INTRODUCING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SOLUTION TO PICEASOFT LTD

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ABSTRACT

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Introducing Customer Relationship Management solution to Piceasoft Ltd

Bachelor's thesis 85 pages, appendices 18 pages
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This thesis was commissioned by Piceasoft Ltd with the aim to prepare a theoretical background, collect key employees' opinions, and build a list of requirements and recommendations to introduce Customer Relationship Management system to the company's operations.

To answer the research question "What are Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution?" relevant literature was reviewed, three popular cloud software solutions were compared and features, relevant to the company's current and expected future needs, were studied in more detail. Parallel to these, participatory action research was conducted in the company. Based on observations and findings seven interviews were conducted to obtain key employees' opinions, wishes, and requirements for a CRM solution.

A combination of the research findings resulted in a list of recommendations and requirements to be studied with Piceasoft Ltd core group, responsible for a CRM solution development and implementation. The list is comprised of two parts: key points for developing a strategy and a list of recommendations ranging from suggested modules, to specific features covering all processes that a suggested solution would include.

A common understanding is that the CRM solution must be light in terms of graphics and hardware requirements, scalable, fast, and agile. The very first module implemented must be contact management followed by document management, marketing, and possibly customer support modules.

The thesis ends with Conclusions where fulfilment of the research objectives, answers to the research questions, thesis reliability, and further research plans are discussed. The research produced enough material to answer all research questions and also produce a viable strategy for the CRM solution implementation.

The thesis includes confidential material, which has been excluded from the public report.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Management, CRM, business process modelling, customer support, action research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

Ad-hoc	Improvised
B2B	Business-To-Business
B2C	Business-To-Customer
BPM	Business Process Modelling
BPMN	Business Process Model and Notation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
GST	General Systems Theory
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
Ltd	Limited company
R&D	Research and Development
SaaS	Software as a Service
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SW	Software
TAMK	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
UI	User Interface
VP	Vice President

1 INTRODUCTION

This bachelor's thesis was commissioned by Piceasoft Ltd. Research was executed and the thesis was written as a part of the Bachelor of Business Administration degree in International Business during the fourth year of studies. I started working on the thesis soon after my employment at Piceasoft Ltd commenced. Being a member of the customer support team while also participating in the sales process gave me a valuable insight to both processes. The Customer Relationship Management topic was selected as a segment of an action plan to streamline the company's processes.

1.1 Background

When small companies make their first breakthrough and start growing their business as well as their customer portfolio, they usually make a lot of ad-hoc decisions to adapt to challenges they are facing at the particular moment. Processes are usually not very systematic, they are not well documented, and above all not integrated with each other.

In the beginning of my employment at Piceasoft Ltd, I presented a list of improvement suggestions to the company's co-founders. One of the suggestions was the implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Coincidentally a similar initiative came from one of our sales agents during the same time. The initial suggestion to adopt an off-the-shelf solution and subsequent customization to our needs was rejected since Piceasoft, as an IT company with many competent software developers, is able to develop a light CRM solution in-house.

My primary task in the company is customer support, but I am also involved in sales and after-sales processes, invoicing, marketing, and content creation, which makes it easier for me to see the areas where the processes intersect and where improvements are needed.

1.2 Commissioner

Piceasoft Ltd is an IT company that develops and markets PC/Mac and cloud software solutions for retailers and consumers, as well as provides industry insights and trends. It was established in 2012 by four co-founders, each in charge of their own field of expertise namely business development, software development, customer support, and sales. (Piceasoft 2015.)

Piceasoft product family is presented in Figure 1. It includes the following products and services: PiceaSwitch™, PiceaDiagnostics™, PiceaEraser™, PiceaReport™, PiceaData™, and an online service PhoneSwitcher.com.
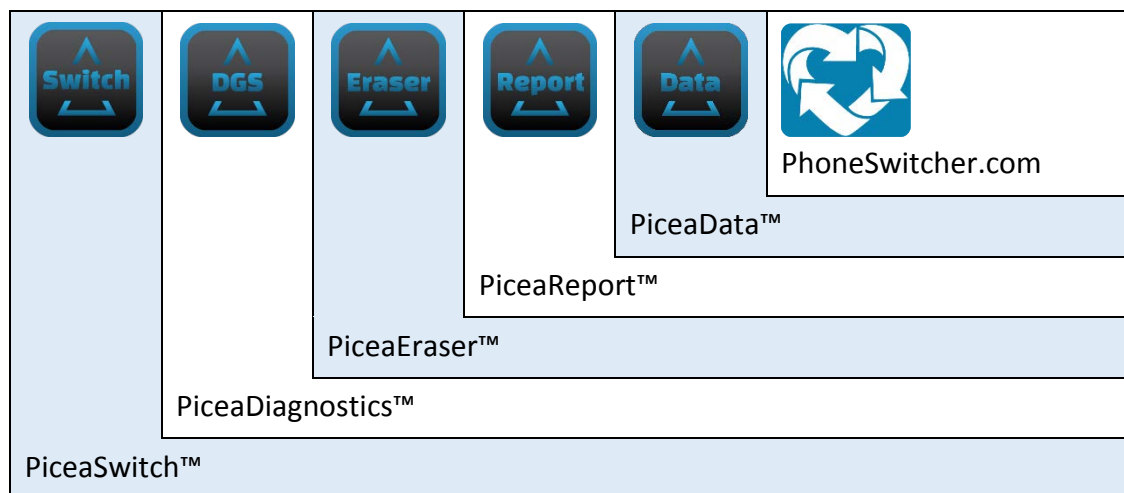
FIGURE 1. Piceasoft product family

PiceaSwitch enables quick and safe content transfer from an old to a new device. It can transfer contacts, calendar entries, messages, bookmarks, photos, videos, music, documents, and apps. PiceaDiagnostics can analyse phones for repair and buyback and save money for No-Fault-Found situations. PiceaEraser is a certified software solution for erasing phone content and subsequent recycling. PiceaReport provides reporting and analytics based on performed operations on the customer and shop levels. PiceaData is a business analytics platform, which provides monthly, quarterly, and yearly industry insights and trends for mobile phone industry. PhoneSwitcher.com is an online solution similar to PiceaSwitch. (Piceasoft 2015.)

1.3   Objectives, Research questions, and Thesis scope

The purpose of the thesis is to create a list of requirements and recommendations for introducing a CRM system to the company. Currently the business processes are not well defined and they need to be mapped and modelled first. Based on the business process models, my goal is to point out the processes, which would be covered by the CRM solution.

The main research question is:

1. What are Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution?

Sub research questions are:

1. What is CRM?

2. How to evaluate and select software solutions for a company?

3. How to incorporate Customer support to a CRM solution?

The scope of the thesis is to collect suggestions for an in-house CRM solution development, model business processes, and formulate requirements for a software development project. The actual software development and implementation are out of the thesis scope.

1.4   Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the thesis, more specifically an action research. Data collection method for the research was a semi-structured reflective interview. Action research has been selected to get acquainted with the working processes in the company. Daily participation in company operations and interaction with co-workers allowed for proper assessment of the situation. Through constant interactions the working processes were assessed and in a later stage modelled.

Prior to the interviews the relevant literature from the fields of business process modelling and CRM was studied. Also several off-the-shelf CRM solutions were compared. Based on the findings the interview topics were selected, and under each topic a set of questions was formulated in order to facilitate answering the research questions.

1.5 Thesis structure

There is a clear need for organizing the information flow in the company. Figure 2 shows the thesis progress from the need, through the literature review and planned interviews to the final list of recommendations.

The thesis begins with an Introduction where the thesis background is outlined; chapter also includes company introduction, objectives and a list of research questions, as well as a concise description of methodology and scope. The theoretical framework (chapters 2 and 3) includes a literature review from the process modelling and CRM fields. In chapter 4 the most popular CRM cloud software solutions for small and medium enterprises are described and their main features are summarized.

In the fifth chapter the research methodology is described. The sixth chapter includes the analysis and research results. The interviews are summarised and analysed, CRM software solutions are evaluated, and one high-level business process model is shown. The chapter ends with a results synthesis based on a combination of research findings. It offers a critical evaluation of the results, based on a comparison between the literature sources and employees' opinions expressed in the interviews.

The seventh chapter outlines key recommendations along with the suggested strategy that will be presented to Piceasoft core team, responsible for the CRM solution implementation. In the last chapter fulfilment of objectives, thesis reliability, and further research plans are discussed.
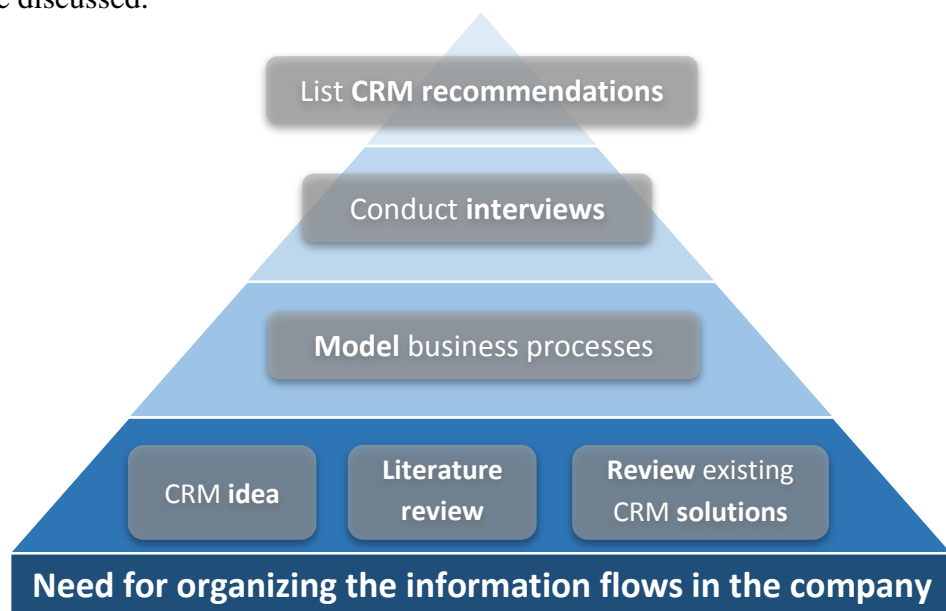
FIGURE 2. The thesis process

2   BUSINESS PROCESS MODELLING

Before CRM can be implemented, the company's business processes need to be mapped and modelled. In this chapter, the business process modelling will be introduced. In order to show a bigger picture General Systems Theory (GST) is explained and Systems engineering, a practical approach to GST is presented. The focus is then narrowed down to company processes, mapping, and modelling.

2.1   From general system theory to a system

Boulding (1956) defines GST as an assembly of system studies and thus encompassing many disciplines. He points out that those branches of science are becoming more and more specialized and consequently isolated from each other due to specific jargon being understood only by researchers from those specific fields. As a solution he proposes building theoretical models that would draw parallels and bring the disciplines back together through similar patterns occurring in specific fields of studies. In his article he also explores the interaction of the system with its environment and forming a relationship with it, while at the same time seeking equilibrium, internally as well as with its surroundings.

A more practical approach to GST is Systems engineering. A system is defined as an entity made of two or more parts, which interact with each other in an organized way and produce results that would not be obtainable by the parts alone. A system is an entity separated from the surrounding environment. (NASA… 1995, 3; NASA… 2007, 3; Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 3.)

We need to look at the system as an entity, because only then we can understand its functionality. This approach is called a holistic view. An opposite view is referred to as elementarism, where we treat the entity as a sum of its elements. (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 3.) System engineering refers to development of a functional system that meets set requirements. It is based on a holistic approach. (NASA… 2007, 21.)

Figure 3 shows system elements in a simplified way. A function or transformation (1) requires input (2) and produces output (3). Other elements of the system are sequence (4) and work accessories (5). A system as an entity is separated from the environment (6). When talking about business processes the systems include human beings (7), but from pure systems' point of view the human presence is not necessary. (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 6.)
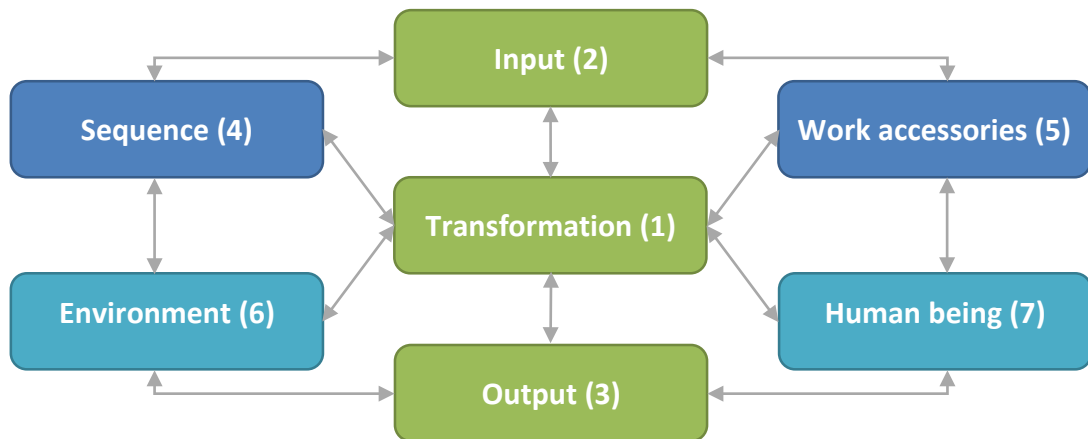
FIGURE 3. System elements (Adapted from Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 6)

2.2 A company is a system of interconnected processes

From the point of view of GST, an organization is an open and dynamic system connected to its environment through inputs, outputs, and various interactions (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 8). From the point of view of process mapping it is important not to analyse the organization from its structural perspective, but rather treat it as a blend of interconnected processes (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 14).

