

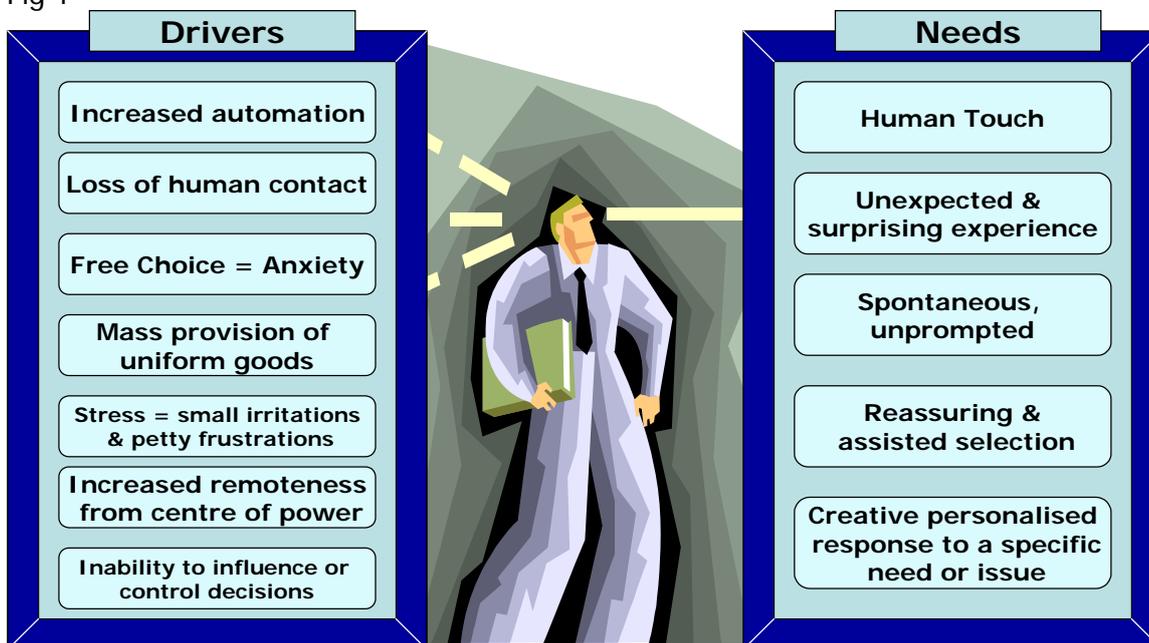
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CRM! Six Steps for Success

According to a recent survey by IBM Global Services, 85% of companies are not feeling fully successful with CRM and the remedies having the greatest impact 'are not the big ticket items (IT hardware & software) but the human oriented steps'. Mark Hollyoake of Springboard Commercial Solutions outlines 6 steps to transform a technology tool into a fully integrated business process that engages with employees and customers alike.

In our everyday world we are feeling less in control, more stressed and treated like numbers as Fig 1 highlights.

Fig 1



Ironically, most businesses are continually bombarded with pitches for customer management (CM) and customer-relationship management (CRM) systems. The technology is truly impressive but it is not an end itself but rather an **enabler** for putting the customer genuinely centre-stage in an organisation's business.

Customer management in its broadest sense is the orientation of an organisation. Is it customer focused-customer centric and how is this manifested within the organisation.? How does it find new customers, manage the relationships it has with its current customers and realise value for the organisation?

CM in this context isn't a pretext for a technology solution, but a management / business philosophy. Hollyoake 2004

Bergeron (2002) lays out the need for computer assisted customer data bases that drive customer relationship management. He goes onto describe the infrastructural requirements to make Customer Relationship Management happen within the organisation and surrounding processes. Woodcock, et al, (2002) identify a number of concepts and processes (decile analysis, segmentation, life-cycle analysis) that require computer based data to enable their functionality.

This is not surprising, as the technology providers have identified the opportunities (budgets/pursuit of increasing levels of sophistication) open to them within the CRM technology driven field. The focus has been on those organisations with the largest budgets and big ticket sales.

Technology may play a part in a CRM strategy, but technology will not provide the holy grail of customer service excellence Coffey (2001). Bryant (2001) cites Raj Mendes, CRM leader at Cap Gemini Consulting as saying "*companies are starting to realise that their CRM projects have placed too much emphasis on technology & ignored customers. They are now trying to put the 'C' back into CRM.*" In a similar vein Mahoney (2002) cites Harvard Professor Susan Fournier as saying "*CRM programmes have become too much about the technology, not enough about the customer relationship*" and that it is time to re-install the 'R' into CRM programmes.

