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Title: The Decision for the Introduction of CRM (Customer Relations Management)

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Two repeating observations encourage me to write this article in relation to the conditions and relations to the sale-marketing function and the concept of CRM (Customer Relations Management) in Slovenian companies.

The first observation refers to the fact that in the last ten years, the general knowledge about the sales-marketing function in Slovenia, especially in those companies which are, by the nature of their activities, of a distinctly sales nature, achieved a great step forward.

Still, if most of the people responsible for dealing with marketing or sales, some years ago still accepted the other wise honest, but still too “strategic” statements of the sales-marketing “gurus”, of type, such as: “Listen to what your buyers say! Offer your buyers what they seek, what they need! The sale is teamwork!” etc. with a nod, then, today we find out the branch in the field of sales-marketing consultants in Slovenia, in most cases, does not offer the services to their clients which would help the already highly educated and experienced leading sales-marketing workers and field commercialists develop or at least preserve the competitive advantage of their companies.

The sales-marketing consulting remains only a mask for the repeated realisation of a (too) expensive, standardised sales or managerial sales seminars which are often performed without any, or unfit sales practices, and which the companies, because of the uselessness of the seminars, curse, but because of the harmlessness still tolerate (and because they do not have any other option). In short, in Slovenia, the practice has surpassed the theory in this field.

Let us not repeat the mistakes arising from the introduction of the ERP!

Because of this, it is proper and useful to write down clearly: despite everything, a missing support for a total (re)organisation and managing of the sales-marketing function in the company exists; as in the conceptual and also the operative level. This support is CRM, which has been present for years in the developed world and is becoming increasingly more fashionable in Slovenia. The biggest novelty and the most benefit which the CRM brings to a company, is the connection of the sales-marketing function into a complete or total business operation of a company.

And so we come to the second predicted observation. That is to say, the decisions concerning the introduction of CRM as a tool which enables the connection of new sales-marketing techniques with modern information technology is very often simplified to merely the level of a dilemma here in Slovenia, i.e. to which CRM software should a company choose?

Recently, in particular in numerous articles, but also in the words of spokesmen from the companies who supply hardware and software equipment for all kinds of events, such as expert conferences or fairs, introduce their programming solutions which are supposed to be better than those of the competition. Each one has its own merit, but these merits do not originate from the realistic needs of the companies, by rule.

With the selling of “functions & features” where, of course, the equation MORE = BETTER stands, they wish to awaken an urge to buy by creating (which is often evident, sadly, only after

the sales is complete) unrealistic expectations from the hardware or software support in the customer. CRM is fashionable, and this fashion must be “used”. Regardless of whether we have CRM experience or not.

At Cap Gemini Ernest & Young, we have, as one of the leading European and one of the most respected global companies in the field of managerial consulting and information technology consulting, a great deal of experience of putting CRM into practice. That is also because we feel responsible to warn the leading workers in the companies: do not repeat already publicly known mistakes by introducing the ERP concept (Enterprise Resource Planning) in the case of CRM introduction, also!

The experience abroad, also, taught us that two mistakes should be avoided at the very start, since they certainly lead to higher costs, if not to the failure of the project of implementation of the ERP and CRM concepts in the business.

The first of the above mentioned mistakes is that the size of the project is left entirely to the decision of the software or hardware supplier and to IT personnel in the company.

To avoid this mistake, the use of an outside consulting company has become the globally predominant practice, but unfortunately not yet in Slovenia. As a full holder of activity, the company takes the responsibility to successfully, quickly, and cost effectively put the chosen concept into practice (for example ERP or CRM).

Because in our beautiful country, “everyone is (must be) a jack of all trades”, let us write down our second warning.

Surprisingly uncritical acceptance of the defence of the Slovenian version of “family-friendly-faction-patriotic” coloured corporatism which is in the current times of privatisation of “parade horses” (real or those which still give us the feeling, for now) of Slovenian economy, possible to read or hear about more often from the mouths of experts and “experts” despite writing down that the introduction of the CRM concept, because of its complexity and professionalism, is an extremely demanding task on which the whole existence of the company could become dependent. Therefore, it is to be entrusted only to the most experienced consulting company. Even if it is foreign.

The last warning is, of course, without meaning in case you have finally decided to introduce the CRM concept on your own, with nothing but the internal resources of your company. If this is or will be the case, let us bid you, in the miner’s fashion, “Good luck!”