

Intranet Services

E Commerce: Manage the Ecommerce Business

The critical component of a successful online business is Keeping your customer contacts and account activities up to date.

Many companies rely on customer relationship management (CRM) systems to keep things running in integrated and smooth passion. But Still, not all small businesses can afford the license and subscription fees associated with CRM — or have the IT staff to support it.

Fortunately, two companies, FreeCRM.com and Salesforce.com offer free online CRM applications that can help in improving company's overall efficiency without adversely affecting the bottom line.

In addition to the free versions, both companies offer fee-based applications, which, offer more features. The freebies do a good job of organizing customer and prospective customer info alike, however only FreeCRM lets you share data with co-workers and coordinate your work efforts — at no charge. Salesforce.com charges \$995 per year for a team edition which lets up to five people access the same information.

Installation and Contact Management

Here for online applications no software to install. Just go to either company's Web site and create a user account. Enter basic information including name, address, time zone and other contact information. Since FreeCRM supports multiple users, one person can create accounts for the rest of your team. Once that's done, one can assign administrative rights and select what data the group will share.

Both FreeCRM and Salesforce will let you import contact records from Microsoft Outlook — or any POP e-mail accounts. During the import process, flexibility is provided to define which data goes into what fields. Both systems allows to create new fields for those which were already created in old address system.

For instance, if someone recorded his/her contacts' vacation preferences in a spare field in Outlook, He/she can create a field in FreeCRM specifically for that information. The program also allows to create and manage e-mail campaigns -- critical for those outbound promotions.

Additionally, both programs allow to create e-mail templates and merge them with selected contacts. FreeCRM sends e-mail through existing POP e-mail accounts. Salesforce.com uses the merge function and a copy of Outlook.

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Sales Management and Reporting

FreeCRM can maintain a list of products and prices to add to a prospective customer's deal, whereas Salesforce.com allows to enter information about a service you're selling, along with a sales amount -- then assigns the sale to a "practice area" rather than a particular product. If tracking specific product sales and activity is important to your business, FreeCRM may be better able to supply that kind of information.

FreeCRM's reporting system allows to modify existing reports by changing the date ranges and optionally displaying the results in graphs. Also versions can be saved for later use. Salesforce.com offers a wide range of predefined reports which can be modified extensively and even export the results to Excel for analysis. For more complex analysis than what the standard reports offer, Salesforce.com is probably a better option.