

CRM Top Tips for Small Business

Find out how Customer Relationship
Management can help your business grow

CRM TOP TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESS

FIND OUT HOW CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS GROW

Before we go on to discuss some of our top tips, we would like to explain what Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is, and the benefits that it can provide to you and your business.

So What Is CRM?

Simply put, CRM is putting the customer at the heart of your business.

Think of a local corner shop. The shop owner knows who his customers are because he interacts with them often. He knows who his regular customers are and he knows those who come in just once in a while. As a result he can greet his regulars by name - he knows their usual purchases and if he introduces a new product line he will know which of his customers are likely to buy it. He also knows the customers that would prefer home delivery, or who need help with their packing. Because of the great service they get, his customers recommend the corner shop to their friends. His knowledge of his customers' purchasing also allows him to carry the right lines and keep efficient stock levels. The shop owner also enjoys what he does and enjoys talking to his customers regularly. This is CRM in action.

Now imagine being able to do this with a business that has customers from many locations, has varying products and needs to be responsive to market conditions. If designed and implemented correctly, this is what CRM allows you to achieve.

What Are The Benefits For Me And My Business?

Why should businesses consider CRM? Simply put; customers are the lifeblood of any business. Without them, the business will fail, but treat them well and they stay. Loyalty and advocacy is good for your business as loyal customers are better customers. According to the Chartered Institute of Marketing, investing in retaining customers is between four and ten times cheaper than trying to attract new ones. It's a good business model; it increases revenues and reduces costs because:

- Loyal customers need less of your time to service
- They complain much less often

- They don't need lots of help in understanding your products and processes
- They are much more likely to recommend your products and services to their friends, family and contacts
- Your staff will be happier too; they much prefer dealing with happy customers to unhappy ones

"A customer is our lifeblood in any of the businesses that we run, so they are everything."

Kevin Green, Kevin Green Wealth

Setting up CRM for your business may seem like a massive task. So break it down into smaller, manageable chunks. Here are some of our favourite tips to get you started.

TIP 1: Spend Time On Your CRM Plan

Your journey starts with creating a CRM plan for the business. This is in our view, one of the most important aspects of a successful CRM project. The plan sets out your vision for the business and your approach for achieving it. Defining this means involving your team from the start, as they are the ones who will be implementing the plan and dealing with it as part of their daily operations. If this is not clear or supported from the beginning, your CRM efforts will be wasted and you will not see the expected results.

When planning, also think about phasing; it's quite likely any CRM project will be implemented in a number of stages; it means you start to see benefits early on, and you avoid overly disrupting your business. It also means that you can phase your CRM project based upon time and resource availability, and prioritise key deliverables such as those causing you the biggest pain points.

"Firstly, really understand what you are trying to achieve. Get down to a really simple level of understanding in terms of what your business is. And finally, what do your customers want? Not what you think they want but what they actually want - which in some situations can be quite different."

Kevin Cope, Koru Property Solutions

TIP 2: Meet And Exceed Customer Expectations

Treat customers the way you like to be treated

Put yourself in your customer's shoes to understand how they are experiencing your products and services. Evaluate your current customer experiences and decide if it meets their expectations. If not, come up with improvements that address this; for example, if you provide cleaning services to businesses, why not follow-up visits to ensure the business owner is happy with the quality of the work. Record the outcome, positive or negative, so you know how this can be improved upon in the future.

"Give customers the services of a million pound house sale for a thousand pound sale. Treat people how you want to be treated, I think that is the base code of everything".

Lee Nicholls, Property Plus Wales

Communicate and talk to your customers

Every so often, talk to some of your customers directly. Ask them where you could improve, what in their view should your top priorities for improving the business be, what they enjoy most about being your customer, and how they feel about the way you service and communicate with them. What would make the biggest difference to them? You'll have different types of customers, so try to speak to representatives of each group. If you can, run reports to identify your top customers and start by talking to this key group if you have limited time.

Note: we are not suggesting that every idea or recommendation that you receive should be implemented, but this exercise will generate plenty of ideas for consideration. It may also help you identify any quick wins for your business and customers and provide you with early indications of when things are not going to plan.

"Asking clients for feedback is something you need to start doing better, so that you understand what they physically want, and don't waste your time doing all this fancy stuff that in reality isn't valued by your customers".

Keith Penny, Pennymatters

TIP 3: Involve And Empower Your Team

Listen and listen again to your own people. Spend a lot of time listening to people within your business as many of the best ideas to improve customer service, efficiencies and processes will come from those who deal with your customers every day. Listen twice as hard as talking – you have two ears and one mouth for a reason!

TIP 4: Recognize And Acknowledge Your Customers

One of the obstacles customers often experience is that they have to tell their story over and over again (especially in the case of complaints) to the people they encounter in the business. Most businesses do not or cannot recognise their existing customers, let alone acknowledge and appreciate their importance to the business. Also, most businesses do not know who their most important and / or profitable customers are, and hence do not service them appropriately. If you do not acknowledge and appreciate what your customers are doing for your business, it won't be long before one of your competitors does.

“What CRM means to me is having a system where we can consistently communicate to our clients the best way we can and the most leveraged way we can. It allows us to find out more about our clients so we can help them more. The more information we have the more informed decision we can make. This is both business and personal information.”

John Lee, Wealth Dragons

TIP 5: Make Sure You Consider Your Data

Think about what data to collect and do it consistently

When building up your customer database, only ask for the information that's reasonably needed for you to run your business effectively – you're not allowed to collect data you don't need, so stick to asking for information you will actually use. And don't keep it any longer than necessary, plan on reviewing your data systems every year and archive or remove old data. Remember, data 'churns' (is no longer valid) by an average of 20% year on year. By 'old data' we usually mean more than 36 months, unless there's a compliance requirement to keep it longer.

