A GUIDE FOR AGENCIES

Setting up your first CRM.

In this eBook, we'll show you how a CRM can help you win clients, communicate more effectively, and build longer-lasting relationships.

copper

Table of Contents:

SECTION 1

What is a CRM?

Think of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software like an intelligent contact manager. Today, most agencies are keeping information about clients and deals in Excel or Google Sheets. While it’s theoretically possible to achieve some of the same results of a CRM with spreadsheets, it’s not ideal.

CRMs help agencies by.

Fostering long-lasting client relationships — By keeping all information, contracts, and client assets in one place that everyone at the agency can access.

Enabling teams to communicate better — Both internally amongst the team and externally with clients, which helps longer-lasting relationships.

Ensuring client data is clean and up-to-date — Which makes things like analytics and reporting simpler and more accurate.

Making it easier to manage projects and hit deadlines — One of the biggest advantages of using a CRM is that it keeps everyone on the same page (including outside partners).

Agencies that use a CRM earn more revenue, close deals faster, win more repeat business, and build longer-lasting relationships with their clients.

According to the research company Techvalidate, using a CRM can improve customer retention by as much as 27 percent. Another research company, Nucleus Research, found that for every dollar spent on a CRM tool, $8.71 is generated in revenue.

Whether it's Jony Ive at Apple or Ira Glass at This American Life, one common theme amongst the best creatives in the world is a focus on detail and process. For agencies, the same principle can be applied to business operations like data management, communication, and reporting. It can sound boring and tedious—but operating efficiently is the key to building a great business.

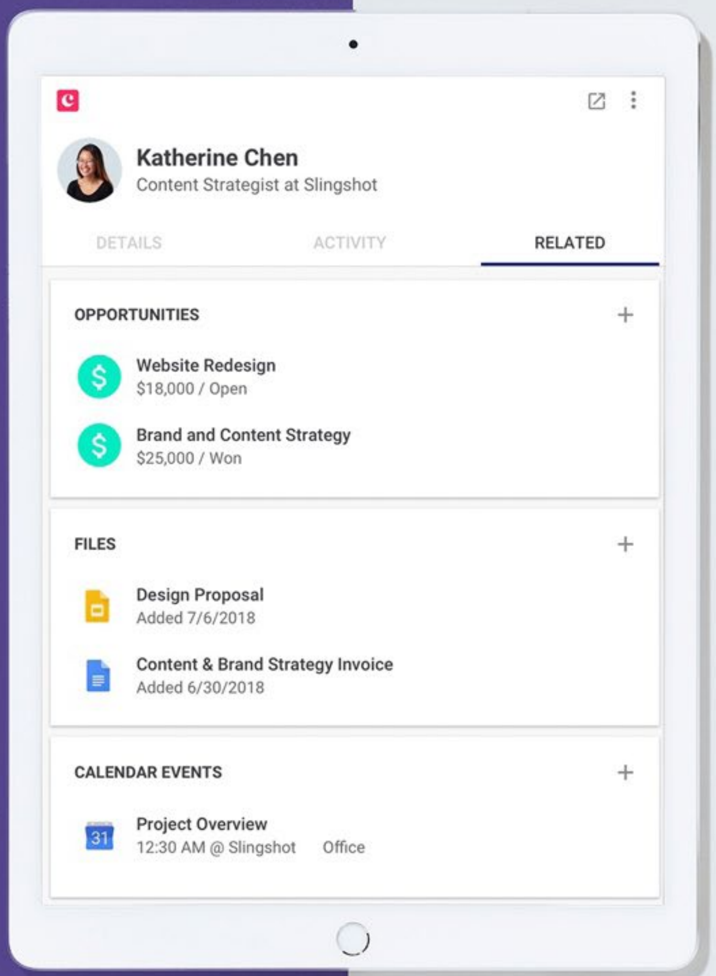
SECTION 2

Why invest in CRM software?

Deploying a CRM can increase your agency's revenue in two ways: first, it can help you streamline new client outreach and never drop another lead or client opportunity; second, it can help you win more repeat business by improving communication with existing clients.

Win new clients.