Business processes are defined as a set of logically related activities performed by people in the organization, executed in a sequence, and set up to achieve an organization goal. This activity requires input that is changed during the process. An output has an added value. (Business process 2015; Halseth 2010.)

A process map is a graphical presentation of business processes. It connects the inputs and steps in the processes. The map offers an overview and it thus encourages process optimization. (Halseth 2010.)

Each business process may be divided into sub-processes, phases, tasks, and operations. Indispensable parts of each process are human resources and their competences (e.g. knowledge, abilities, and skills), materials and energy, as well as information (e.g. plans, contracts, invoices etc.). (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 27.)

Figure 4 shows business process types: Basic transformation process (input is transformed to output), Support processes (e.g. R&D, Planning, Maintenance), and Management processes (e.g. Human Resources Management) (Types of Processes 2011).

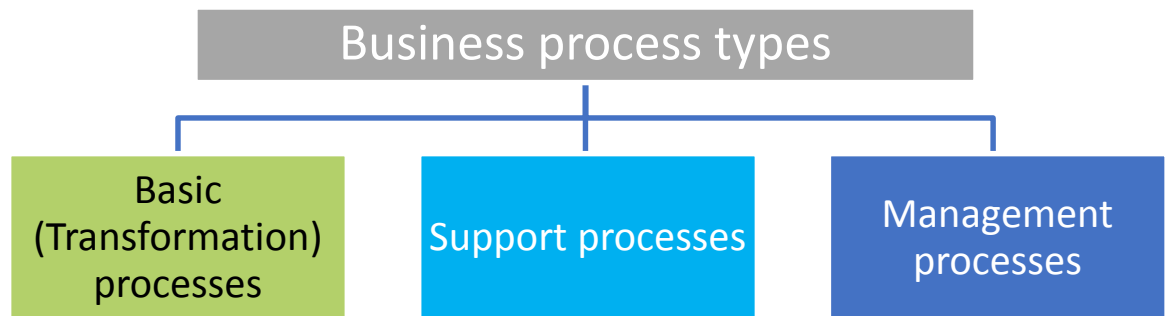FIGURE 4. Business process types (Adapted from Types of Processes… 2011)

In Figure 5 the above mentioned business process types are depicted in more details. The Basic (Transformation) process is the main process surrounded by Support processes. An organization becomes fully functional when the Management processes are introduced.
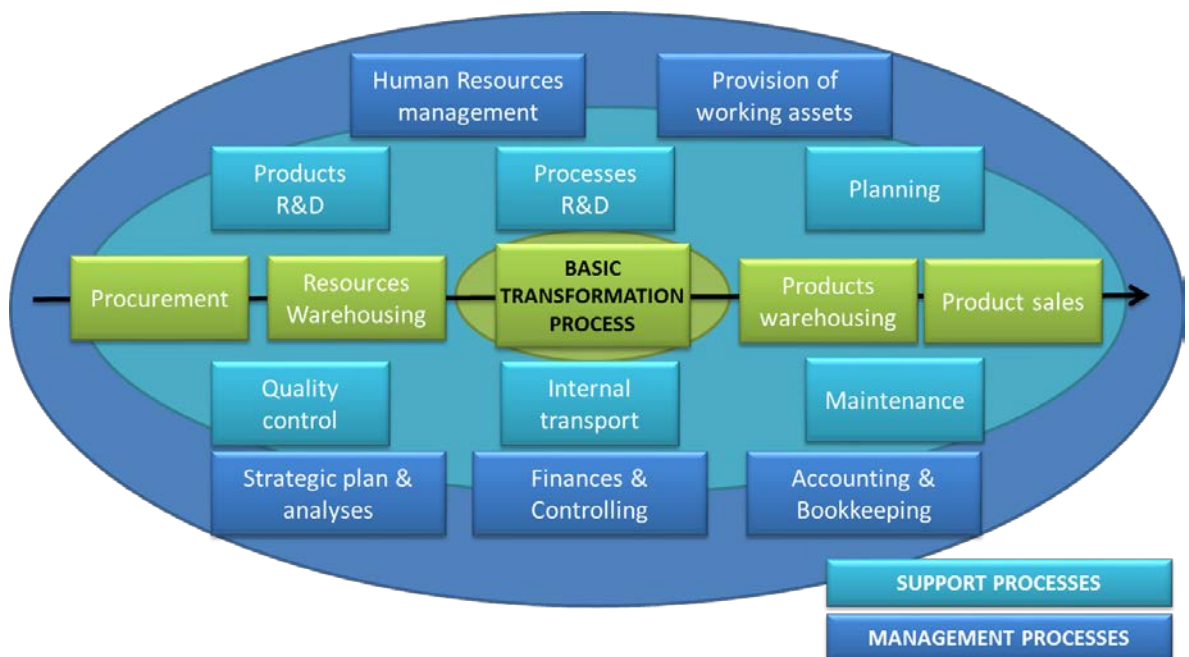

FIGURE 5. Business process scheme (Adapted from Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 31)

2.3   Business Process Modelling

Business process description can be very complex, especially if all processes (which may include sub-processes etc.) in an organization are described. In order to get an overview and a thorough understanding business models are created. Business process modelling can be used to describe existing processes and also in planning the future processes before they are implemented. (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 35.)

Modelling is defined as conceptualization, making, and using a model. A model on the other hand can be defined as a copy of an original that is replicated with a purpose of studying and testing without jeopardizing an original. Models enable better presentation, definition, and consequently understanding of the studied process. (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 35.)

2.3.1   Modelling techniques and tools

A central feature of Business Process Modelling (BPM) is a flow diagram, depicting the business process workflow as a sequence of activities. Additionally it can show events, actions, and connections from the start to the end of the process. The 'language' of the diagrams used for BPM is referred to as "Notation". (Business Process Modelling 2015.)

Business Process Modelling and Notation (BPMN) is a specification developed and maintained by the Object Management Group. The specification for modelling tools requires that they are understandable to all users from analysts and developers to business people (Business Process Model… 2011, 1). Four essential characteristics of BPMN tools are depicted in Figure 6. A BPMN tool must be easy to learn and use, it must enable analyses and simulations, it must enable reports creation, and it must be compatible with the related tools.

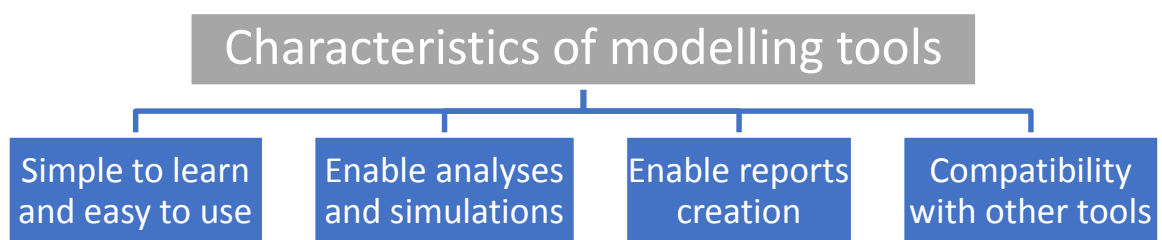| Characteristics of modelling tools			
Simple to learn and easy to use	Enable analyses and simulations	Enable reports creation	Compatibility with other tools

FIGURE 6. Characteristics of modelling tools
(Adapted from Business Process Model… 2011, 1; Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 41)

The tool used for creating the models was Visual Paradigm, version 12.2. The main characteristics of BPMN tools are: Requirements gathering, Software design, Documentation production, and Collaborative modelling as shown in Figure 7.
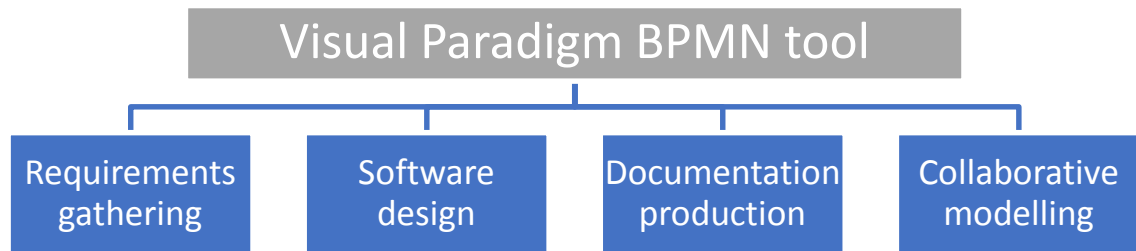
FIGURE 7. Features of the Visual Paradigm BPMN tool
(Adapted from Software Design Tools… 2015).

2.3.2 Documentation

An integral part of any working process is documentation. Documentation in most cases contains a description of the process. Documents can also be a part of the process (tracking and checking the process parameters for analysis). In a modern working environment companies are moving away from using paper documentation towards electronically created and stored documentation. (Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 44.)

Figure 8 shows typical BPMN symbols used in business process models. Each symbol can have many variations depending on its position in the system (e.g. start or end); symbols can also be combined. A typical BPMN chart consists of the following groups of symbols:

a) Flow objects (events, activities, and gateways,

b) Connecting objects (sequence flows, message flows, and associations),

c) Swim-lanes (for organizing process elements in groups), and

d) Artefacts (annotations, groups, and data objects). (BPMN Symbols Explained 2014.)

A pool can contain one or more swim-lanes (or simply lanes). They are used to divide the main company processes like marketing, sales, and logistics. Sub-lanes can be used as well to represent sub-processes. The sequence flow can only connect the elements within the pool. Communication between the pools (e.g. between the processes) is only allowed in the form of message flow. (Weske 2002, 236.)

In the Research results chapter, the symbols below will be used to present typical business process models in Piceasoft Ltd. The models will be used to pinpoint the flows' intersections, which in turn will be used to recommend which processes the CRM software should incorporate.

An event (typically start or end of the process)

Activity

Decision

Sequence flow

Message flow

Delay (waiting)

Sub-process

Organization unit (Department)
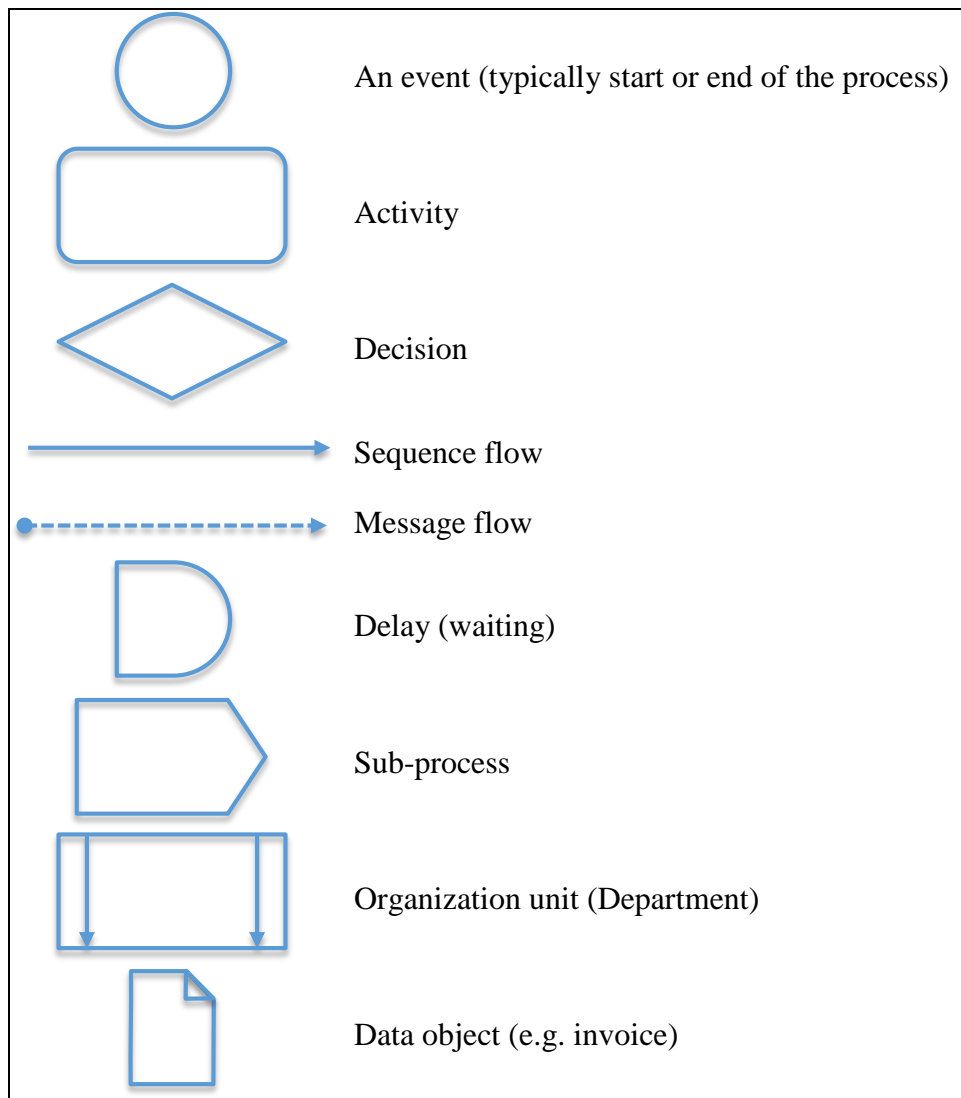
Data object (e.g. invoice)

FIGURE 8. BPMN basic modelling elements – Selection
(Business Process Model… 2011, 29-30; Mihelič & Škafar 2008, 38)

3   CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

The aim of this chapter is to introduce Customer Relationship Management as a process. Before that the terms customer, services, and relationship will be explained and placed in the context of CRM. Later in the chapter the views of CRM implementation are presented and the differences between B2B and B2C processes with regards to CRM are outlined.