Springboard go one step further and aim to put the people back into the equation.

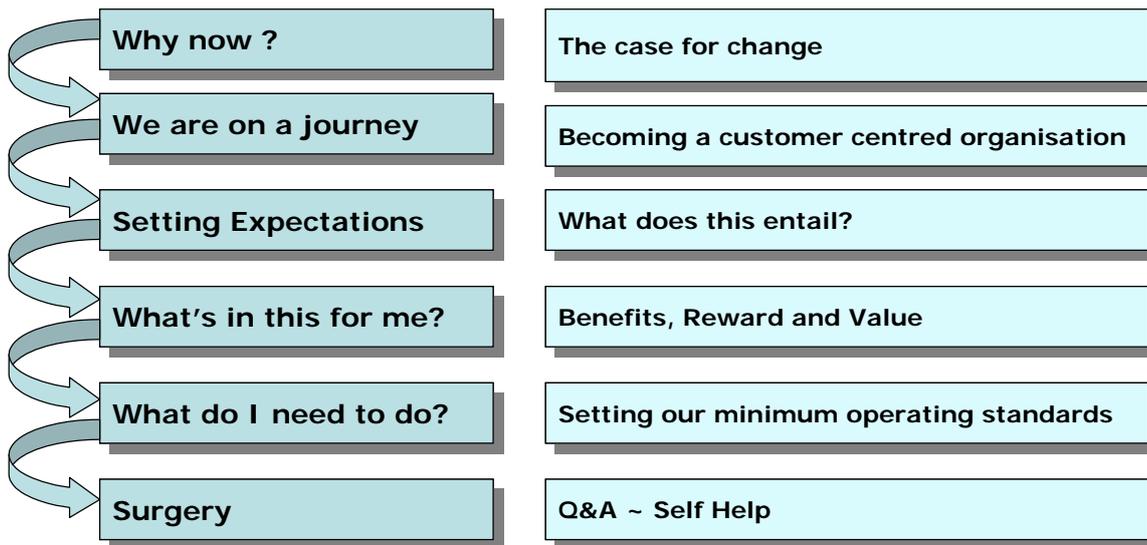
So why do things still tend to go wrong with CRM system implementation? Experience suggests that there are three factors that can disrupt and derail CRM implementation:

- **Fuzzy accountability:** In many cases there is a loss of focus on the customer and the potential to enhance the customer experience. Rather than work with the technology, key staff members circumvent the system using informal networks.
- **Resistance to change:** Customer-facing staff can kick back against the system. Resistance can stem from a fear of the new or a failure to sell the new system internally. Without a clear CRM vision, staff fail to see the big picture and so when hurdles present themselves during implementation they balk and become disillusioned. Instead of embracing the whole solution, they start to pick and choose which part they use.
- **Resistance to IT:** If no one outside the IT department takes ownership for the initiative CRM becomes just one of many IT projects that seem to bear little relevance to the real world of business.

The CRM journey begins with the first step

To address these barriers to successful CRM implementation, Springboard CS has developed a six-step programme for transformation. It all about:

1. Creating champions;
2. Making the case for change;
3. Plotting the journey;
4. Managing expectations;
5. Clarifying what's in it for stakeholders;
6. Identifying what individuals need to do.