Share customer information across the business

Your business holds a lot of customer information scattered throughout different departments. Information can be found in spreadsheets, databases, Outlook and business cards, and often each person has their own version too. You should ensure that everyone who deals with your customers has access to a single data store that contains everything important about your business relationship with that customer. This will allow your team to share knowledge when they interact with a customer or prospect. For example, if your customer support team receive a complaint, they can make sure the Sales and Marketing team are aware of it to avoid providing conflicting messages. This structure will also allow anyone within the business to access a full history of interaction with customers and prospects.

“I know it’s going to make us a lot more efficient as well as it will get me a better grip on what the team is up to as well.”

Rob Warlow, Business Loan Services

Ensure you comply with Data Protection regulations

If you are using or keeping any personal data on your customers, the likelihood is that you’ll need to register with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) in the UK. ‘Personal data’ includes names and addresses, email addresses, phone numbers and so on – and it includes people in their private and business capacities. The process is quite straightforward, although there’s a small fee to pay and registration needs to be renewed each year. The ICO’s website is www.ico.org.uk and you can use the site to register electronically. Incidentally, there is a lot more information on the usage of data here and we strongly suggest that you take a look.

TIP 6: Technology Is A Tool, Not The Solution

Some sort of CRM system is almost always a key part of introducing CRM to a business, because as we discuss in Tip 5, it allows you to share customer information across your business. However a CRM plan does not start with technology. Unless you’re clear what the system needs to deliver, you could well end up with the wrong one, and we have seen many businesses end up trying to fit square pegs into round holes as a result.

There are many, many system options out there; Free vs £000’s, in-house installations vs Cloud, basic vs full integration including order management and invoicing. It is very possible to find technology that is right for your business without the need to compromise or limit your requirements. The shelf life of any CRM system is likely to be longer if you map CRM technology to your requirements (and not the other way around).

“First, think about what exactly you are looking to achieve by having a CRM system because there are lots of different systems out there.

Secondly, pick a CRM system that is appropriate for your level of business; which size of business you are looking to achieve?

The third and most important thing is this. Really spend time working out what your customer wants and how to give your customer what they want - I’m thinking about how you can give massive value. It’s all about interaction with your client – you give them massive value so that when they come to make a buying decision, you’re the person in the industry they go”.

Simon Zutshi, Property Investors Network

TIP 7: Measure, Improve And Repeat

It really helps if you can decide on meaningful indicators of the project’s success early on. It focuses the mind, keeps things grounded, and lets you celebrate success when it comes. We like indicators to be measurable, so try and avoid things like ‘give great customer service’. Keep it simple (at least what you share with the business) and realistic.

Some examples are: all customer facing teams using a single database to store and update customer information, an increase in the number of prospect enquiries contacted within 24 hours, a 10% increase year on year of new customers, a 15% increase in spend per customer, a 10% reduction in complaints, improved customer satisfaction ratings (a 1 point average increase) or better Return on Investment from your marketing.

If you measure your progress regularly, you will be able to make improvements along the way and ensure more efficient and effective results. It is very likely that during the early stages of your CRM journey, you will need to change or enhance your processes. This is fine. It is normal as you are not likely to get everything right from the very beginning.

We asked Kevin Green what his top three tips would be for anyone starting or growing their business. He replies: “Always be customer led, test your markets, and keep it very simple so that everyone can understand it.”

Kevin Green, Kevin Green Wealth



We hope these tips have given you an idea of what to consider when introducing CRM to your property business. In our view, CRM is no longer something that can only be adopted by large organisations. CRM allows you to improve the relationships you have with your customers, which in turn ensure a more efficient and stable business. Your team is happier, your customers are happier and your business will grow faster. It will help you streamline processes within your business and provide you with reporting that allows you spot early signs of issues and success.



About Focus2020

Focus2020 helps property investors and developers find, get and keep loyal customers. We understand the needs in this marketplace because we are also property investors and developers; our team have built up portfolios of rental properties, we have developed property for rent and sale and we have run new-build and refurbishment projects. We have been trained by, and worked with, industry experts such as Kevin Green and John Lee and Vincent Wong. In addition, we've got over many, many years of CRM experience between us; experience gained from working with some of the world's best known brands as well as with some niche small businesses and entrepreneurs.

As a result, we have a clear understanding of the importance of managing the critical relationships essential for successful property investors and developers, and we've created an approach that brings the benefits of CRM to this marketplace. We focus on the various components of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) that are relevant to help you build and grow your business - whether you invest, source property deals for others, supply to the property industry or run property mentorship and seminar programs.

For more information about what we do or how we can help, please contact us. We'll be happy to help.

With Special Thanks To:

Focus2020 wishes to thank the following business owners for their CRM / customer management views and insight. The content in this report has been taken from our CRM for Property Professionals book that is soon to be released. A more comprehensive write-up of these and other interviews is available in the book.

Kevin Green, Kevin Green Wealth, www.kevingreen.co.uk

John Lee, Wealth Dragons, www.wealthdragons.com

Simon Zutshi, Property Investors Network, www.pinameeting.co.uk, www.property-mastermind.co.uk

Rob Warlow, Business Loan Services, www.businessloanservices.co.uk

Kevin Cope, Koru Property Solutions, www.korupropertyolutions.co.uk

Lee Nicholls, Property Plus Wales, www.propertypluswales.co.uk

Keith Penny, Pennymatters, www.pennymatters.co.uk