3.1   Customer, Services, and Relationship

Peter F. Drucker's quote about role of the business is essential when planning to introduce CRM to an organization: "There is only one valid definition of business purpose: to create a customer." Drucker contradicts the classical definition that the purpose of business is to make profit. With the customer placed as the central point in the equation, rather than only money, Drucker gives the combination of value and profit a new meaning. He proposes a re-evaluation of the classical definition by expanding the view to customers as well. He explains that customers will only buy products if they deem them valuable, which will in turn generate wealth for business owners. (Watson 2002.)

When looking at the economy we can define the term services as a tertiary sector of the economy. When we narrow our focus to the company level and look at what companies offer to their customers, we usually classify the output as either products, services, or a mix of both. (Grönroos 2007, 1.) Both previous views of services are well established and recognized when we view services from the outside perspective and try to zoom-in.

When the vantage point is changed and company's processes become a starting point, aimed towards consumers (zooming-out from the company's perspective), and services within the company are defined, but not in view of a product/service offering, the term service becomes even less tangible. Grönroos (2007, 4) introduces the term Service perspective with which he describes companies' overall orientation towards customers, where services play a core role in building relationships with customers. The company's philosophy turns into serving customers by providing the best customer service.

Figure 9 encompasses three vantage points of the services. Service perspective, which similarly to Drucker's definition of business puts the customer at the focal point, is strategically placed at the very centre of the figure.
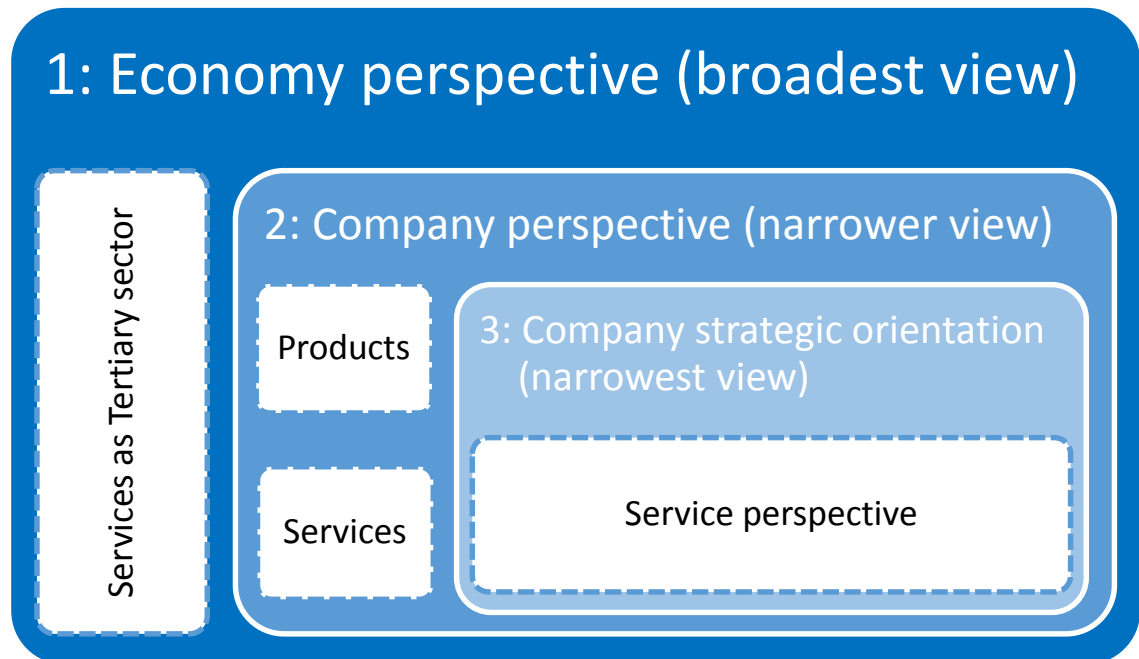
FIGURE 9. Services (Adapted from Grönroos 2007, 4)

Another form or relationship building and maintaining is customer relations. According to American Express Global Customer Service Barometer (2015), American consumers are inclined to spend 9 % more money in shops where customer service is provided. Additionally 81 % of the survey respondents would shop at the same retailer again after a good customer service experience.

The key to improving customer service is communication, both with employees and customers. Customer service, especially in small businesses, can be a real differentiator. One point of emphasis is to listen to what customers want, rather than repeatedly try to communicate the message that nobody pays attention to. (Klein 2007.)

Carefully listening to customers' wishes, fulfilling their needs, and building long-lasting bonds with them create life-long customers. This approach is called relationship marketing. When the above mentioned process is digitalized and upgraded by carefully tracking each purchase, so future marketing messages as well as products and services offered are specifically tailored to people's needs, it is called database marketing. (Solomon 2004, 13.)

According to Dubois (2015) customer retention – forming loyal and returning customers – is a key to success in today's market. A transactional business model, where the emphasis was on selling process and company with its products were in focus, is being replaced by a relationship management model, where the focal point is building firm relationships with customers.

Relationship management is defined as a strategy of continuous engagement between an organization and its external stakeholders. There are two different types of relationship management: a) with customers (customer relationship management) and b) with other businesses (business relationship management). (Relationship Management 2010.)

3.2 CRM defined

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) can be defined as a term covering processes as well as technologies for managing and analysing any interaction from prospects to customers with a company and extracting a maximum value from gathered data with the goal of delivering the most optimal customer service and building relationships, and thus retaining customers and growing sales. (Customer Relationship Management 2007; Ehrens 2013, Kostojohn et. al. 2011, 10.) Lipiäinen (2015) argues that CRM should expand the focus from customers-only to include all stakeholders, allowing them to contribute to a company's success.

When facing competition, companies' processes require constant adaptations, human resources need to be more efficient and more productive, and companies need to follow the fast pace of changing trends to meet customers' demands to deliver the best products or services. Decision making becomes faster. In order to make the right decisions they need to be based on reliable data. (Kostojohn et al. 2011, 1.) Figure 10 shows the essence of Customer Relationship Management.

Customer Relationship Management

Business strategy of increased customer focus

Software tools that support customer focus
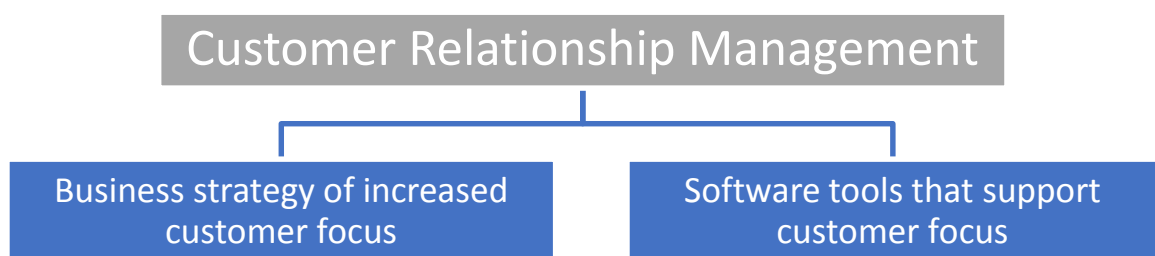
FIGURE 10. Two aspects of CRM (Adapted from Kostojohn et al. 2011, 1)

Succeeding in a competitive ecosystem requires two parallel initiatives: a) an increased focus on customers to provide a better customer experience and b) software tools that manage customer information and store detailed information as well as provide a thorough overview of the market (Kostojohn et al. 2011, 1). Payne and Frow (2005, 168) emphasize strategic and holistic approach to CRM to create a customer value.

Payne and Frow (2005, 169) argue that before the adoption of CRM, the organization's strategic processes need to be identified, and only those processes that intersect each other should be incorporated into the CRM framework.

3.3   CRM goals and purpose

From point of view of technology, CRM consists of a database and processes where customer data and interactions with the company are stored and analysed. The aim of the database is to improve relationships. (Customer Relationship Management 2007.)

In Figure 11 the four pillars of CRM are presented. They are: customer acquisition, retention, extension, and selection (Hughes 2008, 84).

FIGURE 11. Four pillars of CRM (Adapted from Hughes 2008, 84).

Customer acquisition refers to obtaining a customer; customer retention denotes keeping existing customers; customer extension means getting existing customers to buy more of the products offered; customer selection is based on identification of most profitable customers who bring more income and are most profitable for company's business model (Hughes 2008, 84).

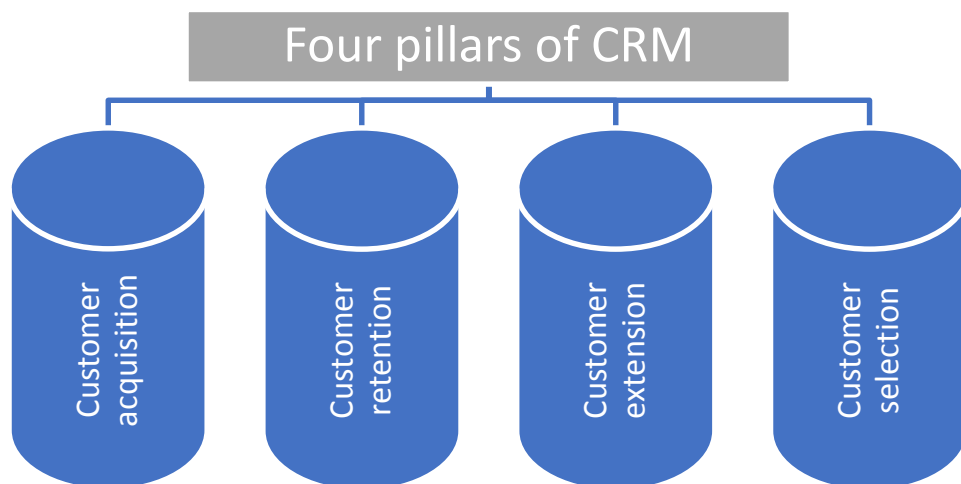An important factor in long-term business relationships is time. A company can learn customers' habits and can more easily offer tailored solutions (Hughes 2008, 83). Swift (2001) defines CRM as an approach to first understand and then influence customer behaviour through tailored and targeted communication with a goal to acquire and retain customers, turning them to loyal and subsequently also profitable customers.

Figure 12 shows the CRM goals. When customers are the centre of company's activity, they need to be first categorized and then proper lines of communication need to be established to convey the right messages. With the feedback gathered companies can use the data to increase sales and satisfaction. (Swift 2001, xviii.)

CRM goals

- How to categorize and address customers
- Benefits of knowing customers
- Use of information to increase sales and satisfaction
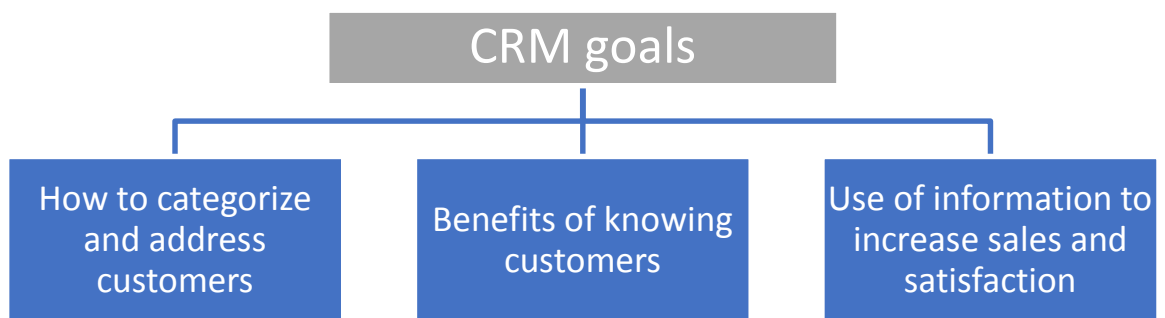
FIGURE 12. CRM goals (Adapted from Swift 2001, xviii)

Customer retention and new customer acquisition are important factors for every company regardless of its size. A CRM tool must in the broadest sense fulfil two functions: a) enhance customer interaction and b) facilitate reporting and data-mining as well as measuring customer satisfaction. The consequence of using the CRM tool is improved understanding of customers' needs and preferences and more customized marketing and sales strategy. (Baumeister 2002, 1.) A more comprehensive view of CRM benefits is shown in Figure 13.

