



4 CRM Trends for 2016

User empowerment will be a big theme as CRM users compare their experiences with personal and business technology.

By Matt Keenan - Posted Jan 6, 2016

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions have become entrenched standards in today's modern enterprise business application ecosystem. Organizations and users have come to expect that their CRM system will be a core part of day-to-day responsibilities and in many cases serve as a key system of truth regarding a wide variety of business metrics. Unfortunately, the value, impact, and accuracy of the CRM system can come into question when employees compare their experiences with CRM to those of technologies they use every day in their personal lives.

With that challenge as the backdrop, we look to the top trends emerging in 2016 for answers. Trend predictions are useful to investigate as you look ahead to how your organization should operate in the upcoming years. What to do with these trends in 2016 can be one of the keys to your organization's success this year and for the foreseeable future.

USER EMPOWERMENT

CRM solutions will be forced to become more intuitive as users demand an interface that includes best-practice usability comparable to current market-leading consumer Web sites, thus eliminating the need for lengthy and repetitive training to learn how to use them. The ultimate usability perception of an enterprise CRM application has been shaped by personal experiences with completing an online purchase, booking a flight, or similar tasks in a user's daily digital life. CRM users must be able to perform simple tasks like creation of a contact, updating a sales opportunity, or completing a call report easily and quickly within their system without the need for extensive training. Designing CRM solutions with an experience that empowers the user is an important shift that will drive the increased adoption of CRM solutions.

MEASURING PERSONAL VALUE

Simply collecting a vast array of numerical data from a CRM solution won't make businesses smarter or salespeople more productive. CRM ROI will no longer be viewed primarily on the organizational level as the "age of the user" is now in full effect. Users will determine the true value of the CRM solution based on their individual productivity gains and the insight it brings to their job each day. Successful CRM solutions will be measured by the personal value they bring to the user first and the value they bring to the organization second. Sample personal-value measures for a sales organization could include year-over-year sales improvement, average value increase per customer, and new customer revenue as a percentage of total revenue. Each of these metrics showcase the impact on individuals and their performance.

MICRO-MOMENTS OF PRODUCTIVITY

In the digital age of things, relationships between machines and people are becoming increasingly complex. According to Deloitte's [2015 Global Mobile Consumer Survey](#), people in the United States checked their smart phones over 8 billion times a day last year. As we become more dependent on our devices, smartphones and tablets are acquiring the capabilities to perform more and more daily activities at a faster pace. The best CRM solutions will become integrated into the daily work life of a user, almost taking on more of a coworker role rather than just added technology, allowing the user to access and input information anytime, and anyplace. In this mobile, hyperconnected world, the user expects to have quick and seamless access to CRM data and analytics whether from their smartphone, tablet, or desktop. The top CRM systems will deliver micro-moments of productivity and insight at the user's point of access, enabling users to move at an extraordinary velocity. Adapting to the fast-paced user environment is critical to enabling proactive and impactful business decisions.

CAPITALIZING ON SMALL DATA

Over the past several years, there has been a rabid focus on Big Data and the value it can bring to an organization. I fully believe that Big Data can augment the understanding an organization has regarding macro trends in an industry, for a brand or for a specific product. But with all of the hype and focus on Big Data, we have forgotten about the intrinsic value of Small Data. In 2016, successful organizations will focus on enabling deep investigation into and aggregation of data that exists in its internal CRM, ERP, SCM, and PRM systems. Moreover, the most valuable solutions will enable end users to develop their own personal analytics with a focus on trends and insights. Specific examples could include a customer's order history over three years to highlight the next logical purchase point or a demographic analysis of customers buying a specific type of product or service, in an effort to create a set of new leads. The effective use of Small Data will make a big difference in the final results.

With significant changes resulting from users' personal adaptation of their CRM solutions, there won't be much rest in the year ahead for CRM professionals. Instead, there will be a fresh crop of new opportunities to consider. Increasing the value of data, focusing on user experience, highlighting a solution's personal value, and adapting to the pace of the digital age will keep CRM professionals at the forefront in 2016.

Matt Keenan is group vice president of CRM products at [Aptean](#) and helps companies looking for a set of strategies to build lifelong relationships with customers. Keenan is a 20-plus-year veteran with deep experience in all facets of CRM, including sales, service, marketing and social CRM. He has worked with companies of all sizes across a wide range of industries to evaluate, develop, and implement customer-centric initiatives, including sales, channel, and customer service process design as well as technology platform evaluation and implementation.