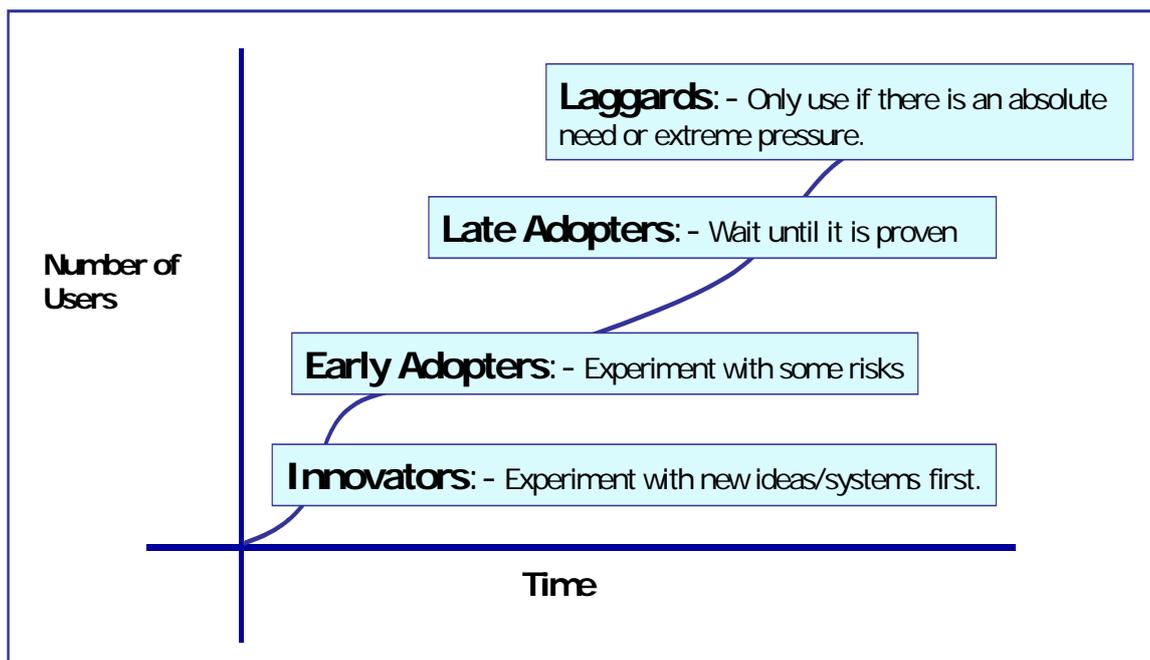


This is the human / people face of system implementation

And it's important to get it right because the same IBM research indicates that '65 to 75 percent of companies are looking to CRM as important in delivering revenue growth through improved customer experiences, retaining and growing existing customer bases, increasing customer acquisition rates etc...'

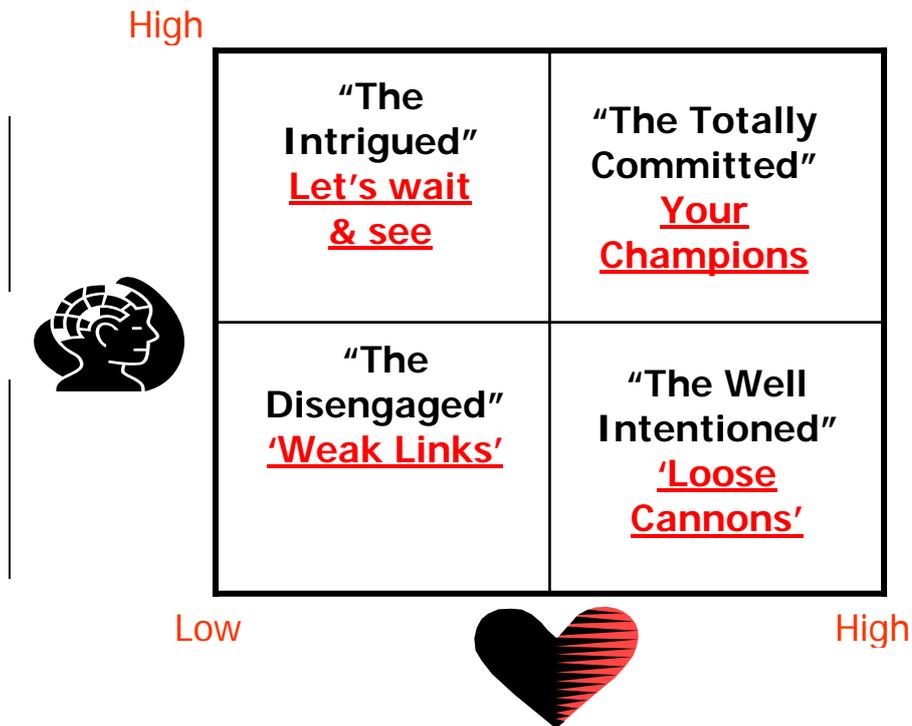
1) Creating champions

The starting point for any CRM programme is the creation of pilot users who can become systems champions. These should be drawn from all areas of the user-curve: laggards, late adopters, early adopters and innovators. When it comes to successful implementation you can never underestimate the powerful effect on the team when the person least likely to adopt new systems, takes the lead. It creates the *'if old Bill can use this damn thing then so can I'* syndrome.