Benefits of CRM

- Lower cost of recruiting customers
- Keep existing customers
- Reduced cost of sale
- Higher customer profitability

FIGURE 13. Benefits of CRM (Adapted from Swift 2001, 28)

3.4 CRM development and implementation

Kumar and Reinartz (2006) list three different sources of CRM. From Figure 14 we can see that CRM software can be developed within a company. These can range from very light tools (Excel sheet with some macros) to comprehensive solutions covering the company's current and future needs. Other two alternatives are a purchased SW solution or nowadays the most popular way of implementing CRM – an outsourced service.
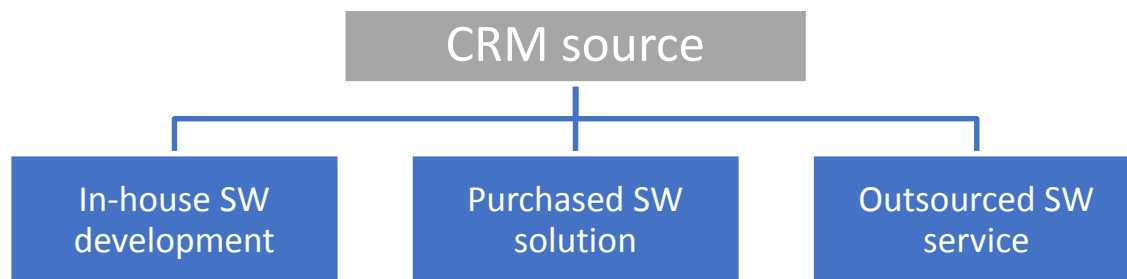
FIGURE 14. Three ways of acquiring a CRM solution
(Adapted from Kumar & Reinartz 2006)

In-house software (SW) development brings the benefit of getting just what a company needs. A SW solution can be also modified according to changes. The main constraint beside the IT infrastructure is time. Experience shows that it can take up to two years to develop and implement a fully functional SW. (Kumar & Reinartz 2006, 25.)

The major advantage of purchased SW is its proven reputation. Usually the implementation comes with extensive vendor support. The 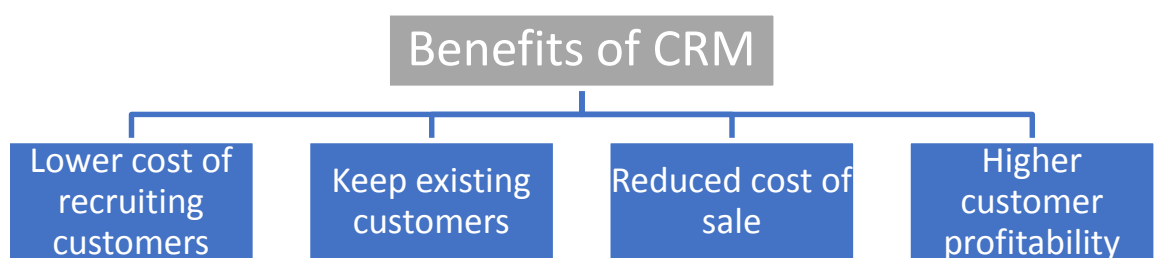major disadvantage is the initial price combined with annual license renewals. The SW customization poses an additional cost. (Kumar & Reinartz 2006, 26.)

An outsourced managed service is the prevalent CRM implementation model. The outsourcing company charges a monthly fee which includes hardware, software, and maintenance. The time from purchase to roll-out is very short. It also comes with significantly lower upfront costs. A major disadvantage is lack of control over the SW solution with regards to company's process changes and CRM SW adaptation to changes. (Kumar & Reinartz 2006, 26.) A cloud-based outsourced managed service is also known as Software as a Service (SaaS). According to Gartner the demand for SaaS continues. Globally share of SaaS accounted to nearly 50 % of the total CRM software solutions revenue in 2014. (Gartner Says… 2015.) In Chapter 4 three of the most popular cloud-based CRM solutions for SMEs will be introduced in more details.

In this chapter, the main CRM focus was the customer. As already stated in subchapter 2.1 when business processes are discussed, people must be included in the equation, not only customers but also employees. Kostojohn (2011, 10) suggests three components of a successful CRM (see Figure 15). Before any attempt to implement a CRM solution, employees need to be well informed and accept the coming changes. The benefits of a well implemented CRM include: improved employee productivity and efficiency, enhanced customer experiences, amplified business insight, and development of a data-driven learning culture.
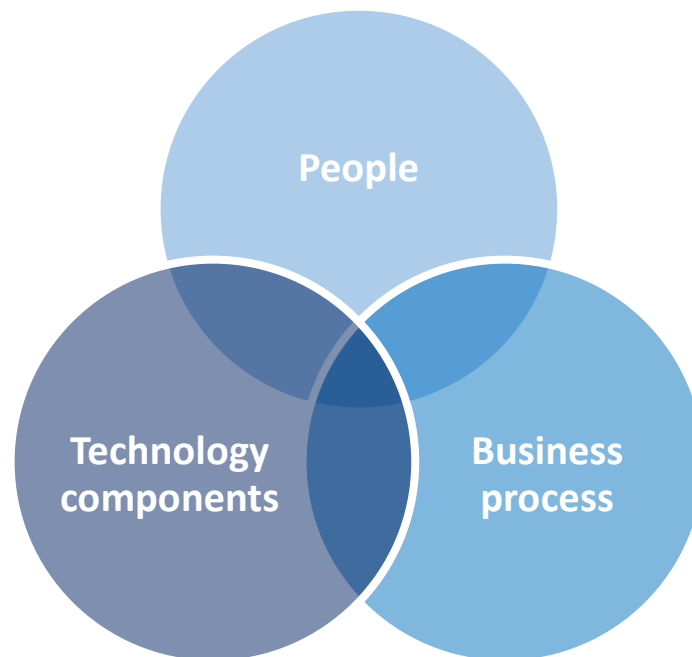
FIGURE 15: Elements of a successful CRM program
(Adapted from Kostojohn et. al. 2011, 10)

3.5   Pitfalls of CRM implementation

The pitfalls of CRM implementation and later usage include lack of employee commitment and engagement in the process, limited views of what CRM is, and what it should do. Some people see it only as a technology (Payne & Frow, 167).

CRM from technology point of view is a simple set of databases connected with the right processes that enhance interaction with customers and improve sales. In order for the tools to work properly and bring results, people using them require a proper training. During the training sessions a positive message needs to be conveyed to employees, who will be using the system, of mutual benefit for all parties involved. When employees have an impression that the only thing the tool does is drawing some charts for higher management and do not see any immediate benefit for them, there is a strong possibility that tools will not be used to the full extent possible or in some cases not at all. (Marks 2013.)

When introducing a CRM system to the company the main hurdle is not the technology implementation but a necessity to change an organizational culture. Seybold (2002) lists common mistakes companies make when a CRM system is being introduced. Some of the mistakes and remedies are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Common mistakes and remedies in CRM implementation
(Adapted from Seybold 2002)

Mistake	Remedy
Process design from inside out	Design the process from outside in
Prioritize customer acquisition	Prioritize customer retention
Start with Sales Force Automation	Start focusing on customer service
Fixed customer database design	Flexible customer database design
Create a modular tool and integrate modules on as needed basis	Integrate modules from the very start of using the CRM

3.6 Differences between CRM for B2C and B2B

According to Swift (2001), each of the four different types of customers companies are dealing with (see Figure 16) require a slightly different approach. A one-size-fits-all approach is not a recommended course of action. In the further text only the two first types will be described from the CRM point of view.

Types of customers

| Consumer | B2B | Distributor | Internal customer |
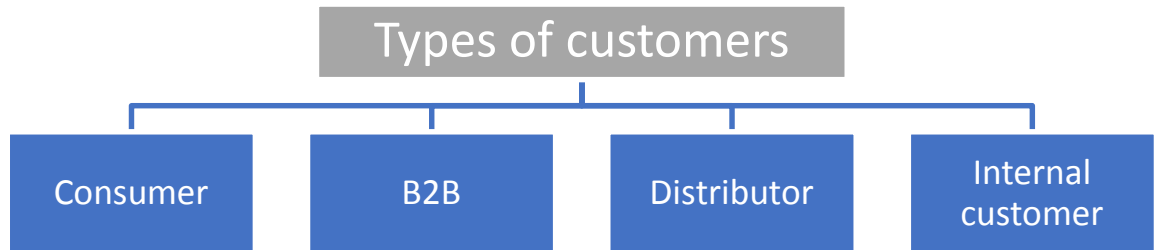
FIGURE 16. Types of customers (Adapted from Swift 2001, 4)

When thinking of implementing CRM to the company processes it is important to differentiate between the types of customers, meaning consumers (B2C) or businesses (B2B). What both groups have in common is their goal – to buy a product or service. The differences arise from their needs and motivations. Figure 17 shows the priorities of a CRM solution and the Sales personnel when dealing with consumers. Consumers are typically individuals or families who are looking for a product or service to satisfy an immediate need in their life, the decision-making process is relatively short and their budget is relatively smaller. (Young 2014.)

CRM in B2C market

| Leads ranking | Quick response | Address motivation | Establish metrics |
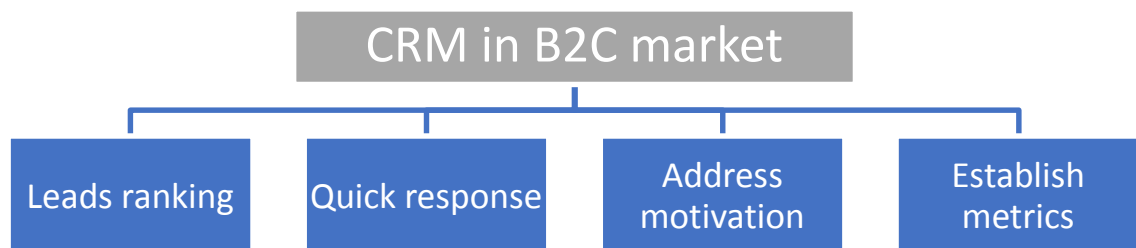
FIGURE 17. CRM priorities in B2C market (Adapted from Young 2014)

Due to the sheer number of leads, it is important to rank them and adjust the approach based on the most promising ones. Time is of the essence as the decision making time is often short. Customer service needs to establish whether a purchase is impulsive or a result of a deliberate decision-making process. Metrics are important when dealing with

large numbers of customers. In B2C sales it is possible and even recommended to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. The reliability of metrics will be higher, if all customers are classified following the same principles. (Young 2014.)

In B2B sales, the contacts need to be nurtured as the buying process is much longer compared to B2C sales. Also budgets are much bigger, and the final product/service can be customized to some extent. As the number of decision makers increases there is a clear purpose of finding equilibrium between their needs and wants. (Young 2014.)

Figure 18 shows the main characteristics of a CRM solution and sales organization priorities when dealing with business customers.
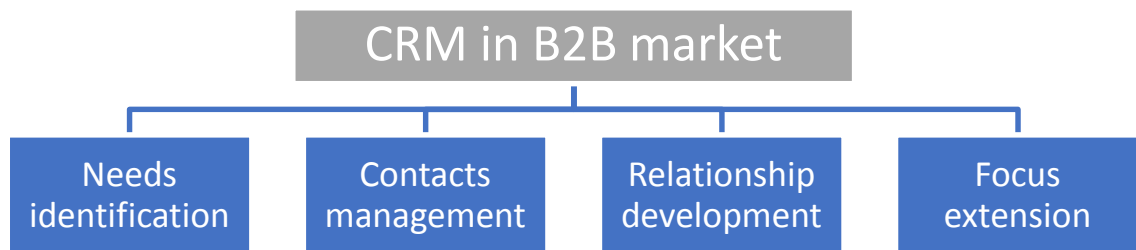
FIGURE 18. CRM priorities in B2B market (Adapted from Young 2014)

In B2B sales, it is most important to find out what is needed to satisfy each of the decision makers. It is also important to keep their contact and other details in one place. It is known that an important factor in a sales process is establishing a relationship; therefore a personalized customer service is implied. Since in most cases B2B transactions are not only one-off deals but long-term relationships, it is important to groom the partnership and make it a long-term orientation. (Young 2014.)

3.7   CRM metrics

Kumar and Reinartz (2006, 90–91) define two different types of metrics, traditional market metrics and customer-based metrics. Traditional market metrics are more general and usually cover a geographic region. Two examples are Market share and Sales growth. Customer-based metrics offer an insight to the customer level by measuring customer

value. Examples of the latter include Acquisition rate, Acquisition cost, Retention rate, Survival rate, and Win-back rate.

An important part of any CRM tool is a dashboard. It offers its users real time performance metrics. The main benefit of a well-designed and well-integrated dashboard is that it collects data from different tools and presents it in a visually friendly way, so the users are informed about the current status of defined parameters. (Lavinsky 2013.)

Dashboards have two main purposes: an overview to company's operations and performance as well as business intelligence. The purposes for which dashboards are used determine which dashboard type will be selected. Operational or sometimes referred to as Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboards show the status of the followed parameters in real time, indicating if targets are achieved and how close to set goals the organization is. Analytical dashboards show the progress of achieving set goals based on a combination of historical data and operational parameters. (Wise Undated.)

In Piceasoft the company hierarchy is fairly flat, but still three distinct levels can be identified (see subchapter 5.3.4, Figure 32). For each of these levels a different type of dashboard is required. Sales agents would benefit the most from the operational type; mid-level management would require a mix of operational and analytical types; while top management would only be interested in a thorough overview and trends thus analytical type would be the most suitable.

