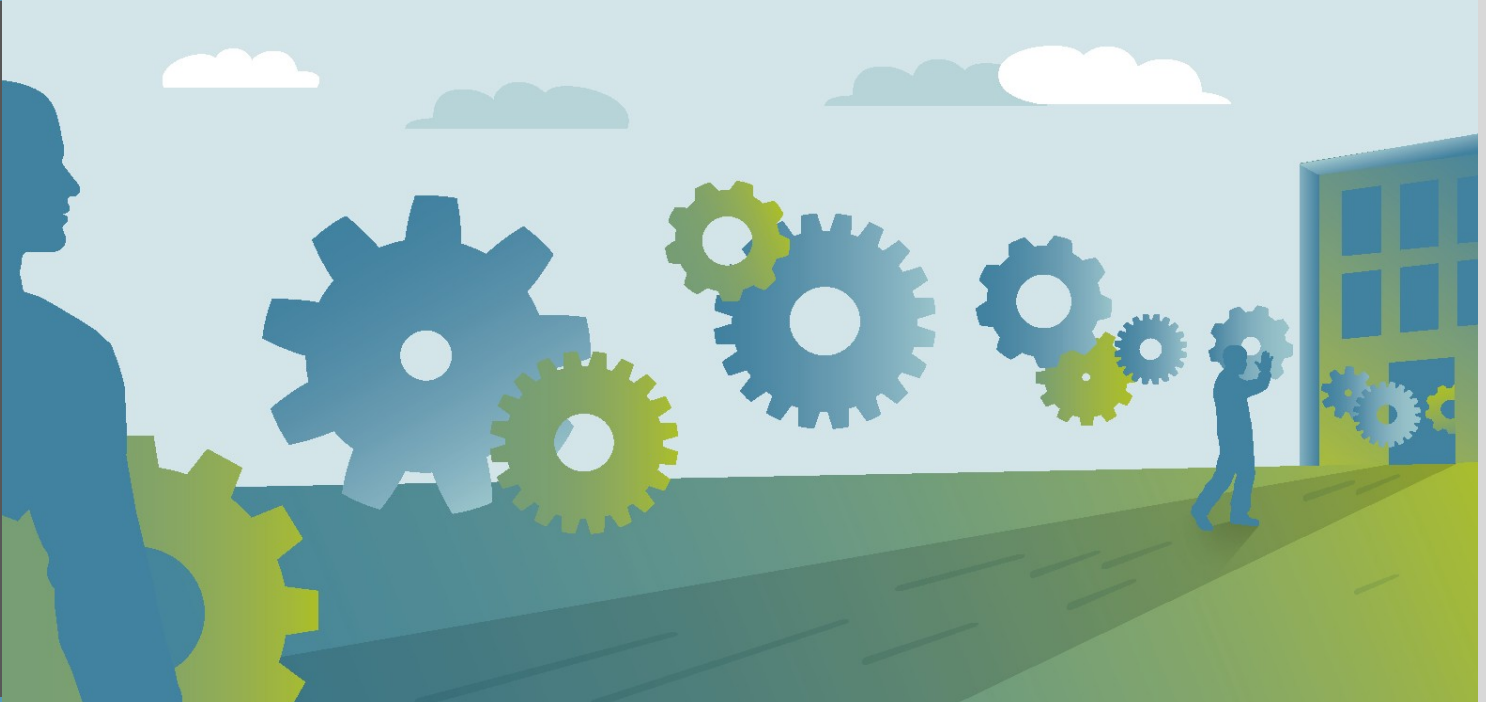


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CRM Success Starts at the Top

Recent evolutions in software technology have made customer relationship management (CRM) systems increasingly powerful, but without proper direction from managers, customer service agents are unlikely to realize the full potential of the utility.

The strong adoption rate of CRM systems is no surprise, considering how important it is to manage data and create personalized experiences at all levels of customer interaction. But despite validation from business managers, the increasingly convoluted and technically complex definition of the concept is leading to ineffective deployments and fragmented usage. According to CRM Buyer, most companies would be best served by appointing a "champion" of the implementation project to monitor progress and power through any setbacks.

Leaders are encouraged to start small and combat early resistance to operational changes. Beginning with a small test group or restricting the pilot program to one department could help win over crucial converts, according to the source. After these early successes are achieved and publicized, all stakeholders can be brought into the fold and educated on best practices. Once the new system takes hold, champions need to harness the momentum and move forward while user morale is still high.

Remedial technical training may be needed for optimal CRM use, but without an overarching change in organizational culture, such efforts may be in vain.

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