In supporting pilot users, it is vital that they know:

- Why we are implementing the system
- What we already know about it
- How it will be used
- What it can do for us individually and collectively



Experience suggests that people tend to know more than you expect. Clarifying this is important because it provides vital insights for the creation of a training programme that will address all of the major obstacles to success.

2) Making the case for change

It takes time and experience for us to accept that IT takes time for change to happen and that it will make a difference. Making the case for change powerfully to staff establishes a rationale that will drive the programme on through to completion.

It needs to not only sell the benefits of system implementation to staff, but also highlight the dangers of doing nothing. At this stage, the opportunity should be taken to develop a customer management road map for both pre and post implementation periods.

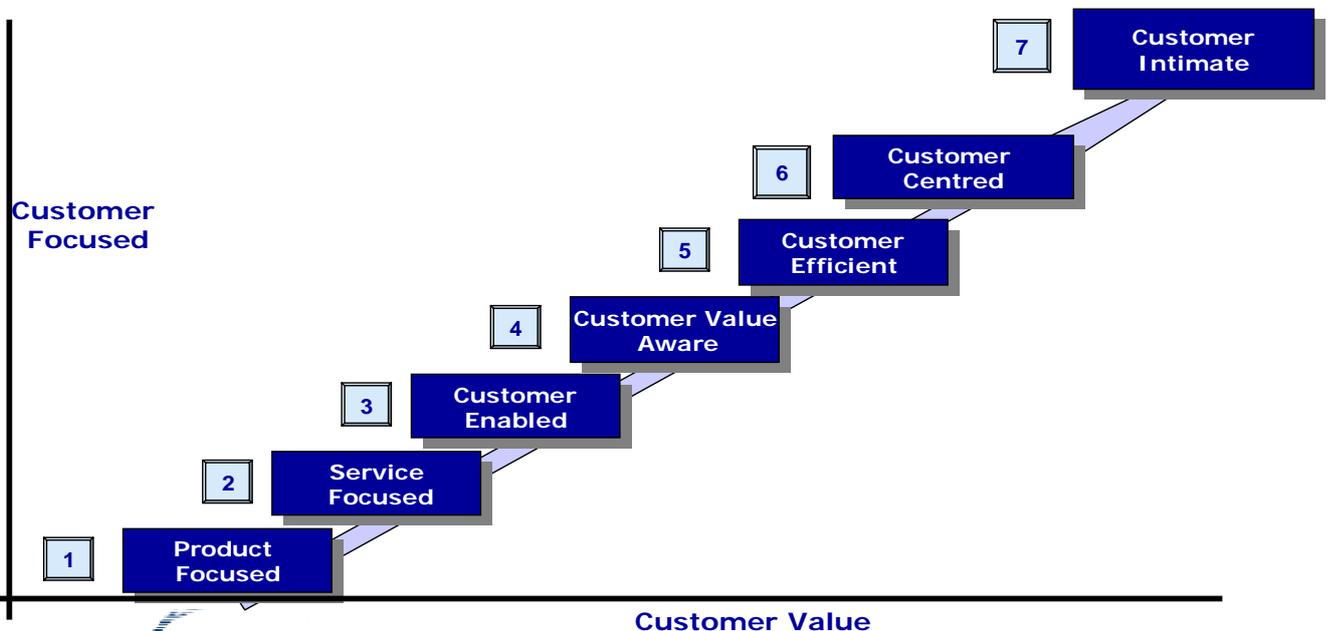
3) Plotting the journey

Developing a customer-centric organisation is the Holy Grail for most businesses. But the road is too often paved with good intentions that make little difference to the actual customer. To get it right requires translating system implementation into a customer management context.

This should highlight the fact that good customer management comes from people, the organisation and the way that they are measured. Information is purely part of the enabling platform for this process and not an end in itself.

So staff need to be taken through the journey that the organisation will take on its way to becoming customer-centric. This process should be two-way with staff from the various functions feeding back their view on where the company currently is on its (customer centric) journey and any outstanding issues that they experience within their company roles.