The benefits of dashboards are manifold as shown in Figure 19. They range from immediate benefits such as saving time, customer behaviour can be followed and analysed over time, and they help adjust the actions based on the trends (Wise Undated).
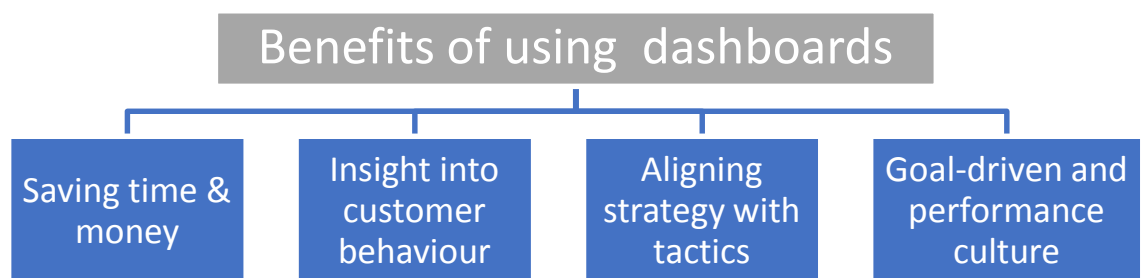

FIGURE 19. Benefits of using dashboards (Adapted from Wise Undated)

4 CRM SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

In this chapter the three CRM software solutions are compared and their common as well as unique features are presented. The aim of the comparison was to get familiar with the software in order to be able to properly lead the subsequent interviews conducted among key employees in the company on one hand, and to be able to suggest most up-to-date key requirements for Piceasoft proprietary CRM solution on the other.

The selection of CRM solutions was based on three articles. The search was performed via Google with the search criteria "CRM for Small and Medium Enterprises". Additionally only sources dating to the year 2015 were used. If the article had more than three suggested solutions only the top three were selected. The selection of articles was a demanding task as most of the articles are sponsored and clearly favour some solutions over others. If the favouritism was evident, the article was excluded. In Table 2 the three sources are listed, each showing the top three recommended CRM solutions. Additionally colour coding was used to highlight, which choice appears in other article(s) as well. The numbers in brackets represent the points: 3 for the first, 2 for the second, and 1 for the third place. The combined scores place Zoho and Insightly on the shared first place with total score of five points each, and Salesforce on the third place with a total score of four points.

TABLE 2. Basis for the CRM solution selection

Source	Top three choices		
Angeles 2015	Zoho (3)	Insightly (2)	Salesforce (1)
Compare CRM Software 2015	Salesforce (3)	HubSpot (2)	Zoho (1)
Waring 2015	Insightly (3)	Nimble (2)	Zoho (1)

All tools allow new potential customers to create two types of access: a free/demo account where only limited features can be evaluated or a full, time-limited account where a complete set of features is at users' disposal. For the purpose of the thesis the latter option was chosen.

The following three subchapters show each of the solutions in more detail. Each subchapter is structured the same way: a short description of the tool and a figure representing the tool structure, followed by the main features. If similar features are a part of the other tool(s) as well, they are only mentioned but not described in details.

4.1 Salesforce

Salesforce offers two major groups of packages, one for SMEs and another for large companies. The latter one is further divided into several pricing models for each of their clouds. The Small Business edition includes only three clouds: Sales, Service, and Marketing each having three to four different pricing models. (Salesforce Pricing… 2015; Small Business Solutions… 2015.)

For the purpose of this evaluation a trial of the Small Business Solution Sales cloud, Enterprise pricing model has been selected. The current price on 8 November 2015 is 135€ per user per month, billed annually (Small Business Solutions… 2015).

The full version of Salesforce includes seven modules called clouds as presented in Figure 20. Each cloud can function as a separate entity and can be subscribed to at any time (Overview demo… 2015).
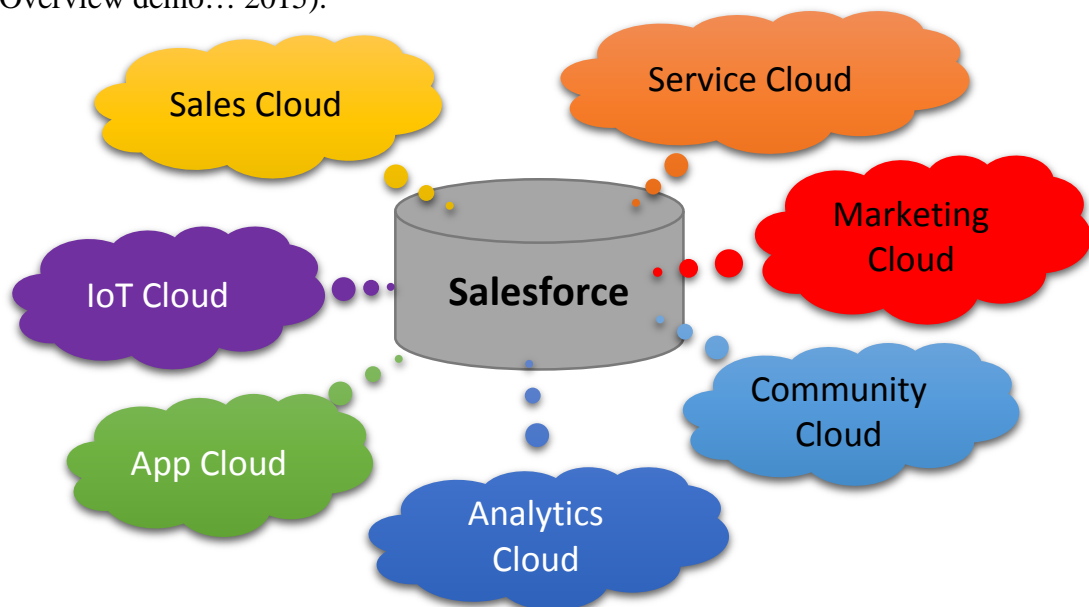
Legend	
Sales	Sales
Service	Customer service
Marketing	Customer specific tracking
Community	Connecting customers, partners, and employees
Analytics	Metrics, trends, analyses
Apps	Running all the system
IoT	Data and automation

FIGURE 20. Elements of Salesforce Cloud CRM solution
(Adapted from Overview demo… 2015)

Immediately after log-in to the system, the user is presented with a comprehensive view shown in Figure 21 with navigation bar on the left side of the screen. The default main view includes Performance chart on the top left side and Account insights underneath. The right side of the screen is populated with tasks and alerts. The view is fully customizable.
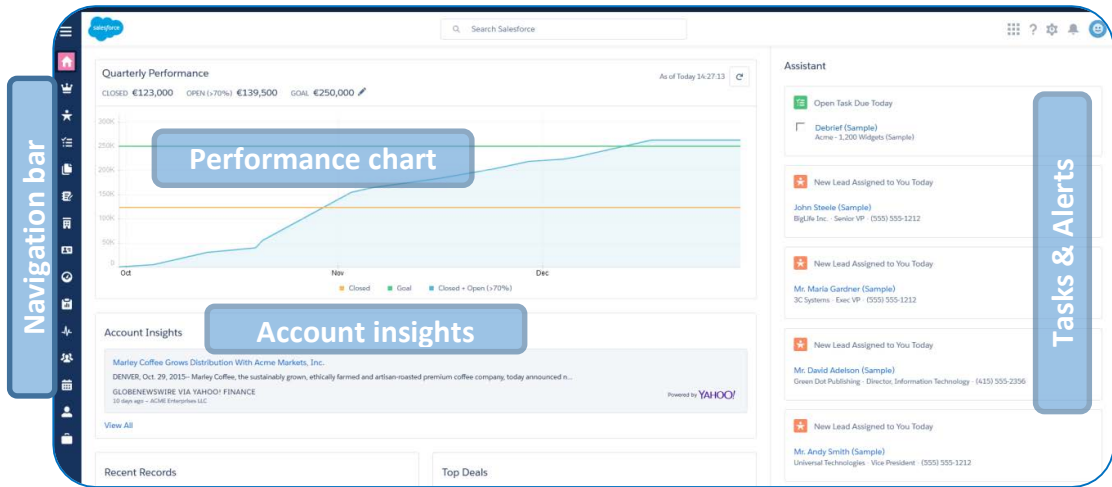
FIGURE 21. Salesforce main view (Test Drive 2015)

In Figure 22 the main elements of the Sales cloud are presented, starting with the Dashboard (a graphical presentation of the current sales status), followed by Accounts, and Opportunities (Test drive 2015).
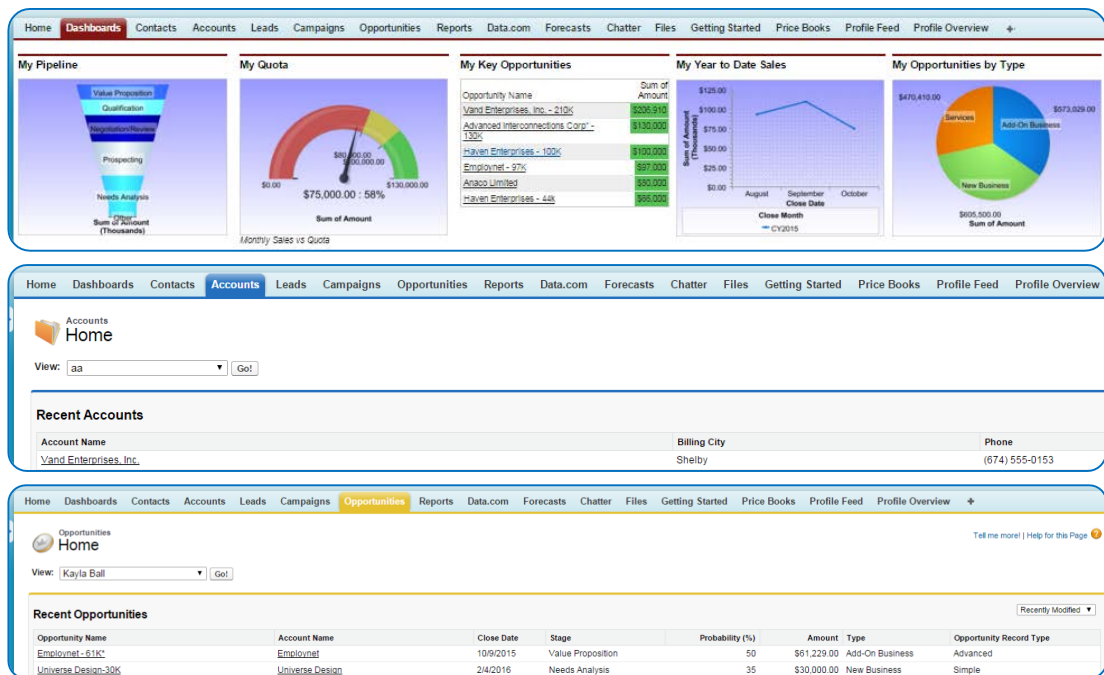
FIGURE 22. Salesforce – Dashboards, Accounts, and Opportunities (Test drive 2015)

The benefits of the more expensive version (Enterprise) are the following elements: Campaigns, Workflow automation (sending mails and reminders automatically when predefined criteria are fulfilled), and full customization including Apps (Small Business Solutions… 2015). In my opinion the views are simple to understand and intuitive. The learning curve for these elements of the Salesforce CRM is very flat. A lot of time was spent on customizing the view to fit different purposes of the organization.

4.2 Insightly

Insightly is being advertised as a number one CRM for small businesses. It offers five different pricing options: Free account (for up to two users), Basic, Plus, Professional, and Enterprise. (#1 Free CRM… 2015.)

To evaluate the Insightly CRM the Free trial–Professional option was used. After the free trial is finished, it comes with a monthly price tag of 49 US Dollars per user, billed annually. (#1 Free CRM… 2015, Waring 2015.) As advertised, the software can be set-up within a minute from receiving an invitation mail. Usage starts by adding contacts (see Figure 23); the sequence of steps is very intuitive, which makes it a very pleasant first-hand user experience.
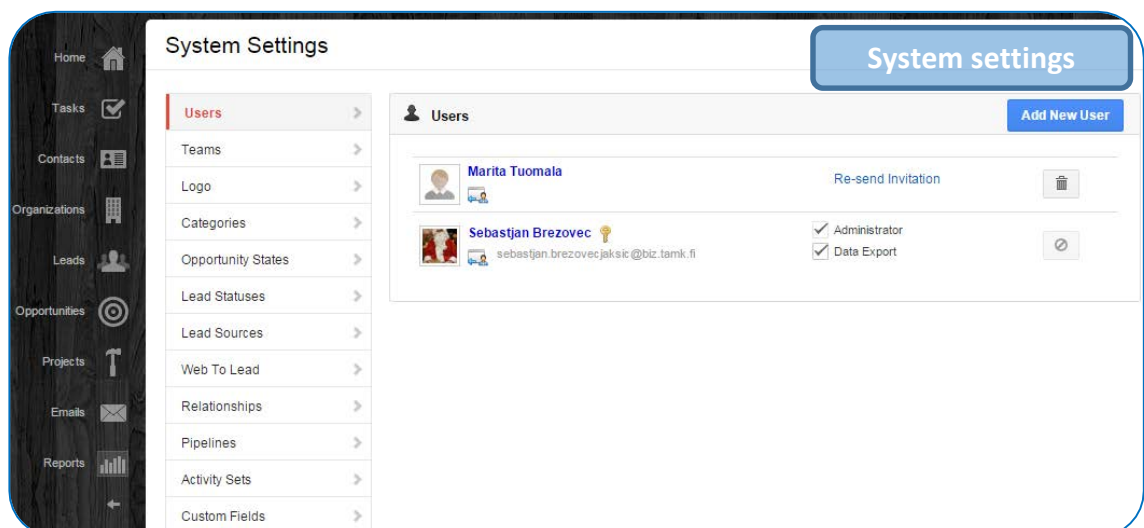
FIGURE 23. Insightly – System Settings (Insightly 2015)

