changed, rendering the coded modification obsolete.

Instead, what you want is a CRM system that has built-in configuration tools. Ideally, a sales professional or sales manager should be able to quickly implement and tune changes. For example, if customer feedback indicates that your sales process workflow needs an addition, a sales professional should be able to make the change without IT assistance.

At the most rudimentary level, a CRM solution should allow you to add or edit fields with a point-and-click, drag-and-drop interface so they reflect your specific business model. The CRM solution should also enable you to create a personally relevant system. It should be intelligent enough to present only information pertinent to the role or function the sales rep is performing, rather than display a horde of irrelevant fields and screens. It should support the user's perspective.

For example, when a sales rep and a sales manager access the account screen, they should see information tailored to their specific roles. The sales rep's screen should have quick actions such as "Create a contact" or "Create an opportunity" pinned to his or her personalized navigation bar.

By contrast, the sales manager, who needs a higher understanding of the account's overall revenue potential, should have "Export forecast" or "Export opportunities over a certain revenue value" as quick actions pinned to his or her personalized navigation bar.

The trick, then, is to use configuration to transform data into information and, more importantly, information into action-oriented knowledge. Unfortunately, very few CRM systems are easily customized in this way. One CRM product that has this capability is GoldMine from FrontRange Solutions.

Suppose a sales manager wants to expand his or her foothold in the northeast and plans to host a seminar for a vertical market in Boston. With GoldMine's configuration capabilities, the manager can quickly generate a dashboard view of all the accounts in Boston, by industry, to determine which vertical market has the deepest penetration of existing customers and which new vertical may be ripe for the picking.

The ability to transform data into action-oriented knowledge is one of the most powerful potentials of CRM but is often the most overlooked criterion in CRM selection. Because of

this, taking the extra effort to scrutinize CRM configuration capabilities during your selection process will richly reward you when your system is up and running.

DEPTH OF PRODUCTIVITY

Many CRM systems are simply contact management programs that track the stages of a sales process. That may be useful to sales managers and even (a little) to sales reps, but it doesn't really help sales reps earn new business.

Ideally, a CRM system should make sales reps substantially more productive than they would be without it. That usually involves automating activities that needlessly consume time, and one of the biggest time-wasters in the sales world is the telephone.

Every sales team has voicemail, of course, and probably some form of automated call routing. And many teams also have a receptionist (although that person may not always be "on duty"). In other words, the telephone setup for your typical sales team is pretty much what it was a couple of decades ago.

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But consider this: The average inside salesperson spends only 15 minutes out of every hour talking with prospects. The rest of the time is typically spent trying to connect with prospects – checking voice-mails, researching customers and prospects, dialing and redialing multiple phone numbers, and so forth.

But what if you could automate the busywork out of your sales team's workday? Even a solution as simple as automated dialing from an integrated marketing campaign can double the time that sales reps spend actually talking to live customers.

That's only part of it. FrontRange is well ahead of the curve and has provided telephone automation capabilities for years. FrontRange combines its award-winning GoldMine application with voice-enabled CRM best practices and has created an environment that makes it much easier for your sales team to hold productive conversations with your customer base.

Consider cold calling: Inside sales reps often leave dozens of voice-mails every day. Many of those messages are similar, if not identical, but sales reps often try different wording and tonalities, hoping to find the right combination that will convince a prospect to call back; however, the sales rep must typically rely entirely upon his or her own memory to assess what worked and what didn't. The activity is hit-or-miss, with no practical way to hone the approach and make it more effective. With GoldMine, on the other hand, sales reps can record their voicemail pitch several times and then gather accurate information on its efficacy.

Similarly, consider what happens when your customers call your firm. A big limitation of traditional telephone automation is that the important customers are typically thrown into the queue with the hoi polloi. Unless your receptionist has been with your firm for years, your biggest client might end up on hold or, worse, connected to voicemail.

That never happens with GoldMine. When a call comes in, the telephone system checks the GoldMine database to determine the importance of the call. Some calls, such as one from the cell phone of your largest account's CEO, might be routed directly to your own CEO's private line. Other calls might be routed to the customer's personal sales rep or to the agent with the skill set most likely to prove helpful to that customer. Still other calls, such as those from headhunters, for instance, might simply be terminated – without wasting anybody's time.

Combining telephony with CRM means your sales reps know more about prospects and customers – every time they speak to them. It means that your sales reps get in touch with the right people at the right time and with the right information.

What's more, being able to track, monitor, and measure telephone activity means that you'll understand your customers better. You'll be better able to monitor and fine-tune your marketing messages and find out what's working in real situations. As a result, you'll experience higher close rates, lower cost of sales, and higher customer satisfaction scores – all in a way that's measurable and repeatable across the entire organization. And

that's a major part of building prosperous and profitable customer relationships.

BREADTH OF SUPPORT

Many CRM systems are directed entirely at the sales pipeline. Once a customer buys, the CRM system becomes nothing more than an historical record, useful only when it's time to sell to that customer again.

Building a prosperous and profitable customer relationship requires more. From the customers' perspective, it's all about the experience they have every time they contact your company. And nowhere is that contact more important than when customers call for support and service. Ideally, your CRM system should be able to make that experience a positive one.

With GoldMine, the minute a customer calls with a request, the customer-support agent can see a pop-up screen with that client's information on it. Rather than ask the customer to answer a series of identifying questions, the agent can answer the call by name and might already have an inkling of what the call is about. That starts the interaction on a positive note, building client rapport while saving the customer time and hassle.

The CRM system should also be able to help you manage and gauge your sales-support processes and staff. GoldMine allows you to measure more than 80 sales-support metrics, including how fast calls are answered, the number of calls answered, after-call survey results, calls rejected, and so forth. That information helps you identify and reward the top performers and diagnose and coach agents who still need help.

GoldMine can help with the training process, too. The system can record calls and track which ones ended well. The best can be routed into the training system for other agents to imitate. Support managers can also use the system to “whisper” suggestions during live calls, thereby making the training process hands-on.

A fully functional CRM system can also transform customer support from a reactive process of handling incoming calls into a proactive process. You can survey customers to find out whether they're satisfied with their products and services, or you can notify customers automatically if there's an outage or a product issue that might affect them.

Extending the power of CRM beyond the sales process helps ensure that customers remain customers, laying the groundwork for cross-sell and up-sell opportunities. And, of course, these activities can easily be folded into the support environment so that customer support becomes a source of revenue, as well as way to build better relationships.

In short, if you want to build prosperous and profitable customer relationships, it's not enough to have a CRM system that tracks your data. You need a CRM system that actually delivers on the promise of CRM to manage the entire customer relationship.

For more information, please visit our website www.frontrange.com/telesales.

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