Problem	How CRM helps	Outcome
Winning repeat business requires constant communication with clients	Create reminders, email templates, and remember previous conversations	More revenue, larger average accounts, lower cost of marketing
Email and spreadsheets create communication “silos”	A CRM gives everyone access to communication related to a project	Fewer mistakes and “oops“ moments, more repeat business, happier team
Managing a network of contractors can feel like herding cats	A CRM improves communication with contractors	Better relationships with contractors, and more successful projects



CRMs are a central database where you can keep all information related to existing and future clients. According to Rain Group, a sales industry research firm, it takes an average of eight touches to get an initial meeting with a new client. If you want to find 10 new clients this year, that means you need to send 80 emails to potential clients. If you want to find 100 new clients, that number goes up to 800. Keeping track of that many touch points is no easy task.

Today, many agencies track this communication through spreadsheets and email. As a result, they lose dozens of potential clients. That's because a spreadsheet can't tell you when you last emailed a potential client. It can't remind you to follow up with that person after one week. And it can't tell your teammate that you emailed that prospect already.

A CRM solves many of these problems by offering agencies the ability to see all the emails that have been sent to a potential client, set follow-up reminders, and give everyone access to this information.

“We’re so much more organized with a CRM. And we’re using it for way more than sales—it correlates, collects, and connects everything in our records. It’s been a huge tool and resource for us.”

—— JEREMY ROSE, COO AND CO-FOUNDER, ADVOC8 AGENCY

Win repeat business.

Once a client is secured and a deal is won, a CRM enables your entire team to track every interaction and organize relationship data. In competitive creative industries, this is essential to success.

Winning repeat business is one of the cheapest ways to reduce an agency's client acquisition cost (CAC). Yet many businesses focus more on new client acquisition than existing client retention.

According to a study by Econsultancy and Responsys, 49% agreed that "pound for pound, we achieve better ROI by investing in relationship over acquisition marketing." But just 30% of companies say they are "very committed" to relationship marketing, with 22% conducting no relationship marketing at all.

If you aren't convinced that we're living in the Relationship Era, consider this staggering statistic: according to Harvard Business Review, "research done by Frederick Reichheld of Bain & Company (the inventor of the net promoter score) shows that increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25% to 95%."

These are just a few ways in which CRMs help agencies win repeat business:

1

Reminding sales and business development teams to follow up with clients frequently and discover new project opportunities

2

Preventing “Oops” moments where two people at the same agency email a client with different or contradicting messages

3

Improving client satisfaction by increasing communication on projects

According to research conducted by Copper and Qualtrics Research, CRMs can save agencies an estimated 15 hours per week in data entry alone. In people-intensive businesses like agencies, time is money. Currently, the average person responsible for sales at a company spends two hours a day on manual data entry. Assuming an eight-hour work day and an average annual salary of $60,000, this equates to $15,000 a year spent solely on data input.

Agencies are creative in nature. Clients seek their help in order to come up with ideas or do work that they themselves are unable to do. Freeing up time and resources to think more deeply about the creative process is critical to beating the competition and delivering a unique value proposition.

By automating data entry and capturing all your contacts, emails, and account details, CRM software leaves your team free to focus on actually fostering client relationships and generating creative solutions that keep clients coming back.

Break open communication silos and establish a single source of truth.

For successful agencies, a CRM acts as a central database, or the trunk of the business tree. Macquarie Media reported uncovering $1.4 million in revenue when they switched to a CRM system.

Before investing in a CRM, each account manager at Macquarie Media tracked their clients and potential clients in whichever way they preferred. One account manager kept their notes in a spreadsheet, another in a Word document, and yet another scrawled in notebooks. There was no overarching system (a common problem at agencies).

But with a CRM in place, suddenly all that data was scooped up and stored in one location. Client information that was previously stored in multiple systems could finally be seen by everyone in one consistent form, in one place.

Advoc8, a Washington, D.C.-based brand experience agency, uses their CRM to manage extensive contact lists and keep everyone on the same page.

Because Advoc8 organizes experiential events and branded content for a huge range of brands (including Google and CNN), the team has a database that's bulging with contacts. For each client, they need to store important information like venues, prices, and food menus. With a CRM, the agency can attach venue details and sales materials to each client's account. And when the team needs to work on anything related to those company records, they can see all previous communication is one place.

