



CRM TECHNOLOGY

by Harry Sheff & Keith Dawson

It's a CRM Bonanza



The industry's experts talk turkey about why it works, why you need it, and where this toolset is going.

CRM means different things to different people. Since it first burst on the scene in 1997, burning with the heat of a thousand suns, it has changed quite a bit. Call center practitioners have gotten used to managing the complex deployments, the changing data sets and the new rules for call flow that CRM brings.

At heart, CRM tries to do one thing: bring accurate and relevant information about customers to the agent's desktop. There's no question that ten years into its development as software, it can accomplish this task with gusto. It's part of the need-to-have equipment in a modern call center.

After several years of retrenchment among CRM vendors, the

tools on the market today are a far cry from those brave attempts ten years ago to amalgamate customer data. As often as not, you can get a CRM system that's hosted, or on-demand. Just as important, CRM is a dynamic part of managing the customer experience — hooked into other tools for assessing quality, measuring satisfaction, training reps and more.

Given all the changes, we went in search of insight into what CRM means today. We asked many of the experts at companies that make CRM software where they think this complex toolset is headed, and what it means for today's call centers.

"Customer Relationship Management" is a vague term. How

do you define it relative to your product?

Greg Anderson, FrontRange: The term is vague because it means something different to each vertical market and typically to each business within that vertical. Because of such we are focused on providing tools that can help firms solve their business issues by having solutions that can be configured to work the way you want to work. In other words, our product adapts to a company's workflow and allows automation of many CRM processes. By doing such, you reduce your training costs and increase user adoption of the CRM system, which enables you to achieve a return on your investment. The bottom line is that CRM helps you