

Unleash the Secret of CRM and Accounts Integration

In our recent survey of 50 top Customer Relationship Management experts in the UK, it was revealed that most companies are either thinking of implementing, or currently using a CRM system. Our research showed that for those already using a CRM system, many have not realised the importance and potential benefits of CRM integration with their back office system.



Why? The simple answer to this question is that people underestimate the potential benefits of CRM, and often mistake CRM as a tool solely to manage contacts and documents. However without realising the importance of better CRM through accounts integration, many are not maximizing ROI (return on investment).

CRM accounts integration can help companies to understand customer purchase patterns or the sales history of a particular customer. When trying to pitch for new business sales staff should have the full picture of their customer record, which could help them better serve their customers and create more up-sell opportunities. On this

basis effective integration with back office systems can multiply the value and return on investment of the CRM solution.

CRM systems are able to manage the entire marketing and sales process used to help build long term relationships between the customer and the organisation. However customer relationship management systems should also deliver a bottom line return, not simply be a way to manage contact details and documents.

"For many customers, proper accounts integration forces CRM to the core of every business activity, used by everyone from the Managing Director downwards..."

David Hunter – Senior CRM Advisor,
ProspectSoft Ltd

Consider a scenario. Imagine you are sales or account manager, and you are questioned about an account balance by your customer. Would you rather:

1. Put him on hold and ask a busy finance manager?
2. Or would you like to access information yourself and give him an accurate, immediate answer?

Hopefully, your preference would be to give your customer the answer on the spot without putting him on hold.

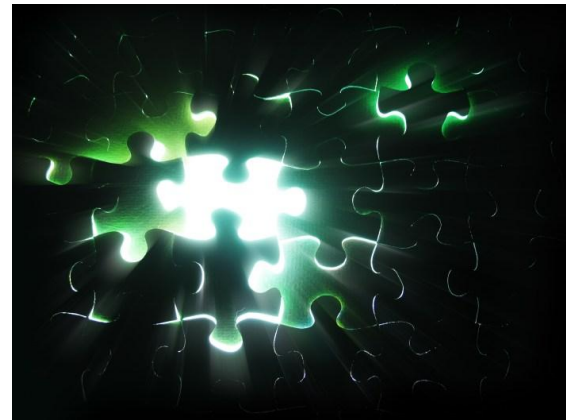
This is what we call moments of truth, with the right approach these moments of truth can be turned into moments of magic by exceeding customer expectations.

Centralising customer information gathered from different departments is crucial to providing good customer service. For example, if you know what you have in stock you could promise the customer next day delivery, stopping him going to your competition. Or if the sales team knows the margin on a particular product they could beat a competitors price. These are just two examples of how important accounts integration can be to success.

It is therefore essential for an organisation to adopt a CRM system that integrates better with their accounting system, to access this information and make it available to the employees who talk to your customers. However, companies realising the importance of accounts integration are finding it difficult to find a CRM solution that can fully integrate to their back office systems.

In our experience, many CRM projects fail due to the difficult or poor integration of the CRM system (marketing, sales, support, web site, etc.) to the "back office" system (accounting). In fact, a typical company-wide CRM project can take years, with most

of the time spent by consultants trying to integrate the various departments of the business.



Why CRM Integration with Accounting System is important?

The purpose of accounts integration is to provide CRM users with live access to important data in your accounting system that will help you improve efficiency, reduce cost, close sales, improve service and improve collections. This data is presented directly from the account record in the CRM system, eliminating the need to exit or switch screens.

Top Tip: Providing a shared interface vastly improves the quality of data in your CRM system.

We find that many problems can result from poor CRM and accounts integration; the following are some of the most common:

- Field staff change customer details like telephone numbers and addresses in the front office system, but due to the lack of integration the address in the accounting

system is not updated and is different to the CRM system. This often results in invoices being sent to wrong addresses, costing time and money.

- Field sales staff cannot see current item pricing or stock information unless they switch back and forth between the CRM and accounting system.
- Without integration, if a customer calls to check the status of their order, you will have to go back and check with the order processing team.
- Poor integration or no integration gives no access to salespeople to see the credit status of potential customers to help close new sales.
- Without integration, staff are much more likely to 'work around' the system, or revert to previous manual methods. This can be lethal to success – a system that nobody uses is a failed system.

Key Features of CRM and Accounts Integration

What makes the best CRM system different from most CRM products is the fact that the interfaces are in real-time. Staff can access up-to-the-minute data rather than records



that were copied at an earlier time and not necessarily current.

Top Tip: Real time accounts integration puts critical information in the hands of customer-facing staff who need it most.

Although the specific features of accounts integration depends on which interface is selected, most CRM products share the following key features.

- When you alter details on a record, such as telephone number or address, the CRM system makes the identical change to the corresponding customer or vendor records in your accounting system.
- Group Import of Customers/Vendors. The existing customers and vendors in your accounting system can be automatically imported into the CRM system so that you can immediately start marketing, selling and supporting your existing customer base.
- Conversion of Prospects to Customers. When you close your first sale to a prospect, through better integration you will automatically create a correctly structured customer record in your accounting system, eliminating the need for rekeying.
- Summary balances, individual transactions, on-stop details and credit limits can be accessed with accounts integration.

For most businesses, the accounting system is probably the most complete and accurate

source of customer information. It is therefore essential that your CRM system be able to access this information and make it available to the employees who talk to your customers. This helps to reduce cost, optimise resources and achieve return on investment in the following ways:

- ✓ Employees can work more efficiently due to process automation, for example generating and sending more quotes, confirming more orders and making more sales.
- ✓ Customer calls are dealt with quickly and their problems solved, improving customer satisfaction and customer retention.
- ✓ Customers can be segmented by sales and purchase history to create more targeted marketing campaigns.
- ✓ Information regarding high priority accounts helps you ascertain the best match, and manage them through account management to achieve high value sales in a lesser time frame.
- ✓ Quotations can be raised with correct pricing and relevant discounts. Current stock

levels, the customer's purchase history and credit limit can also be checked prior to sending the quotation.

If you want to learn more about how accounts integration can benefit your business, we are running a FREE series of online webinars (web based seminars) where we'll be discussing accounts integration in greater detail. All our webinars last for just half an hour... learn more at www.IRISExchequerCRM.com/webinars.



OR If you feel ready to take the next step and want to learn more about how an integrated IRIS Exchequer CRM solution can help you grow your business, contact us on +44 (0)1494 486333 to book free, no obligation consultation meeting.