The Seven step Customer Journey



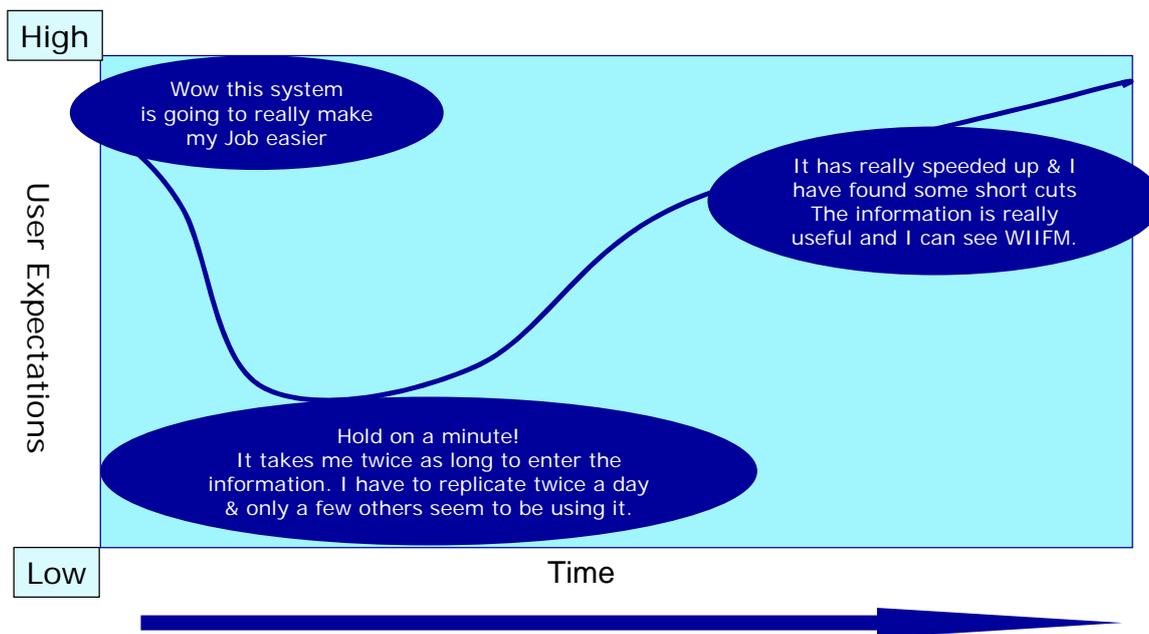
The result of this planning and feedback process can be encapsulated into a vision statement with clearly identified objectives and milestones and a road to its realisation.

4) Managing expectations

Many CM and CRM systems are over-sold and over promise on the capabilities they can deliver from day one. This generates a high level of expectation and anticipation which puts pressure on the new systems and its ability to perform. No system is a cure-all and is unlikely to deliver excellence the moment it is implemented.

The reality is that during the first few months, everyday tasks will take longer to accomplish and information will be harder to find. For those using the system, excessively high expectations can generate high stress levels compounded by information overload and a feeling of disappointment. Experience leads us to suggest that it is far better to aim in the early days for a base level of use and then consolidate benefits before moving forward.

In the early days and weeks of implementation, the support infrastructure may 'wobble' and the help desk 'fall over'. For a toddler, this is a natural part of the process of learning to walk, but for employees used to functioning efficiently with the old system, these set backs can pitch them in to a *trough of disillusionment*.



The Springboard CS process avoids this because a high level of reality is injected back into the user base. From the start it is made clear that:

- Your start point will determine the level of frustration that you experience
- This frustration should be confined to the first few weeks or months
- Over time problems will be ironed out and you will find shortcuts
- You will probably only ever use 20% of the rich functionality offered by the system
- In the first instance therefore, mastering 20% of the system will more than meet requirements

One way in which to get staff involved and engaged is to get them to start thinking about the system and the part that it can play in helping them to do their work easily and more productively:

