

## **CRM Keeps Focus on Customers**

If you're like most manufacturers, you spend considerable money and effort keeping your customers happy and securing new ones. Otherwise, you're vulnerable to the competitors who knock on the doors of your customers every day.

To stay on top of their game, many manufacturers are employing customer relationship management (CRM) software so that they don't lose touch with their customers.

CRM provides companies with a view of all interactions with a customer throughout the company. CRM systems provide important data on buying habits, sales opportunities and service needs.

When integrated with a manufacturer's back-office accounting system, CRM supplies the sales staff and other customer contact personnel with valuable information on buying trends and progress toward forecast targets.

### **Accurate Forecasts**

By tracking each sales opportunity and integrating sales contact information with past purchase records, CRM helps improve sales and revenue forecasts. Making back-office accounting information available to the sales staff allows faster and more consistent response to customer needs.

CRM captures all important customer contacts, whether in conversations, e-mails or phone calls, leading to improved communication and collaboration among team members. Sales, marketing, production and customer service departments all have access to critical customer interactions.

### **Integrated Data**

Integrating all the detail that a company collects about a single customer can be a complex undertaking. CRM sales data, for example, needs to track contact and relationship history in a form adaptable to individual users' needs in all departments dealing with customers.

Then, records of customer problems or special needs are readily available to the salesperson handling the customer's account. To resolve customer problems, the customer service department may need billing data or order information for the account, so those records need to be in the CRM database, too.

The more up-to-date the information available across the company, the better the performance possible for each department. For example, a salesperson aware that a customer is experiencing a serious performance problem with a company product might decide to wait until the problem is resolved before making the next big sales effort with that customer.

Because of the complexity of CRM applications, small and midsize businesses often find a step-by-step approach makes the best sense. That way, companies can build in the capacity for future customization. We can provide information on how CRM might fit into your business operation.

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