"We actually reduce friction and noise—which, funny enough, includes a lot of what people normally think of as collaborative work. Unnecessary conversations are just busywork. Real collaboration happens when you have a single source of truth."

—— JEREMY ROSE, COO AND CO-FOUNDER, ADVOC8 AGENCY

SECTION 3

How should your agency implement your CRM?

Here's how to set it up and get everyone on board.

1

Set Your Goals.

What's the goal? It's an important question to ask before starting any project and CRM implementation is no different. Ideally goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and time-related.

Here are some examples of goals a CRM may help you with:

- **Increase new client touches from three touches per week to seven email touches per week by the end of the quarter**
- **Upsell five existing clients on larger projects by the end of the month**
- **Increase customer satisfaction from 85% to 95% by the end of this year by communicating more frequently**
- **Review sales figures every Monday afternoon with the team**

2

Determine your budget and who will be using the CRM.

CRM prices range from $10 per month to $100,000 per month—keep in mind there may be hidden fees. But don't worry: it's possible for small-to-medium-sized agencies to spend as little as $20 per user per month.

In order to determine your budget, you'll need the following:

- **How many people will use the CRM?**
- **Which features do you need?**
- **How fast do you want to get up and running?**

Many CRMs price their product in tiers based on the value provided. Usually, basic offers get you 80% of the way there so it's generally recommended to start with that package and upgrade when necessary.

Once you know what features you need, you'll be able to evaluate different CRMs and determine the true cost of each one.

3

Take an inventory of your business data.

The next thing you'll need to do before choosing a CRM is to figure out what integrations you'll need. That's a fancy way of saying you need to decide what software and apps need to work with the CRM. Here are some examples of integrations that you may want:

Gmail and G Suite (Docs, Slides, Sheets, Hangouts)

mailchimp

or other email software

RingCentral®

or other VoIP software

Dropbox

or other storage platforms

Typeform

or other form creators

slack

or other collaboration tools

4

Choose a CRM.

Once you've created goals, established your budget, and decided on your desired integrations, you're ready to choose a CRM. The most important thing is that you choose a CRM that works for your business.

No one business is the same. So when you see another CRM's Super Bowl ad talking about how happy Procter and Gamble is using their product, consider that CRMs made for Fortune 500 companies aren't always a good fit for small-to-medium sized businesses. That's why the first three steps are so important.

HERE ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES WHEN CHOOSING A CRM THAT WORKS FOR YOUR AGENCY:

Don't rely on Google alone

The company that spends the most on SEO and paid marketing is the one that ranks highest on search engines, but that doesn't mean they are the best software option. Look for third-party experts like Gartner, G2 Crowd, and ProductHunt to see reviews from other agencies and compare your options.

Try a couple of options

Before you commit to a CRM, try a few different options to see which user experiences you like, what features are available (and actually useful), and how much time it takes to set things up. Trying a few options will give you confidence in your decision. Some companies will make you sign a long contract and pay upfront before you've had a chance to properly test it out and get your teammates' feedback. Be wary of any companies that don't offer a free trial or require a long contract to get started.

Ask your industry peers

Some CRMs work better for agencies than others. It sounds obvious, but a great way to find the best option for your business is to ask similar sized companies in your industry about their experiences with CRMs. Consider going to industry meetups, posting a question on Facebook or Twitter, or asking questions on a message board like Quora or Reddit.

Look for customizability and quick deployment

Every agency is unique, so the best CRM is the one that can be tailored to suit your needs. Look for a CRM that you can easily customize without hiring expensive developers. To test this out, try creating a few custom fields or reports (more on how to do this below) and see how long it takes. If it takes longer than an hour or requires outside help, you should probably find something that's more user-friendly.

5

Build your CRM swat team.

Once you've decided what CRM you want to use, decide who will be involved in the implementation process. As they say, "When everyone is accountable, no one is accountable," so make sure you clearly outline who will lead the CRM implementation and what others will be responsible for. At small agencies this might just be one person. At larger agencies it could be a few people from different teams.

Here are some questions to ask in order to build your swat team:

- **Who will lead this project?**
- **Will that person be responsible for making changes to the CRM in the future?**
- **Who will be responsible for importing existing data?**
- **Who will be responsible for integrating the CRM with software we're currently using?**
- **Who will build our standard reports and dashboards?**

Another good way to think about this is to look at the goals you've set and ask who will be responsible for achieving each one.

