

COLUMNS

## Why mobile CRM is no longer a luxury

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By **Ehab Samy**

According to a recent survey, 55 percent of U.S. consumers would rather go a week without caffeine than a week without their mobile phone.

Which is why it is so hard to believe that just five years ago mobile customer relationship management was just a checkbox capability only a handful of organizations wanted and fewer still deployed or used.

Back then, most mobile CRM applications were immature, difficult to use and largely inefficient. Mobile phone bandwidth was still painfully slow and 3G coverage was still spotty. Mobile device form factors were not conducive to CRM access from the field. And the mobile interfaces of most CRM applications were deplorable.

Yet mobile CRM adoption is now increasing at a fast clip.

Smart tone

In fact, for a growing number of organizations, mobile CRM is no longer a luxury. Today, it is a critical requirement for engaging in high-value prospect and customer interactions outside the office.

How did these sweeping changes in attitude and adoption rate happen so quickly?

One reason is increased competition and customer expectations and the resulting need for greater sales productivity.

In this challenging business environment, field and sales personnel need better information faster, from wherever they happen to be working.

When mobile professionals have access to all the relevant information, they can go much deeper into the sales process in a single visit. They can respond to customer inquiries such as order status and recent service history on the spot, increasing the quality of the interaction and improving sales productivity.

Another key reason the demand for mobile CRM increased is the proliferation of smartphones and other mobile devices.

BlackBerrys, iPhones, Android devices and iPads and similar tablets now make it incredibly easy to access information. And their browsing and geolocation capabilities open up a world of possibilities for business

information. And their browsing and geolocation capabilities open up a world of possibilities for business applications.

In fact, as smartphones continue to overtake feature phones, users' expectation of what they should be able to do with their mobile devices has increased. And this expectation has carried over into enterprise applications such as CRM.

Rep tie

For instance, by helping sales reps track client office locations and contact information, a midsize financial services company is leveraging mobile CRM to improve client relationships and loyalty.

When a rep is traveling and finds herself with unexpected downtime, she can quickly access a local map on her smartphone that displays all client and prospect locations within a 10-mile radius.

If she is able to secure an appointment with one of these clients, she can immediately access key account and personal information to help ensure a more productive sales call.

Additionally, by loading into the system personal information such as hobbies, alma mater and birthday for each key client contact, sales team members can be alerted when birthdays or anniversaries occur. The ability to have this kind of alert via their mobile device enables them to take timely action from the road.

Mobile CRM has certainly reached a new era. And considering the rapid pace of mobile technology innovation, the greatest possibilities are just ahead of us.

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