

Moving to E-CRM in Arab world to increase profit, AqsaCRM a case study of Building an Arabic E-CRM

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Abstract

There is hundreds of software that implement CRM methodology, but there are no Arabic complete solutions till now except a few products for big companies like Microsoft, so it is a big challenge to Arab world to benefit from CRM concept and implement their software to benefit from it.

This paper aimed to discuss the difference between traditional marketing 4Ps and the new generation of marketing 4Cs, and then to explain what does CRM mean, its definition, features, and how to implement E-CRM success fully, how CRM increase profit to companies using it.

A Case study will be presented about designing and implementing an Arabic E-CRM, we have developed the necessary database schema and structure to support a web-based CRM system and front-end portal for both the clients and employees to access, input, and transfer information.

1. Introduction

These days, business circumstances are changing rapidly because of information technology development and the spread of the Internet. Thus, it is important to develop Customer Relationship Management (CRM). CRM can satisfy customer needs that are becoming more complex. In addition, companies prefer existing customers to new customers because acquiring new customers induce them to bear more expenditure. They want to maintain existing customer

relationships and generate more profits with customers through long-term relationships [1]. There is an increase in companies that introduce CRM software packages for efficiency and to develop strong customer relationships. From the late 1990's, CRM packages have been introduced in earnest to the domestic market. CRM is a new management process developed to get excellent results in business and to maintain long relationships with customers by integrating and managing customer information [2]. In particular, introducing CRM packages is a popular strategy in the financial and telecommunication markets. The financial industry is at the center of the CRM spread. CRM construction is also in great demand. Recently, the Arab world financial market is becoming more growing. Also, in the domestic market, there have been many changes because it is possible for cross selling and up-selling such as banc assurance as well as traditional saving and loans. According to increase in customer-made finance, which satisfies customer needs, the importance of customer relationships grows.

1.1. Research question and methodology

The research as described in this paper is driven by the need for an effective CRM strategy in dynamic markets. To further focus, the advertisement is our industry of concern. The associated research question we elaborate is: Is there a suitable model or

framework which helps in defining an advertisement's CRM strategy and align it with their business goals?

A number of models for CRM are already constructed by consultancy firms and some scholars. In this paper we create a developed a CRM general CRM system for advertisement's that illustrates the relation between strategic fit, CRM balance and CRM performance. The developed system is based on open source software called Vtiger CRM [10]. Our work was centralized on arablize it and customize it to suit advertisement companies.

1.2. Paper outline

In the following section we provide more details on CRM Strategy models, definition, and profit. This allows us to explain How the market evaluating moves from the 4Ps model to 4Cs, leading to introduce a CRM as. Section 3 depicts the between CRM and mid-size company relationship and how CRM systems increase profit in theses companies. Section 4 present our case study in which the application was applied in a real-world situation. The system philosophy was presenting in addition to the platforms used to implement it and the main features of it. In section 5 we discuss the case study results and further touch upon framework validation aspects.

2. The CRM Strategy model:

Before talking about CRM strategy we have to take a look at the evolution of marketing and how it moves from 4Ps model to 4Cs one.

2.1. Evolution of marketing:

According to the American Marketing Association, the original 1935 definition of marketing was: "The performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to consumers." In the mid-1980s, the first revisions were made changing the definition to: "The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and

distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives." In late 2004, it was again changed to: "Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders."

2.2 Marketing mix - the 4 Ps

The main four elements of the marketing mix are described as "the 4 P's" - product, price, promotion and place.

Product: The first P is a product. This should define the characteristics of a product or a service that will meet your customers' needs.

Price: The second P is the price of a product and deciding on an overall pricing strategy. Pricing can be a very complex area. Most people believe they should undercut their competitors but this is not always a wise strategy.

Promotion: The third P is about promoting products and services. This may include advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, and atmospherics.

Place: The final P is about location and where the service is actually delivered. Many retail gurus will tell us it's all about "location, location, location" and this still holds true today.

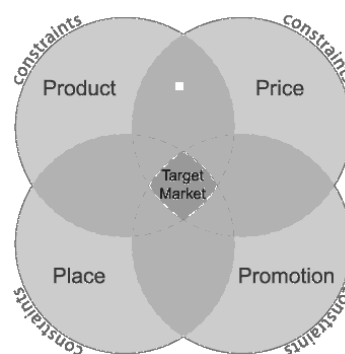


Figure1: the 4Ps Model

2.3 The 4 Cs

Many now dismiss the four Ps as being out of date and have developed the four Cs. For example, there are the C's developed by Robert Lauterborn and put forward by Marketing guru Philip Kotler where by:

- Place becomes Convenience
- Price becomes Cost to the user
- Promotion becomes Communication
- Product becomes Customer needs and wants

The four C's reflect a more customer oriented marketing philosophy. They provide useful reminders - for example that you need to bear in mind the convenience of the customer when deciding where to offer a service.