A welcome feature of Insightly CRM is that all pricing plans include project (task) management. Task adding is a very simple operation as only task names are compulsory fields. Later tasks can be edited and attributed with more information. A task list is presented in Figure 24.
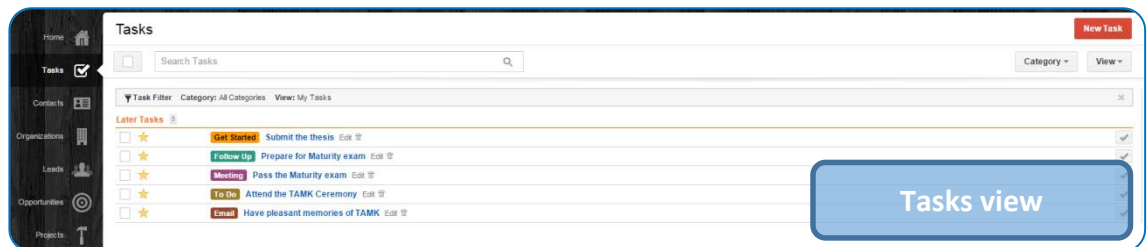
FIGURE 24. Insightly – Tasks view (Insightly 2015)

Insightly as opposed to Salesforce is not structured modularly. Its higher priced options only include enhanced functionality of the same feature (e.g. Free pricing plan includes sending mass emails to ten recipients, while Professional plan's limit is 10.000 emails per day) (Insightly 2015). Professional pricing plan includes a simple but very effective Reporting view where ten different simple report types can be created. The view is presented in the Figure 25.
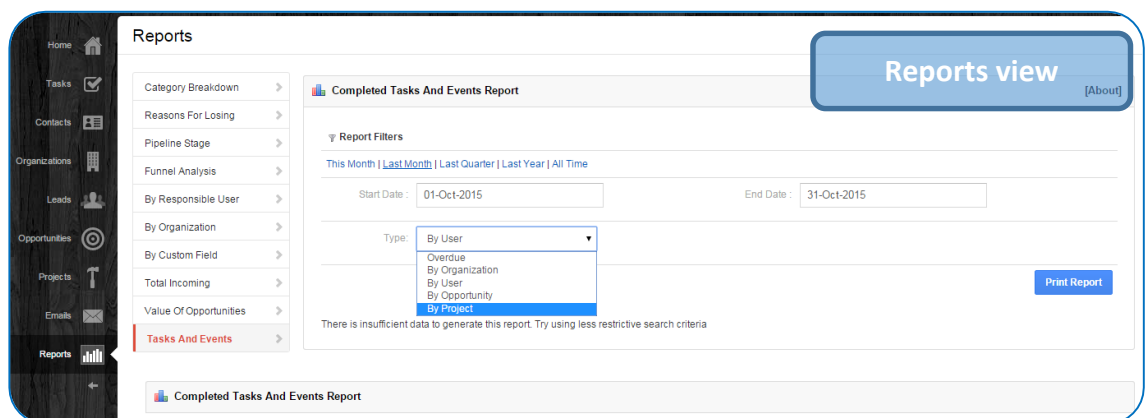
FIGURE 25. Insightly – Reports view (Insightly 2015)

The main downside of the Insightly CRM is its lack of layout-, data entries- and workflow rules customization. The software also misses marketing automation capabilities. (Waring 2015.)

4.3 Zoho CRM

Similar to Insightly and Salesforce Zoho CRM also offers several pricing options: Free (up to ten accounts), Standard, Pro, Enterprise and CRM plus. Zoho's follows Salesforce's example and offers six different modules (see Figure 26): Sales and Marketing, Email and collaboration, Help Desk, Finance, HR, and Business Process. (Zoho CRM… 2015.)

In the further evaluation the Enterprise version will be described. The current price on 8 November 2015 is 35 US Dollars per month, billed annually (Zoho CRM… 2015).

Like all other similar CRM software it allows Product customization, Workflow management, Security administration, Integration with external tools, as well as full support for Apps to interact with, manage, and control the software on the go. Zoho supports a lot of add-ons, which allows using external tools and integrating their functionality into the CRM solution. (What Is Zoho? 2015.)
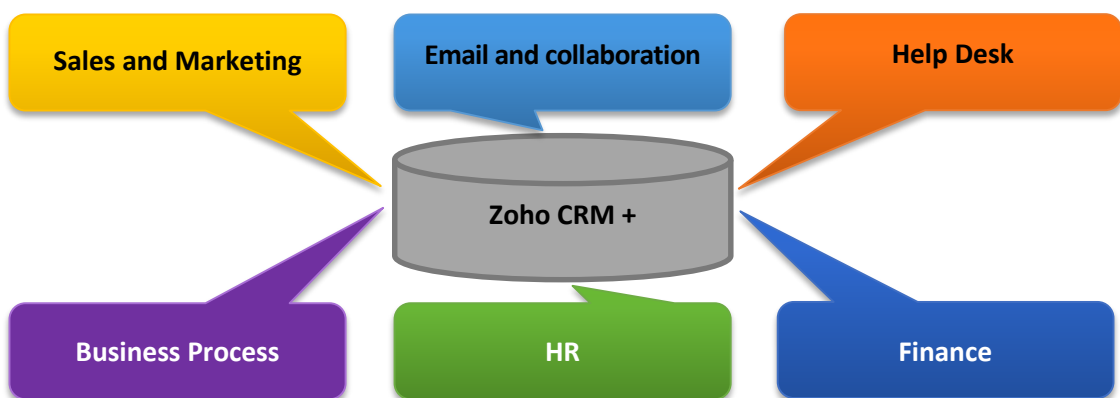
FIGURE 26. Six modules of Zoho CRM (Adapted from Zoho CRM… 2015)

Zoho, similar to Insightly, also has a Project Management capability called Activities, where it is possible to create tasks and events or schedule calls. Figure 27 shows the Welcome page of the Zoho Enterprise version. It welcomes the user to log leads, contacts, accounts, and activities to the system. The next logical steps are Administrator setup and Personalization.

Most of the time invested during the initial period of CRM introduction goes to the tool customization. Users are added and views are adapted to different roles in the organization, which are in turn further tailored to specific user's needs and requirements. It is therefore essential to have a clear strategy in place before a CRM tool is purchased, so no time is lost for repeated and unnecessary work if last minute requirements are added and IT staff would need to reconfigure the whole system.
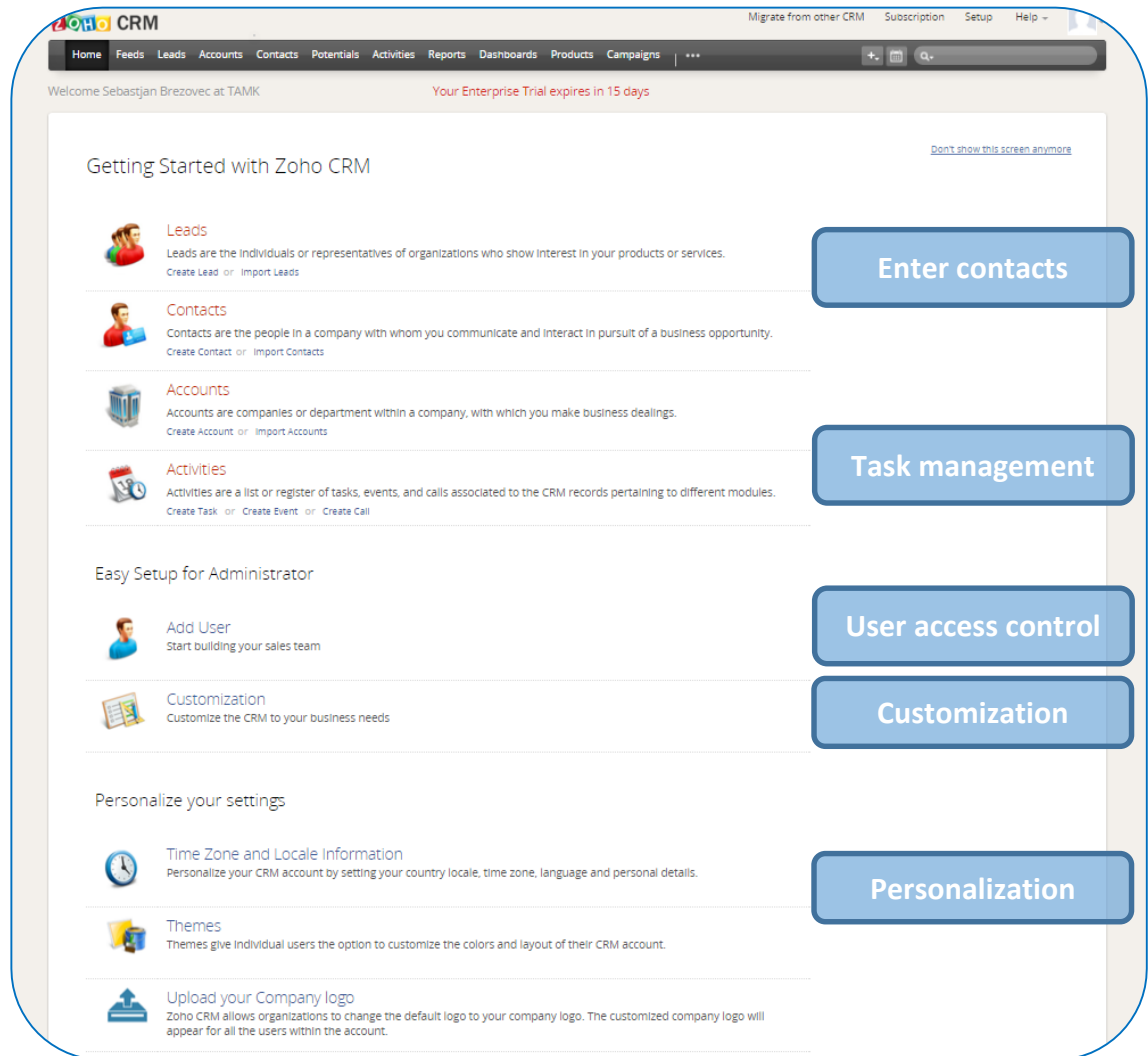
FIGURE 27. Zoho CRM, Enterprise edition – Welcome page (Close More Deals… 2015)

Both Zoho CRM and Sales force solutions include Social CRM (following Social Media and creating leads based on contacts' entries). Both also include Territory Management, which allows launching customized campaigns in different geographical locations. In order for a CRM tool to save a lot of time and prevent information loss, workflow automation is a must. Otherwise the tool becomes just a nicely organized repository for company's data. One aspect of workflow automation is shown in Figure 28. By automating tasks work processes become more efficient and there is less chances for errors as reminders for not completed or not followed-up activity are sent by the system.

Automation is started by creating rules. Next steps include adding a Rule trigger, an action that executes the rule (e.g. stage, date, modified by a certain user, etc.), Rule criteria, and Action (send alerts, assign tasks, update fields, etc.) (Close More Deals… 2015).
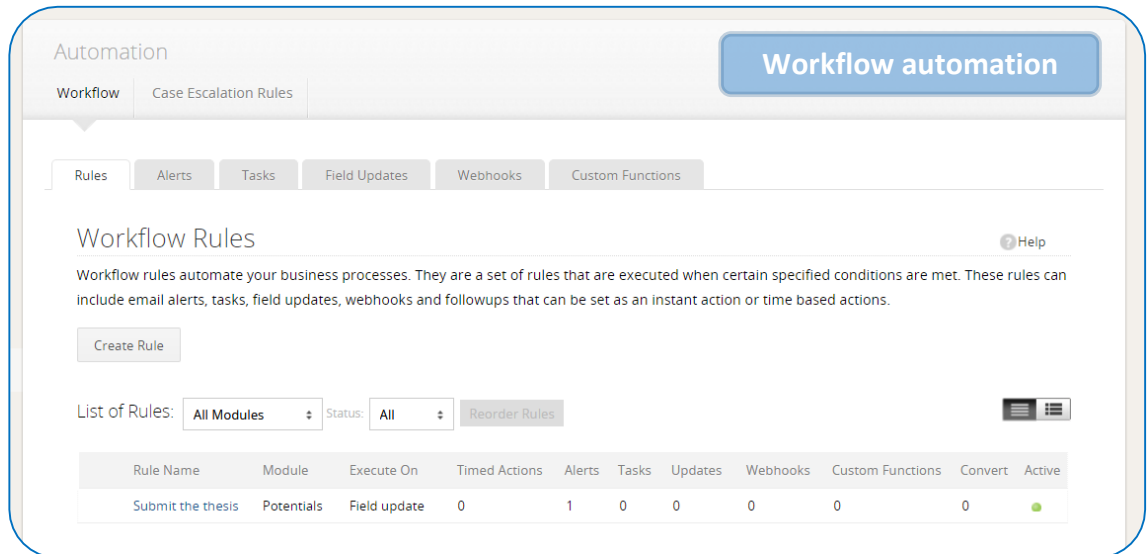
FIGURE 28. Zoho CRM, Enterprise edition–Workflow Automation (Close More Deals…2015)