6

Create properties, pipeline stages, and customize fields.

One of the first things to do once you sign up for a CRM is to personalize it based on your existing sales process.

HERE ARE SOME KEY THINGS TO CONFIGURE AND WHAT THEY MEAN:

Properties

CRMs usually come with a set of default properties. These are essentially categories of information about a client, prospect, or project that you want your CRM to store. For example, common properties include Contact Name, Deal Stage, Budget etc. When setting up your CRM, think about what properties represent information critical to your sales process. Also think about the information you'll want to analyze when you build reports and dashboards.

Pipeline stages

Pipeline stages allow you to track the progress of projects and deals. Once you've defined your process, assign a stage to each step of the process. When in doubt, keep it simple: only set up stages that you need in order to keep track of a deal's progress. For example, you may only have three stages: First Meeting, Proposal, Final Scope.

Custom fields

Don't let the tail wag the dog. Make sure your CRM works for you instead of the other way around by customizing it to suit your needs. If you don't want to store a default piece of information about a client, customize it. Advoc8, who we mentioned earlier, stored information like event venues, prices, and even food menus.

7

Import existing data.

Once you've set up your CRM, you're ready to start importing the client and prospect data you already have. There are 3 important things to consider at this stage:

Make sure data is clean & consistent

The data in your spreadsheet columns should be in the same format. For example, don't import a spreadsheet with dates that are written like 01/01/2018 and also January 1, 2018.

Use virtual assistants

The task of cleaning and organizing data may seem daunting, but there are entire companies that help you do this. Consider hiring a virtual assistant to help you clean data and organize it all into one place. Arcgate is one such company that charges between $0.10–0.50 per record for data enrichment.

Watch the tutorial

We can all admit to skipping the occasional product tutorial. But the two-to-five-minute video tutorial that CRMs usually create for their customers are well worth the time, saving hours and headaches.

8

Create your first dashboard and reports.

Once you've imported your data, you're ready to start creating dashboards and reports. This is where you can look at trends that inform future business decisions and strategy.

Here are some examples of reports that agencies use to grow their business (note: the time period should easily be adjusted by day, week, month, quarter, or year):

- **Potential clients (leads) contacted**
- **Opportunities created**
- **Pipeline created**
- **New clients signed**
- **New revenue**
- **Existing clients upsold**
- **Existing client revenue**

SECTION 4

How do you get the team to actually use a CRM?

1

Email Your Team.

You're finally ready to high-five your CRM swat team, celebrate a job well done, and invite your teammates to sign up. A CRM is only useful if people use it, so start inviting some users.

Many CRMs will have an area within the app or software where you can invite your teammates. Then they typically send those users a standard onboarding email, but consider sending a separate email to let people know that you implemented a CRM.

2

Establish buy-in from key stakeholders.

In *The Tipping Point*, author Malcolm Gladwell popularized the theory that a small percentage of people set trends that most people follow. He wrote, “The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts.” While he was writing about Hush Puppy shoes, the principle applies for product adoption of any kind.

Think about who is most influential at your agency and get their buy-in. This could be as simple as talking to managers or executives. Or for smaller agencies, it might just require getting the CEO bought in.

3

Create incentives to encourage adoption.

One of the oldest tricks in the book to encourage CRM usage is to tie employee compensation to usage of the product. It may sound harsh, but the easiest way to encourage adoption is to tell people, “If it’s not in the CRM, you don’t get paid.”

For example, you may compensate salespeople based on the new clients they find. Tell them that the commission gets paid when the pipeline stage goes from “Qualified to buy” to “Closed client.”

SECTION 5

How can agencies use a CRM to grow their business?

While a CRM is just a piece of software, you can use it as the catalyst for new processes and behavior that can fuel your growth as an organization. Consider how using a CRM can help you automate work you're currently spending too much time on, make stronger decisions with data, and develop longer-lasting relationships with your customers.

Automate your workflows.

One major advantage of CRMs compared to spreadsheets is the ability to automate tasks and encourage better habits. Earlier we mentioned the importance of following up in the sales process. But remembering to send follow up emails is difficult when you have a lot of plates spinning. With a CRM, you can put parts of the sales process on auto-pilot.

