Business Choice Awards: CRM

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KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE, YOUR ENEMIES CLOSER, AND YOUR CUSTOMERS CLOSEST OF ALL.

Customer relationship management tools help; here's who PCMag readers consider the best.

Customer interaction is a key component of most businesses. The success or failure of a business rides on the quality and quantity of customer interactions. This process is too important not to be tracked and managed thoroughly. For this reason, many businesses rely on customer relationship management (CRM) to organize and manage all aspects of customer interactions.

CRM − OVERALL SCORES

SugarCRM	7.1
Oracle	6.5
Microsoft	6.2
Salesforce.com	6.1
ACT!	6.0
SAP	5.8
Average	6.0
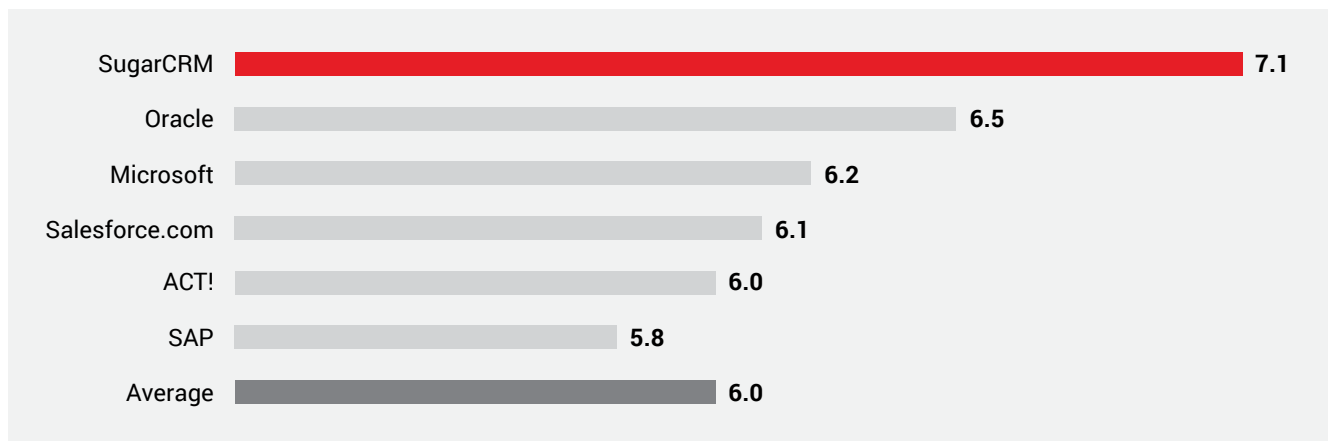
A customer database that holds all customer, product, and service-related information forms the core of any CRM solution. Every customer touch is logged in order to improve customer communication and provide better service. Reporting and recommendations are strong points of CRM, and provide the ability to do things like notify customers of new products, match customer needs with existing product plans and offerings, remind customers of service requirements, and follow up on sales and service to assure customer satisfaction. In addition, the ability to customize CRM solutions means that you can initiate, track, manage, and report the outcome of any and all ways your sales and customer service personnel interact with customers, making sure that all of your employees are on the same page and working to keep customers happy.

This edition of PCMag Business Choice Awards focuses on those CRM tools. For more than 25 years, we have been augmenting our hands-on, labs-based product reviews with our Readers' Choice Awards, in which PCMag readers rate the products and services they use the most. The Business Choice Awards extend the Readers' Choice Awards by garnering feedback about the hardware, software, and services our readers deploy, administer, maintain, and use in a business environment.

This survey asked respondents to rate their overall satisfaction with the CRM products they use or manage and the likelihood they would recommend them to others. In addition, we inquired about their satisfaction with technical support, and the overall reliability of the solution.

If you select, deploy, or administer the products in our Business Choice Awards, or if you advise or manage people in these roles, then you know how critical it is to choose the right products. The results of the PCMag Business Choice Awards survey are invaluable when doing so.

CRM SOFTWARE AND SERVICES

Everyone knows that customers are the lifeblood of their business and that anything they can do to build a relationship with customers and keep them happy is worth doing. CRM software is designed to do just that and focuses on organizing, automating, and synchronizing sales, marketing, customer service, and technical support. The term CRM covers a broad spectrum of functionality so make sure to do your homework and find a solution that includes the features you need. You'll also want a reputable and stable CRM vendor because these solutions, in addition to being a significant financial investment, take considerable effort to set up and maintain. The Business Choice Awards for CRM are the best place to start your evaluation process.