The views are very clean and inviting to use, without too many unnecessary compulsory fields to fill-in. Only the bare essential information is a must. The Create Product view is shown in Figure 29.
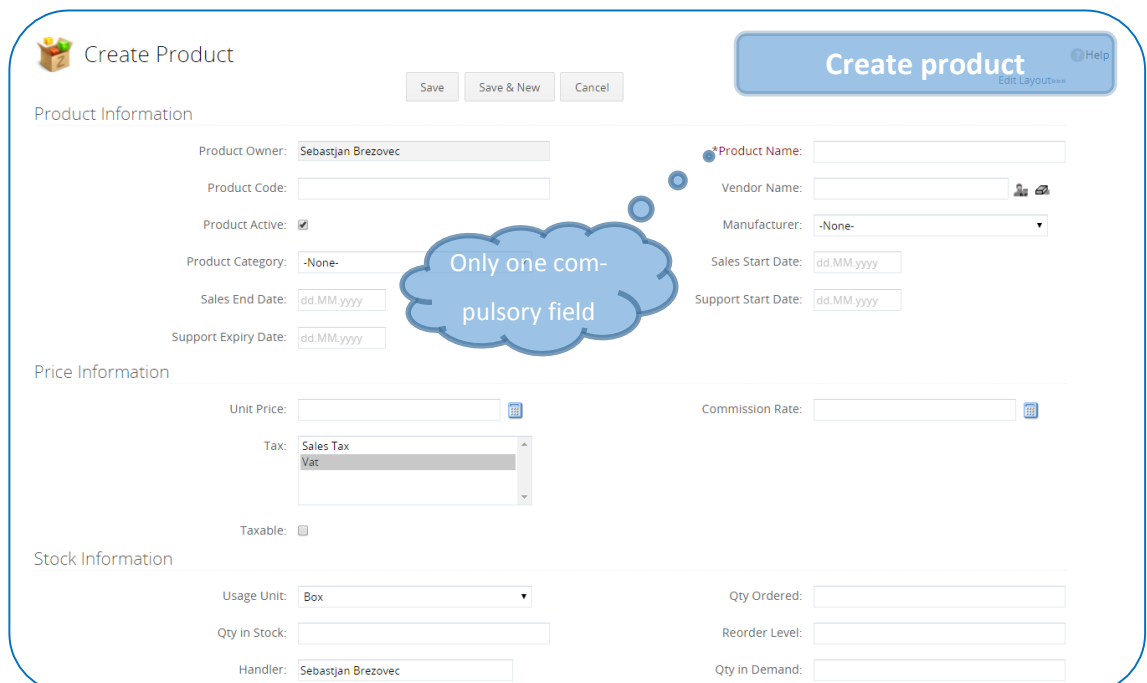
FIGURE 29. Zoho CRM, Enterprise edition – Create Product (Close More Deals… 2015)

5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was selected as the thesis research approach. In this chapter a research method, as well as data collection- and content analysis methods will be described and it will be explained why they were selected. As reflection is such an integral part of qualitative research, the author's personal opinions are added to some of the topics below.

5.1   Qualitative research

The goal of qualitative research is to gain an insight into people's opinions and reasons for their views and beliefs. It provides a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and in some cases facilitates problem solving, idea generation and exposing trends. (Wyse 2015.) Jones (2004) figuratively describes the qualitative research as the richness of vocabulary and expressions that replace strict and unambiguous numbers.

Yin (2010, 7–9) argues that qualitative research is such a broad term that a simple definition cannot be given. Five different features, which comprise qualitative research are shown in Figure 30.
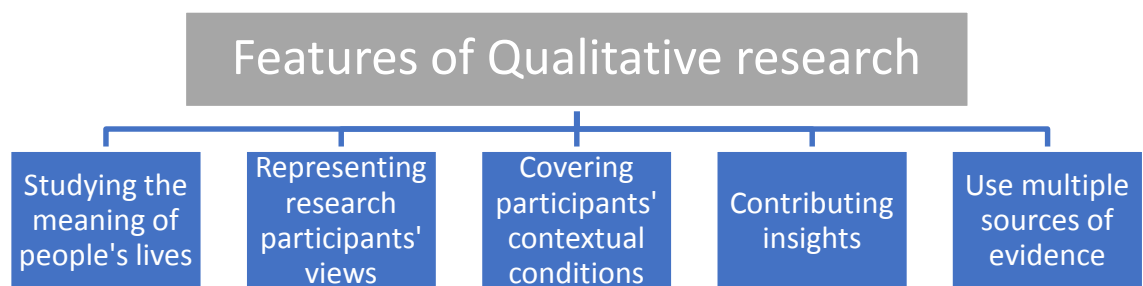
FIGURE 30. Five features of qualitative research (Adapted from Yin 2010, 8-9)

The research conducted for the current thesis applies all Yin's (2010, 7–9) observations. The co-workers in real-life conditions at Piceasoft Ltd were active participants in the study. Through action research their views were obtained and through interviews they contributed insights about the nature of their work and about their requirements for the

outcome of the thesis (CRM solution requirements). Several sources were studied including literature and most popular cloud-based CRM software solutions. Additionally previously mentioned participatory action research and interviews were conducted.

Similar to Yin also Flick (2009, 14) does not provide a thorough definition of the qualitative research and lists the research features. In the author's opinion the list is fairly similar with one distinction. Flick (2009, 14) emphasizes reflexivity of the researcher and the research. He notes that researcher's communication with the participants is a part of collected data. Important parts of the research are researcher's observations and reflections, which also count as data.

5.2   Research method

The method selected was action research. McDonnell and McNiff (2014) define action research as a very practical approach including repetitive improvement cycles that consist of evaluating one's own work, and improving it based on other people's feedback, and changing the working practices as well as the way of thinking. When one deems it of good quality it is then explained to others and approval is sought from them. According to O'Brien (1998) action research is a preferred research method because it is aimed at solving real life problems. Cronholm and Goldkuhl (2003) compare the roles of action researcher and consultants in the business environment. According to them consultants are primarily hired to solve a specific problem, therefore the action is the only outcome of their presence in the company, while the outcomes of action researcher's work are action as well as research.

Another advantage of action research is that the researcher works within the organisation that is being a part of the research, including the employees. Only in this way the working practices and tacit knowledge connected to it can be properly assessed. (McNiff & Whitehead 2001, 41.)

Preceding views are valid if the researcher is treated as an independent entity in the process. How about if the researcher is a company employee? Search for scholar sources describing employee's role as a researcher has yielded no results. Hirvis and Seashore (1982) describe a common setup where a researcher has only limited contacts to the people who might be directly involved in the research. In the beginning phases of the research

the contacts are limited to operational personnel and some members of the upper management, while contact with some employees is not established. It is the researcher's role to find them and establish and initiate a communication with them. (Hirvis & Seashore 1982, 84.) In the author's line of work at Piceasoft such barriers did not exist. The communication bridges were established fairly quickly and exchange of information was smooth and served the purpose of the thesis.

From an educational point of view action research can also contribute to professional growth (McNiff 2002). The results of the action research described in chapter 6 will serve several purposes: to write the thesis (an educational goal), to help the company introduce a CRM tool, and especially the author's professional growth.

Action research has been chosen as one of the methods for a specific reason. McNiff (2002) defines it as open ended research because it only uses an idea as a premise for research. In the present thesis literature review and CRM software solutions comparison were used to develop the interview questions. The interview results were analysed and combined with own reflections on the work process.

5.3   Data collection methods

According to Northern Illinois University (Undated) data collection is defined as a process of collecting information on a research topic in a way that enables answering research questions. Data collection methods, applied in the research, were literature review, CRM software evaluations, semi-structured reflected interview, observation, and reflection. As reflection is so intertwined with the latter two, it is included in both, and not described separately.

5.3.1   Literature review

Secondary data is based on analysis or interpretation of primary sources. Information is presented in a compact form and is above all easily accessible. During the literature review it is important to critically assess consensus in a scientific community about the topics listed and add own opinion on the matter. (Primary, Secondary, and… 2013.)

In the following three subchapters the primary data collection methods will be explained.

5.3.2 CRM software evaluations

Three different CRM cloud software solutions were evaluated (see chapter 4). Secondary data from the literature reviews (see chapters 2 and 3) and the primary data collected from CRM software evaluations served three purposes: a) to get familiar with the topics, b) to be able to form right questions for the subsequent interviews, and c) to be able to reflect on the interview results. Figure 31 shows the process of data collection prior to forming the interview questions and conducting the interviews.
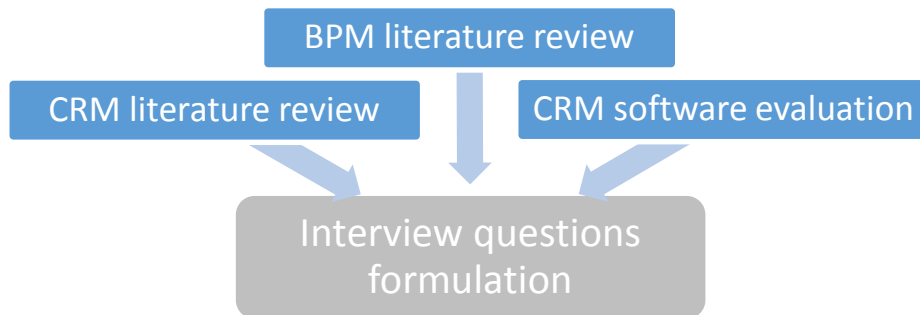
FIGURE 31. Steps preceding the interview questions formulation

5.3.3 Observation

Pawar (2004, 17–18) describes this method simply as impartial collecting of impressions in the studied environment, their description without commenting, including recording of feelings and questions during the process, while not interacting with the people involved; data collected during observation must be interpreted and reconstructed to give it a meaning in the research context.

During the (participatory) action co-workers were observed and notes were taken during the daily routine work, during meetings, and interactions with customers and investors. Rubin and Rubin (2004, 26) define participant observation as daily activity of recording what people do and occasionally also joining the process. Observing is not a one-time activity; it requires many sessions to try to extract working patterns. Another important factor is researcher's participation in the process and later trying to analyse the process excluding own input from the participation. Conversation with participants is a common practice of getting familiar with the people and processes prior to the interviews.

5.3.4 Semi-structured reflective interview

Semi-structured reflective interview is a method that enables a researcher to learn from interviewees about their views on the subject (Davies 2007). This data collection method was chosen to best complement the data gathered during the action research. During the action research the details of the processes were documented, while during the interviews a more in-depth opinion from the participants was obtained. Both rely on reflection.

Semi-structured interviews are usually scheduled. Researcher prepares a list of questions. The list is short because more questions are formed during the interview based on the answers. Researcher is trying to lead the participant towards the planned topic to facilitate answering the research question. (Rubin & Rubin 2004, 31.)

Reflection is an important part of qualitative interviewing. It involves also researcher's personal attitude including his/her views on the research subject. When performing and analysing interviews one must understand the meaning of the respondents' answers and not assume anything. Interpretation of the interview involves reflection on the entire research context. It is very important to reflect on previous knowledge about the topic and combine it with the interview findings. (Hsiung 2010.)

In order to get a wide and relevant array of recommendations, opinions from all hierarchical levels in the company as well as one opinion from outside the company were obtained. Figure 32 shows the interviewee positions in the company structure.
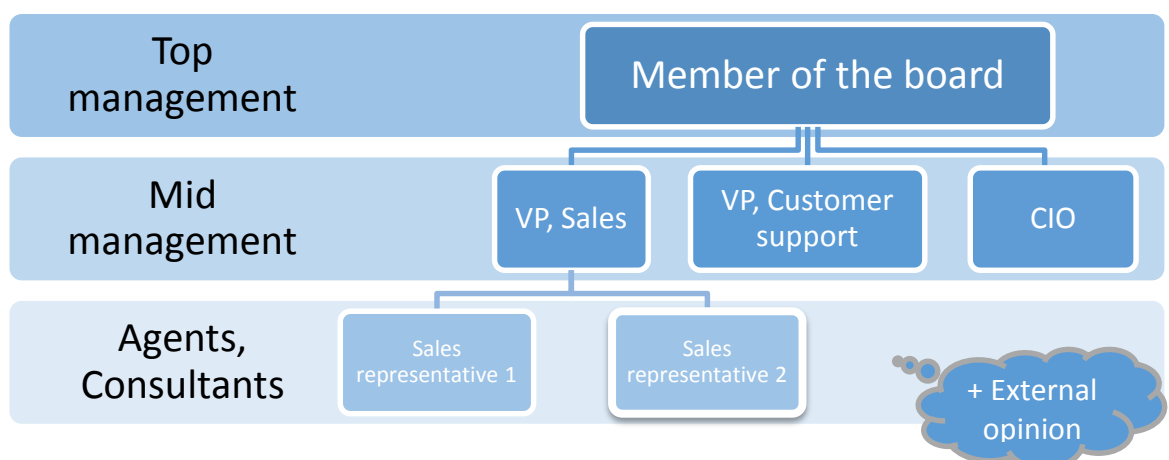
FIGURE 32. Interviewees and their position in the company hierarchy

Sales agents and consultants are the main contact points with existing and potential customers. On the mid management level three people were interviewed. VP, Sales maintains an overview of the total sales process and interacts with software development as well as customer support among others. VP, Customer support is in contact with customers as well as with opportunities involved in trial or pilot testing as well as with sales and software development. CIO is, among others, responsible for software evaluation before it is deployed on the company-wide level. His opinion is crucial in the software introduction. Top management needs a thorough overview of the current status and also trends are an absolute must.