2.4 CRM Definition

CRM has its roots in several disciplines: marketing, services management, quality management, and of course, information technology. CRM is a continuous learning process facilitated throughout the customer's lifetime with an organization. If implemented correctly, CRM strategies can reap significant benefits for any organization." CRM is a business strategy to select and manage the most valuable customer relationships. CRM requires a customer centric business philosophy and culture to support effective marketing, sales and service processes. "[5], "CRM is a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a system and a technology, designed to improve human interactions in a business environment." [6]

2.5 CRM as a System

CRM has many main modules as figure2 illustrate. CRM has two main objectives: To retain current customers by increasing customer loyalty and to attract new customers by providing individualized customer service.

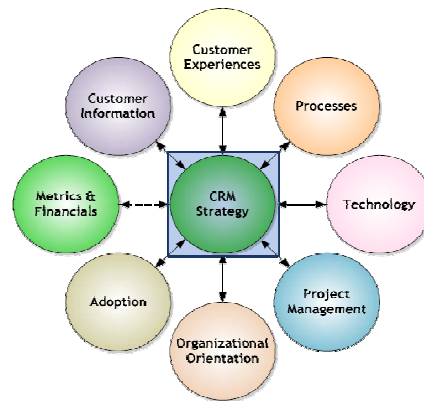


Figure 2- CRM modules

3. CRM and Mid- size companies

According to IDC, ROI results from CRM technology ranged from 51% to 500% for over half of the companies. Of the companies that participated in this study, 58% experienced a payback in one year or less. Success relates to the company's ability in managing a complex process of change within the company. Elements to success included: Careful planning, Remaining flexible while managing the evolving business Processes, gaining support from key people and employees and practicing patience.

3.1 increasing profit:

Due to the saturation of CRM implementation among large businesses, "it is the midsized companies that are seeing the most increase in IT spending and are predicted to be the largest customer base for CRM applications over the coming years" (Guglielmo). With the proper CRM implementation, companies should benefit economically. According to Ronald Swift's Accelerating Customer Relationships, effective CRM increases profits in six ways: lowering customer recruiting costs, dissipating customer recruiting needs, reducing cost of sales, increasing customer profitability, increasing customer retention and loyalty, and evaluating customer profitability. Furthermore, an article based on University of Michigan research shows that if a CRM product can project increase customer

satisfaction by only 1%, then the company for which this product was implemented will increase its market presence by an average of 3% (Siebel, 2003).

3.2 The Market grows:

The market value of customer relationship management software in the world about 8, 1 billion dollars, growing by 23, 1 percent, According to Gartner'[5] Foundation International Research. Rates have increased investment in customer relationship management CRM, a solution designed to manage information on dealings with corporate clients and prospective clients, by 40 percent in 2007, according to the institution itself. He said the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition growth in the vertical business sectors, accompanied by massive investments by some fast-growing regional companies, help create more opportunities for global technology companies like Microsoft, especially in light of the continued growth of the economies of countries in the Middle East, in return for economic slowdown Worldwide.

In Arab world there is a need in fact to CRM systems , especially Arabic one, there is only one exception of that , it is Microsoft which is have a a CRM solution that support Arabic language.

In fact we centralize in this paper on using free and open source platforms in implementing our CRM system which will be very helpful in adding Arabic support and decrease cost by using none property software.

4. Case study

CRM technology is an enabler for the business processes associated with the delivery of customer value. Technology can help a company bond more closely with its customers provided that the technology solves real business problems.

4.1 case study AqsaCRM philosophy

Our case study based is AqsaCRM is based on Vtiger [4] which is enterprise-ready Open Source CRM software mainly for small and medium businesses. We choose this option because it is built over proven, fast, and reliable LAMP/WAMP (Linux/Windows, Apache, MySQL, and PHP) technologies and other open source projects.

AqsaCRM is our customized version of Vtiger which support Arabic language and centralized on supporting the main features of CRM in Arab world. AqsaCRM CRM leverages the benefits of Open Source software and adds more value to the end-users by providing many enterprise features, such as Sales force Automation , customer support & service , marketing automation, inventory management, multiple database support, security management, product customization, calendaring, E-mail integration, add-ons, and others.

AqsaCRM CRM also provides, enterprise grade business productivity enhancement add-ons, Customer Portal, Outlook Plug-in for Microsoft Outlook users, Office Plug-in for Microsoft Word users, and Thunderbird Extension for Thunderbird mail users. All these add-ons are part of the AqsaCRM are Open Source too.