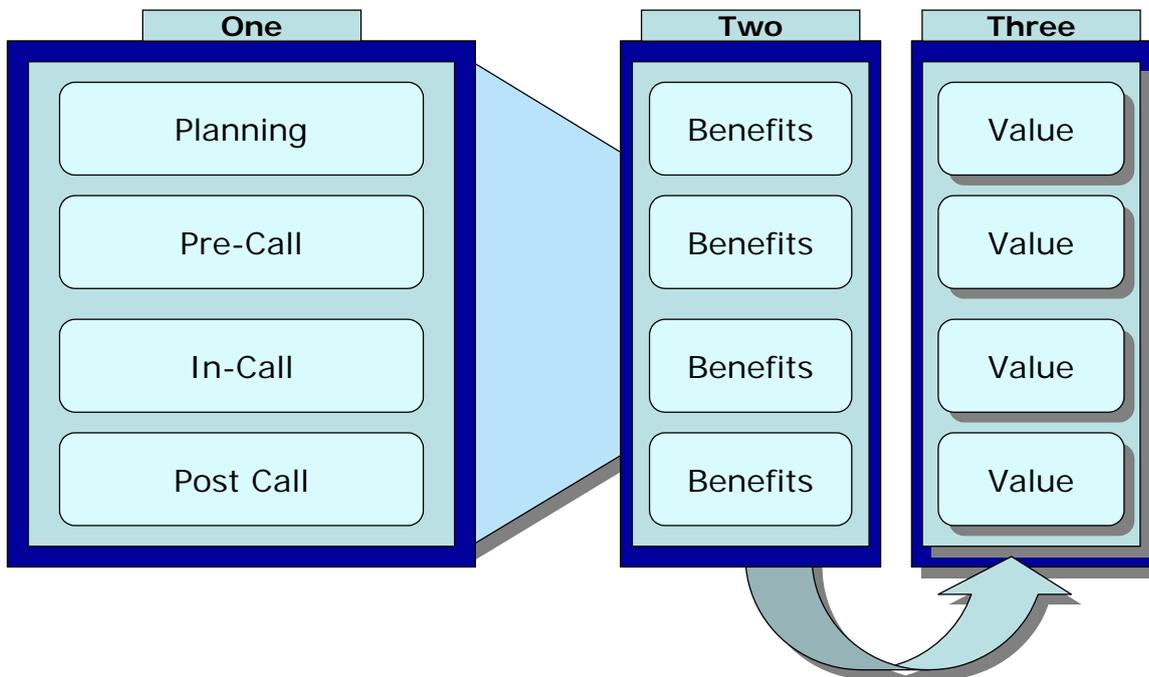
- How might it impact the way they work with other individuals and departments?
- What difference could it make to the way in which I fulfil my role and responsibilities?
- What opportunities does it create for customer interaction?

5) What's in this for me?

Human beings can be altruistic but the primary concern is usually, 'what's in it for me?' That's why it is important to take time to develop system functionality into a clear set of benefits for the user (and of course the customer). Benefits not functionality is the key!

Customer contact	Functions	Benefits	User Meaning	Customer Meaning
- Before				
- During				
- After				

This information can be captured using a simple table – above. Benefits should be split into three sections – pre, during and post implementation. In most cases there should be around 15-20 benefits per section.



The above (fig) highlights the process for customer facing field based sales people. This process should be repeated for all staff involved within the project. Everyone in the organisation in some shape or form has a bearing on its customers. At this stage it is vital and useful to involve staff from all functions in validating the benefits and prioritising the top three. More than anything, this process helps staff to understand that

there are real and tangible benefits to be gained from successfully implementing the system: not just for the company and its customers, but also for them as individuals.

What does the system do?	What are the benefits?	What does this mean to me?	What does this mean to our customers
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6) What do I need to do?

Once the benefits have been identified and prioritised it is far easier to gain buy-in from staff. In fact it is vital that they get involved in agreeing the minimum operating standards they will adopt during implementation. By setting their own operating standards they take ownership and with this engagement, there is far greater chance of successful implementation.

What do I need to do?	Per call	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
- Before				
- During				
- After				

At the end of this 6-step process, the user base will have a broad understanding of why the organisation is implementing a new CRM or CM system, a clear vision for the future, a set of realistic expectations, an appreciation of the benefits to them, and a set of operating standards which they can buy into. It all means that when it comes to transforming the people to make the most of the system, they engage positively with the programme.

Conclusion

We all love new technology but we hate reading the instruction manual, so we never really manage to make the most of it. CRM systems are just the same. Fantastic technology but it's not 'plug and play'! To make it work, you need to convince the people that use it that it's going to make a big difference to their lives.

We have to avoid 'fuzzy accountability' where users revert to old systems and informal networks to get their customer management work done. We need to overcome natural

resistance to change and buy into a vision of a better future. And everyone must realise that CRM and CM is all about a new way of working rather than a new IT system.

The Springboard CS six-step programme brings everyone in line with the business vision and ensures that CRM does deliver the promised revenue growth through improved customer experiences which lead to retaining and growing existing customer bases and increased customer acquisition. Ultimately, if you get both the human and IT elements of CM/CRM systems right then significant benefits can flow quite quickly – ignore the human angle and benefits may NEVER FLOW.

This article was written by Mark Hollyoake, Director of Consulting and Co-Director of SCS Ltd. If you would like to know more the please contact Mark on:- contact@springboardcs.com.