In this year's survey, received enough responses to be included as finalists, two more than last year's results, but with three vendors appearing for the first time (with not enough response, Sage didn't get a spot in the results this year.)

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

	Overall	Reliability	Tech Support Needed	Tech Support Satisfaction	Likelihood to Recommend	Net Promoter Score®
SugarCRM	**7.1**	**7.2**		**6.8**	**7.4**	**21.1**
Oracle	6.5	6.8		6.3	6.3	-27.1
Microsoft	6.2	6.4	37%	6.3	6.2	-28.2
Salesforce.com	6.1	7.2	36%	6.1	6.4	-15.4
ACT!	6.0	6.8		6.1	6.2	-22.7
SAP	5.8	6.3		5.8	5.6	-52.0
Average	**6.0**	**6.7**	**37%**	**6.1**	**6.1**	**-29.6**

Overall score is based on answer to the question "Overall, how satisfied were you with your cloud computing service?" It is not the average of the other scores in the table.

Except for numbers indicated by a percentage, scores are based on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is the best. A blank indicates we did not have enough response to include a score.

® NetPromoter is based on the answer to the Likelihood to Recommend question. NPS is calculated by taking the percent of respondents who answered 9 or 10 (promoters) and subtracting the percent who answered 0 to 6 (detractors). Net Promoter, Net Promoter Score, and NPS are trademarks of Satmetrix Systems, Inc.; Bain & Company, Inc.; and Fred Reichheld.

In the end, there was a clear best among the players: SugarCRM wins this edition (after not even making the cut in 2014), earning highest overall satisfaction and likelihood to recommend scores.

Looking at Overall Satisfaction, Sugar takes a sweet lead with a 7.1 (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the best). That's in a class by itself compared to the competition. None of the rest get a very strong endorsement. It's quite possible that this is because of the complexities involved in CRM as a field. A good CRM initiative isn't just about the technology, it's also about the best practices and processes that a business has in place. With a solution this complex, we rarely see a simple answer to the question of "are you satisfied?"

Reliability, in this case the ability of the software or service to run every day and provide consistent results, also follows the trend of overall satisfaction. SugarCRM is at a high of 7.2, but tied with

Salesforce.com. (Last year, Salesforce.com was our winner, but it took a mighty tumble in overall score this year to 6.1.) Only Oracle and ACT! come close to competing in reliability, each scoring a 6.8.

Looking at tech support, SugarCRM's story begins to crystalize. It's once again on top with a 6.8 for satisfaction with provided help; the rest of the pack struggles to keep up. The only two vendors with enough response to indicate how many customers needed tech support were the behemoths: Microsoft and Salesforce.com, and both had dismal numbers, with over one-third of their users needing to ask for CRM assistance.

Turning to the critical question of "How likely are you to recommend your CRM provider to a colleague," we see that very few are likely to recommend their CRM provider to a colleague, period. The highest score goes to SugarCRM with 7.4, which sets the solution above the pack. Only the refined SugarCRM's users seem likely to recommend their CRM provider. The scores are so bad for the others, that every other vendor managed a negative Net Promoter Score (NPS).

BUSINESS CHOICE WINNER: SUGARCRM

SugarCRM has come a long way from its open-source origins to become an enterprise-worthy and beloved solution for customer every aspect of the customer relationship. It's certainly clear that PCMag readers prefer it far and above the other options, including those from big-name vendors like Microsoft,

METHODOLOGY

We email survey invitations to PCMag.com community members, specifically subscribers to our Readers' Choice Survey mailing list. The survey was hosted by SurveyMonkey, which also performs our data collection.

Respondents were asked to rate their CRM provider over multiple questions about their overall satisfaction with the solution, as well as experiences with technical support within the past 12 months.

Because the goal of the survey is to understand how the CRM solutions compare to one another and not how one respondent's experience compares to another's, we use the average of the CRM solutions' rating, not the average of every respondent's rating. In all cases, the overall ratings are not based on averages of other scores in the table; they are based on answers to the question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your CRM service provider?"

Scores not represented as a percentage are on a scale of 0 to 10 where 10 is the best.

Net Promoter Scores are based on the concept introduced by Fred Reichheld in his 2006 best seller, The Ultimate Question, that no other question can better define the loyalty of a company's customers than "how likely is it that you would recommend this company to a friend or colleague?" This measure of brand loyalty is calculated by taking the percent of respondents who answered 9 or 10 (promoters) and subtracting the percent who answered 0 through 6 (detractors).