

الفصل السابع عشر

Clients Relationship Management

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Clients Relationship Management *

Introduction:

Companies need to deliver services across multiple channels including telephone, email, web, call centres and palm devices, to satisfy and retain customers. This would be the changing face of customer relationship management (CRM) in the years to come, experts believe.

CRM was not just a tool on sales force automation, but gave companies a 360 degree view on customer needs.

Companies need to understand their customer needs, enabling the process within the organisation to market, sell and service products to the customers using CRM. However, for a successful CRM, companies will have to integrate properly the front office and back office, else there would be duplicity within the organization.

(*) Source: Wings of Oman (2008).

Why is CRM strategic?

Though it cannot be suggested that CRM applications can compensate for all the ill effects of a slower economy, they can help to maximise customer value. A slowing economy means customers spend less, but one of the basic aims of CRM is to gain a share of the customers' wallet so that the company gains on an overall basis.

This focus on the customer helps particularly in a tight situation, as all customers are not equal. In any customer base, there will almost certainly exist some customers who tend to cost more to serve than they are likely to return in profit. Therefore, the smart company will grow its business by managing its customer relationships in order to make each individual customer optimally profitable.

If you know your customers and prospects and how they vary by value, revenue and/or profit potential, it makes sense to concentrate on those who are more likely to generate the most profit.

While a non-CRM user is powerless to address this reality, companies that segment and market according to a CRM strategy can grow their business cheaply by simply serving fewer unprofitable customers, all of whom can be efficiently identified and targeted. That might sound anathema to companies conditioned to the often (ab)used term "Customer is king". He

still is, only this time the companies get to choose their kings.

However, enterprise-wide projects require huge investments.

So what is it to be done?

If your company understands that CRM is critical but the funds are not available to implement a quality capability, one possible way to move ahead could be the "release the critical funds" strategy. It requires you to think of CRM as a holistic business strategy and one way to fund a holistic CRM strategy is to create operational efficiencies in another part of the business, for e.g., in the back office.

Most companies have invested huge quantities of capital in their back-office environments. To move forward in today's economic reality, these companies need to free investments in one area of the business to fund more important business strategies such as CRM.

Companies' Assets:

Companies need to view assets in two categories, strategic and non-strategic. Strategic assets are those viewed as vital to the future growth and success of the business. This does not mean that non-strategic investments are not important. It simply implies that they represent an opportunity to gain access to locked-up capital.

Strategic assets provide growth in good times and insulate against

downturns, investments that strengthen relationships with customers such as CRM, sales force automation (SFA), marketing automation (MA) and customer interaction centres, while non-strategic investments may include back office systems, desktop maintenance legacy systems or any other non-critical activity that is done in-house. After this segregation, alternative arrangements like outsourcing should be considered to reduce costs in these non-strategic areas in order to free capital for strategic IT investments.