Commence Corporation Concurs With MultiChannel Merchant CRM SaaS Thesis
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The introduction of software as a service, (SaaS) pioneered by companies like SalesForce.com, NetSuite, and RightNow Technologies has inspired more businesses to move forward with CRM. This new deployment model has proven to reduce the initial cost of hardware and software acquisition and alleviate the lengthy implementation cycles that have plagued the CRM industry for years. Industry reports confirm that businesses both large and small are gravitating to the SaaS model, prompting other mainstream companies such as Oracle and Microsoft to enter the space. But, has SaaS solved the real problem with CRM? Despite the reduced cost and deployment time of SaaS, user adoption continues to be an issue and cancellations among the providers remains a serious concern. What then is the problem with CRM?

Answering this question in the current issue of MultiChannel Merchant is journalist Debra Ellis. Ellis notes, "Selecting a CRM system is similar to buying a new car: It's all about the fit. The road hugging sporty model that delights a young man will not meet the needs of a growing family. The CRM product that meets your company's needs today may be outgrown tomorrow. There are four stages to selecting the best product or mix: objectives, analysis, selection, and evaluation.

Always start the selection process with your objectives. If your analysis and integration is sophisticated, you may simply need to upgrade your existing resources. If your data is disorganized or managed with an obsolete legacy system, you may need a complete overhaul. The key is to know what you want to accomplish and how you will measure the results before your start shopping for a solution.

The analysis stage is when you determine exactly what is missing from your data analysis and customer service tool belt. Can you easily access raw data so you can verify the reporting? Or are you dependent on canned reports preprogrammed within your system? What do you need to change about how you touch your customers? How well can you track results? Are you fully using your existing tools?

There are four types of CRM software products: On-demand (SaaS), niche (specialized for unique challenges), enterprise packages that can cover every aspect of the business from marketing to order management, and hybrid systems that select the best features from multiple offerings.

You also need a CRM vendor that fits your needs. This requires more than creating a feature requirement checklist and sending out requests for proposals. All of the top vendors meet basic requirements for core marketing, sales, and customer service capabilities. You want to find one that is flexible, scalable, and matches your corporate culture. This will allow you to grow without an annual system conversion.

The culture is important because you will be working closely with the vendor to create the perfect environment for your organization. Be sure to look at the supplier's work environment, too. If its support hours are 8 a.m. to 5p.m. Monday though Friday, and your company operates 24/7, there will be a time when you are in trouble with no hope for help. Resolve those issues before making your purchase decision."

Larry Caretsky is the CEO or Commence Corporation a leading provider of CRM solutions. Caretsky has authored several white papers supporting Ellis' arguements including Six Points to Consider, Getting Back to Basics, CRM an Executive Perspective and Practices That Pay, a book that describes how to Leverage Information to Achieve Industrial Selling Results.

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