4.2 AqsaCRM– Features

Sales Force Automation	Customer Support & Service	Marketing Automation
Lead Management	Trouble Tickets	Campaign Management
Account & Contact Management	Knowledge Base	Mass Mailing
Opportunity Management	Customer Self Service	E-mail Templates
Sales Quotes	Online Knowledge Base	Mail Merge Templates
Inventory Management	Activity Management	Productivity Add-ons
Products Catalog	To Dos, Meetings & Calls	Email Client
Price Books	Recurring Events	Outlook Plug-in
Vendor	Shared Calendar	Office Plug-in

Management		
Purchase Orders	Activity History	Thunderbird Extension
Sales Orders	E-mail Notifications	Customer Portal
Invoices	Notes	RSS Feeds

Reports & Dashboards	Product Customization	Security Management
Key Metrics	Custom Fields (10 different data objects)	User Management
Customizable Reports	Pick Lists	Profiles
20 Pre-built Reports	Custom List Views	Roles
20 Pre-built Dashboards	Drag & Drop Modules	Groups
Report Folders	Currency customization	Organization-level Access Control

5. RESULTS

5.1 Database

Using InnoDB database, we created a database to support the relationship model and support also web-based prototype. This relational database, hosted on using MYSQL. By storing and organizing information fundamental to the CRM system, it enables the prototype to be a dynamic system that provides personalized, up-to moment information and allows users to search for desired information. The functionality of the website depends on the relationships between fields of the database. Each field of the database has a unique identifier so that none of the fields are repeated. These unique identifiers and the relationships between data minimize the size, the complexity, and the overall maintenance of the system. This is important so that all information remains current and consistent to prevent the storage of unnecessary information. A client only has to update their information once, and it will be updated throughout the system, which allows for users to personalize their pages.

5.2 CRM Web-based Prototype

The AqsaCRM web-based prototype, which was presented as Diploma project in year 2007/2008, graduated studies in computer since engineering.. The web system was designed focusing on our client's specific needs and in accordance with Nielsen's Usability Heuristics. The general layout and color scheme is shown by the screen shot of the log in page, Figure 3, and Setting page, Figure 5. The log in page, Figure 3, effectively fulfills the Design requirement "Login routes users to their personalized page." From the point users log in, they view their personalized page, connecting the users to information that applies to them.

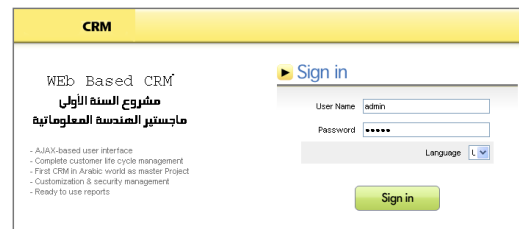


Figure 3- Log in screen

Figure 3 is a general look on the system:

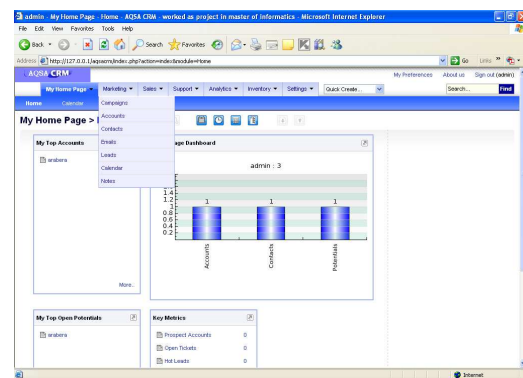


Figure 4 - Aqsa CRM general Look system

Setting screen is very detailed, it contain all what customer need to customize the system, he can even change the labels of field of tables, or modify the contents of

combo boxes and checkboxes , and also add new items. Figure 5 is the setting page.



Figure 6- Setting Page

5.3 Modules

In AqsaCRM the following libraries are used: Ajax, Calculator, Clock,,db_backup, fpdf, images, anuange, ListView, php_writeexcel, prototype-1.4.0 , jscalendar . There are many modules used in the system :Accounts ,Activities, Administration, Calendar, Campaigns, Contacts, Custom View, Dashboard, Emails, -FaQ, -Helpdesk, Invoice, Leads, Notes, Potentials, Price Books, Products, Purchase Order, Quotes, Reports, Sales Order, Settings, Users, Uploads, Vendors , Web mails.

5. Summary

The goal of this project was to develop a CRM system for Arab companies which are mid-size companies and growing company. Though this system culminated in a web-based CRM prototype; the research we conducted to achieve these goals was the most critical part. By combining our market research, CRM development study, and

employee interviews we devised a complete system requirements document. Building on these requirements we developed a database and web interface to demonstrate the fundamental CRM functionalities. This system, along with the supporting documentation, provides an understanding of the business processes along with the functionalities necessary for implementation of a complete and effective CRM system.

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