Here are some examples of automation triggers you can create:

- **If a contact record is inactive for more than five days, create a task for the contact owner to follow up.**
- **If an opportunity gets moved from the “Meeting Set” to “Proposal” stage of the pipeline, generate an RFP for that account.**
- **If a customer has been active for one year, set a task to send them a customer appreciation gift.**

Become more data-driven.

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

——— PETER DRUCKER, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROFESSOR, HARVARD

The common thread in most business advice today is that data is powerful—and not just in the cliché way that corporate billboards advertise.

If you aren’t already using data to inform important business decisions like where to invest marketing and sales dollars or what markets to focus on, consider using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure your business and team.

A lot of companies say they are “data-driven.” But the truth is that most talk a bigger game than they walk. Many agencies don’t follow up with every lead seven times. They don’t look at which customer segments are closing at the highest rate. They don’t look at which customers are most profitable. For agencies that are willing to make the changes required to actually use data to drive their decisions, this is a big opportunity—and a CRM is one of the most powerful tools for capitalizing on it. After all, it is the hub where all this data can be stored and analyzed frequently.

Consider organizing a whiteboard session where your team can determine your agency’s KPIs. Then, assign each KPI to a person and have them develop three more KPIs to achieve their goal. Finally, build dashboards and reports in your CRM to keep everyone accountable

SECTION 6

Use Your CRM to build deeper, longer-lasting relationships.

We said it once in this guide and we're going to keep saying it until we lose our voices (err, our fingers get tired of typing): we now live in the Relationship Era.

The Internet has made it possible to connect with your customers in a much deeper way.

We've ditched impersonal conference calls for face-to-face video conversations. Agencies that deliver poor results now get punished in comment sections and review boards, while genuine value creation and customer success are rewarded with social media testimonials.

Every agency reading this has an opportunity to take advantage of this shift. Your CRM is an important tool in doing that.

Here are only three of the many relationships your agency can nurture using a CRM:

1

Communicate better with your clients

The legendary design agency IDEO—responsible for designing the first Apple mouse, among other products—uses their CRM to figure out when, how frequently, and in which manner they engage with their customers.

For example, each person on their client outreach team has a target number of people they need to contact each month. Account managers have targets to maximize the amount of times they check in with their existing customers. The result? They've been able to outperform nearly every competitor by building strong relationships at scale.

2

Manage partner and contractor relationships

Building client relationships isn't the only way to use a CRM to grow your business. As we mentioned earlier, all else equal, a 10% increase in your agency's profit margin will net a 10% increase in profit. So while it's important to go find 10 more clients, it's also important to double down on your efficiency in delivering services to those clients.

Advoc8, an agency profiled earlier in this guide, uses their CRM to manage relationships with contractors, venues, prospects, and more—while minimizing friction and noise in the team's workflow. By building relationships with service partners, they have continuously reduced the cost of serving their clients and improved their margin.

3

Foster better relationships with channel partners

Referrals are one of the best client acquisition channels for any agency. Those can come from happy customers or channel partners. Many agencies partner with organizations that offer ancillary services. For example, a video production agency may partner with a social media marketing agency and refer business to each other. In order to get as many referrals as possible, it's essential to nurture these partnerships.

Partnership cultivation is very similar to the sales process: the more frequently you communicate, the better your chances of success. Consider creating a report to see which partners refer the most customers to your agency. Then, create a task to follow up with each of them every month or quarter to check in—or send them a thank-you gift once they've sent you 10 (or 20, or even two) referrals.

For much of the 20th century, businesses got a bad name for their “Bag ‘em and tag ‘em” sales strategy style. Traveling salespeople blew through towns slinging products they didn’t believe in and customers didn’t want. But the Internet and the birth of the Relationship Era changed that.

Now, the businesses that succeed are the ones that build long-lasting relationships and try to solve problems for their customers in every interaction.

CRMs have adapted to these changes too. They are no longer just databases with rows and columns. They are tools for building better relationships with all the people you do business with. They can help you make more decisions based on data. Put simply, CRMs are transforming the way agencies do business.

Request a demo.

Interested in learning more about how Copper can help your agency build better relationships?

Enter your info in the form here and
a Product Expert will be in touch shortly.

:copper