# 12 Steps to Enhance Customer Loyalty

Rich customer relationships that generate loyalty and revenue are critical to sustained performance. Now more than ever, organizations must be able to flexibly adapt to the unique needs of individual customers. To meet this challenge, companies of all sizes are deploying Customer Relationship Management (CRM) applications and strategies across their organizations. They are coordinating multiple channels—including the Web, email, call center and face-to-face—to interact with customers and meet their needs. Successful CRM begins with innovative strategy. But strategy can't do it alone. Companies must also deploy technologies that integrate sales, marketing, customer service and field support in order to grow profitable relationships with customers, channel partners and suppliers. With insightful data collection and analysis that allows sales, marketing and customer service to achieve a 360-degree view of the customer, companies can generate loyalty, boost satisfaction and increase profitability.

Presented here are 12 steps[1] to help your business achieve those goals.

**1. Don't be put off by the CRM hype of recent years.**
Many businesses are realizing measurable productivity, sales, customer acquisition and retention gains from a strategic decision to become more customer focused.

**2. A good out-of-the-box CRM solution probably exists to solve your problem.**
One-dimensional views of the customer, disparate databases and the inability to mine customer data are common challenges. Tried and true solutions are available in the market today.

**3. There's no need to break the bank.**
Many highly functional front and back-office systems can and have been implemented for well under $100,000. In some circumstances, systems can be up and running for five figures.

**4. Avoid automating chaos.**
Automating a flawed business process does not improve the process. It just speeds up or makes a bad process more transparent. Map out the current business process you are trying to fix before you invest in any CRM application.

**5. Establish clear benchmarks for success.**
This can mean up-front work to obtain clear baseline measures.

**6. Designate a person or department to head up and manage the CRM project.**
It doesn't have to be an IT person, but it should be someone of authority with an excellent understanding of your business.

**7. Consider working with a Value-Added Reseller (VAR).**
Select one with the care you use in selecting any other trusted business partner such as an attorney or a CPA.

**8. Develop a detailed project plan for the implementation.**
Revisit it periodically to make sure it is still on track.

**9. Bring front and back-office staff in early.**
These people have the most insight into how you can improve your operations.

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**10. Plain vanilla is good.**
Training will be easier, more effective and less costly if you keep it simple.

**11. Train initially and on a continuing basis.**
Factor training costs into the total project budget.

**12. Implement in stages.**
Early, visible wins will engender support, build enthusiasm and momentum. Look for solutions that are integrated, modular and customizable.

(1) 12 Key Steps to Enhance Customer Loyalty is an excerpt from "A CRM Blueprint: Maximizing ROI from Your Customer-Based Strategy" from the Peppers and Rogers Group.