The interviews were conducted in the following way: first the background (thesis) and the need for a CRM solution were presented. The respondents were asked whether the interviews could be recorded. The data collection aid was a mobile phone with an installed Voice Recorder Pro+ app. When consent was given, the recording started. Another data collection aid was a notebook for taking notes – as a backup plan in case of problems with the voice recording. Some interviews were performed face-to-face and some over Skype.

In Table 3 four main topics with corresponding questions are listed. All interviews started with the same question, but depending on the answers different questions may have been added. In order to obtain answers to the research questions participants were led back to the main topics/questions listed.

TABLE 3. Interview topics and questions

Topic		Question
1	**Introduction to CRM**	
	CRM and Purpose of the solution for the company	What does CRM mean to you?
		In your opinion where would Piceasoft profit most if CRM tool would be introduced?
2	**Tool use & Processes improvement**	
	Where the tool would be used?	For which processes would you choose the CRM tool?
		Which processes need most tracking?
3	**Tool design, development, and implementation**	
	Design	Do you have any preferences how the tool would look like (cards – like Trello, tabs – like Excel, other)?
		How important are visual elements to you?
	Relationship between processes and software	Do you think CRM process could cover also other processes (not just Sales)? Which ones?
		Would you like the tool to be seamlessly integrated with other tools like Outlook, Google Drive etc.?
	Implementation timeframe	When would you like to take the solution into use?
4	**Other – Open discussion**	

5.4   Content analysis of the interviews

Rubin and Rubin (2004, 190) define content analysis as a logical next step from data collected during the interviews towards an answer to the research question. The total process is comprised of seven phases. For the purpose of this thesis only the first five will be utilized and further simplified as seen from Figure 33.
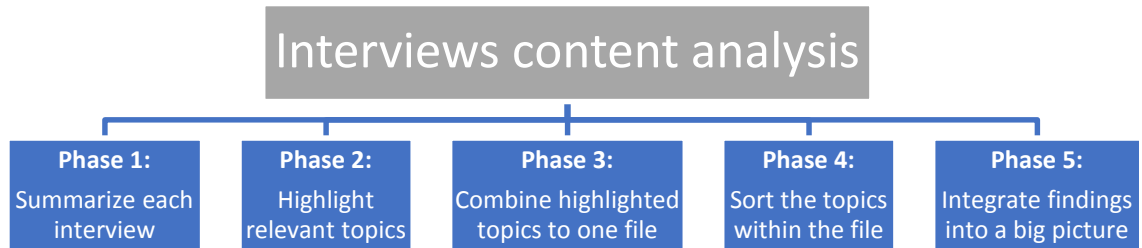
FIGURE 33. Interviews content analysis (Adapted from Rubin & Rubin 2004, 190)

In case the interviews were the only data collection method, it would be feasible to perform the fifth step in Figure 33: "Integrate findings into a big picture" immediately after the fourth step "Sort the topics within the file". For the purpose of the present thesis other data collection methods were applied. Therefore the integration will be performed only after the findings from the other sources are analysed.

6 ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH RESULTS

At the beginning of this chapter the content of the interviews is analysed, and evaluated CRM software solutions are compared. Interview results are combined with literature review findings.

The interview analysis outlined in the subchapter 5.4 is followed. The interviews were first summarized and the relevant content either connected to research questions or generally interesting for the outcome of the thesis was highlighted. In order to assure a smooth text flow and avoid repetitions, the interview summaries and topic highlights (phases 1 and 2) were moved to Appendix 1.

6.1 Combination and Sorting of the highlighted topics

Seven interviews were conducted to be able to thoroughly answer the research questions; six participants are Piceasoft Ltd employees (internal and external), and one doesn't have any affiliation with the company. He was selected because of his familiarity with CRM tools and because his input was instrumental in the CRM tool introduction to his company sales process.

In the third and fourth phase of the analysis the highlighted interview excerpts with at least one *italicised word* were sorted into topics. Within a topic all answers were combined into a coherent and readable text. Subchapters 6.1.1, 6.1.2, and 6.1.3 are based on the findings from the interviews and offer answers to the sub research questions 1, 2, and 3 (see subchapter 1.3).

6.1.1 CRM tool, definition, and purpose

A compiled CRM definition from all interview participants is as follows: CRM is a powerful tool for storing and sharing contacts for the purpose of their identification and for customer relationship information. It must prevent data loss. The purpose of the tool is to

share knowledge, manage the customers, keep all customer activities on track, give information how they are using company's products and services (P&S), how successfully they are doing business with the P&S, and especially how company's P&S help their businesses. From the usability point of view the purpose is to enable any team member to continue from the point where another team member has left off. The tool keeps everyone in the sales team informed of the sales process status. The final goal is to connect sales people into a coherent team and consequently increase sales volumes. The system should also prioritise activities with emphasis on sales, to get as many as possible prospects, more leads. From leads, based on the information available in the system, prioritization would take place with regards to what prospects should be invested in (time, resources) in order to get a deal, to sign an agreement, to get more money.

6.1.2   Software Selection/Development, Evaluation, and Implementation

This subchapter is based on the interview with Piceasoft CIO. Generally all SW evaluations start with reviewing different features and pricing models. An additional criterion for software to be considered for use in the company is its usability. General requirements vary from SW to SW, but some characteristics are common for all the tools: to manage the field from one place, work simplification, and software must be light enough not to cause computer stalling. The tool selection is always based on the current and expected future needs.

For a start-up with limited resources the primary focus is on open-source software (it is free). Open source SW is cheap to use but it requires a lot of configurations before it can be taken into use. The usability is not always the best. With the business growth needs for more comprehensive solutions emerge. The first commercial product introduced was JIRA. It is used for project management, as well as for tracking software development and testing issues. The aim was to get a big picture.

Some of the tools used were developed in-house. Own tool development is based on available resources. It also depends on the type of tool being developed and the required functionality. It is also worth considering what is possible to do by oneself and what needs to be purchased outside the company. Price plays an important role. Another constraint is

time. When the company resources are busy and a solution is required immediately and the reliability must be guaranteed, the cost is not the most important issue.

A Moodle platform was checked for a customer support platform and it seemed a viable option. The impression was very positive. Moodle can be easily integrated to the Piceasoft systems.

6.1.3 Customer support as a part of CRM process

Findings in this subchapter are based on the interview with Piceasoft VP, Customer support. Customer support needs to be handled via some sort of tool. It could be a separate tool, like ZenDesk. Another possibility would be to include it within an existing JIRA database, which is currently used for R&D purposes. JIRA is used by our new potential customer and they have requested partial access to our support systems. The third possibility would be having own dedicated customer support tool based on an open-source Moodle platform or as a module in a new CRM solution.

From the current support processes point of view the new tool should include the following features: it should have a possibility for integration with other tools (a tool for granting license requests, a tool for handling licenses, and a database for tracking open issues). Another important aspect would be user and country specific access.

6.1.4 Additional interview findings

The interviews were conducted to obtain the employees' opinions about working practices, and to gather their views on the CRM and its introduction to the company. The sub research questions from one to three were answered in the above subchapters (6.1.1, 6.1.2, and 6.1.3). Chapter 7, Recommendations, offers an answer to the main research question. Before answering it, the employees' opinions obtained through interviews are first summarized and then synthesized with the findings from literature reviews and CRM solutions comparison. Number of interview participants is either mentioned at the beginning of the sentences or indicated by a number in square brackets (e.g. [2]) at the end of the sentences.

Where do companies profit most when CRM is introduced?

Answers from four interview participants were combined to answer this question. Companies profit most by getting customers organized and prioritized by logging who has been contacted and by whom, and what has been offered. In addition to that orders' development can be tracked. The tool is useful for tracking leads and promoting them to opportunities – using the pipeline approach. A CRM tool can also include back-office support, where people working in support are adding data to assist customers. Additionally, the speed of reacting to customers' requests and the level of support given could be tracked. The main concern is when the business grows, there should be control of what is kept and where. In case a person who built a contact list leaves the company, all the knowledge is lost; the relationships are not known, the established processes are not known, the information about the stage of the business negotiations is lost. It is important that this information is stored and available for all the relevant people to have access to it.

What other processes could CRM cover?

The common view among all seven participants was that CRM should be used primarily in sales process. The tool can be used for cross-functional alignment [1]. The functions are: a) Communication marketing (for sending newsletters, product launches, press releases), b) for R&D process, c) in product operations, d) in finances (for invoicing), and e) in document management (to check what material has been sent to customers; also to keep all the latest versions of documents in one place, e.g. presentations, offers, templates) [5]. It can be also used in a cross-country setup [2] – sales people from other countries would have access to the tool. There are major differences between the markets in terms of finding the leads, working on the deals, and closing them. The CRM tool, when properly configured, can show the differences and pinpoint the stages that need more work in order to get better results. All these processes must be linked to this system without any bottlenecks [1].

Integration with other tools?

Integration with other tools enhances usability and increases performance. Most CRM tools on the market can be used together with an app on a mobile phone [4]. Client info, if entered into the system is available on the go. Piceasoft is using MailChimp for sending newsletters; this tool could be integrated to track marketing activities with each customer [3]. Email integration would be beneficial, because all customer support requests are currently handled via email [4]. We need to consider the pros and cons. Outlook integration

would require a lot of resources and make the tool slower [1]. We have a website, Linkedin, Twitter, and Facebook accounts. When we introduce a CRM tool all the touchpoints need to be re-evaluated [1].

Do you have any previous experience with CRM tools?

Microsoft Dynamics was not a positive experience [1]. The tool was very heavy and not flexible. All changes required additional configuration by external IT experts – the users were not able to do the modifications by themselves. Microsoft Dynamics CRM has a neat feature of tracking all email conversations [1]. There is a possibility to mark each message separately if it should be stored in the database. This is useful when sending contracts. In this way all people involved will see the email. Status upgrade (e.g. from lead to opportunity) was very difficult, it was not intuitive or logical. Users needed to perform many steps to upgrade a lead.

Another CRM tool (based on MS Dynamics) was used at Ilves Hockey [1]. Customization was done well but it was not used efficiently enough. The tool was generally good but only for certain areas, e.g. for boxes booking in the arena during the matches. Other elements were poorly integrated.

Salesforce has proven to be too massive and not suitable for a small company [1]. It has a lot of useful features, but for a start-up phase, when the company entered the market, it was simply overwhelming. PipeDrive has been in use for a year and it was well accepted. It is quick to use and easy to process.

Strategy and implementation

One interview respondent has participated in CRM tool introduction during his previous employment. First the features of the tool were introduced. The process included initial training. Then requirements were collected (features, number of users). According to second interviewee, who has been involved in the CRM tool introduction, processes need to be defined first, followed by a clearly formed strategy. People need to be involved in the process from the very start and must start using the tool when it is put in place. Implementation should be gradual, step by step. In Piceasoft case [1] the first step should be customer information. In this category two things are most important: current customers and most important prospects. Also requirements for metrics for these two categories need to be defined. Additionally, customer retention is at the top of the list of priorities.

The question is at which point in time it makes sense to implement a tool for the whole company? In one participant's company many people have access to the tool but they are not using it. Although CRM is mostly used by sales people, it is an opportunity if everyone is on board. Motivation of the users is really important. It should be most user-friendly to the people who enter the data.

Before the implementation phase short-term and long-term benefits need to be equally presented to the management [1]. Short-term or immediate benefits in Piceasoft case could be shortening invoices processing time.

Implementation timeframe

Five participants answered the question about the timeframe. All of them would like to have first modules introduced as early as 2016. It might not be realistic, but this would be an ideal point, since it's a new fiscal year. The first module should be contact management [4]. This is the very first need. UI in the contact management module: contact page with all the contact info could have calendar integration with all activities scheduled [2]. In this way communication would be enhanced. At the start not everything should be final, only small steps need to be taken: e.g. list of customers; for major customers account managers need to be appointed; this also allows prioritizing. For potentials with whom we are not doing business yet, we do not need key accounts but still need to track all activities. Data entering in the tool will take long time [1]. A special consideration needs to be given to methods of importing the existing data.

Automation

One participant shared his experience with his use of Microsoft Dynamics. A welcome thing would be an upgrade from lead to opportunity when a key event occurs, e.g. a test activation key is sent by the Customer support team. When the contract proposal stage is reached, the potential customer becomes visible on "everyone's radar." When the customer uses our software we could automate things for every defined amount of operations to be able to track their activities (this is a clear move from Sales only to Operations module of a CRM tool). In case of inactivity for a prolonged period of time the tool could send a ping to raise an alert. Another participant shared his experience: a report is automatically compiled and sent via email every Sunday evening. The report contains an overview of the sales of the current month, and volumes forecast for the next period. Tracking: if an action point is assigned to someone a person is automatically reminded.

Dashboards

The tool can also serve management via dashboards and report retrieval functionality, instead of asking everyone about the status [3]. The purpose is to get an overview of customers' activities. The tool can generate different types of reports, showing historical data and also forecasting. If all information is available in the tool it requires less additional input from the sales people as the KPIs already show the overall situation and also specific information about each entry (if properly tracked). Decision making can be sped up.

KPIs need to be defined and taken into use along with colour coding [1]. An example of a KPI can be using the Piceasoft applications with a certain type of contract (number of operations with annual or prepaid license). Another example could be the purpose of use (switches, diagnostics, or erasure operations). Also errors could be tracked and analysed (at some point there could be sudden drop in use. We could analyse the data and try to find the root cause for not using the software. It could be a technical fault or we changed the functionality and did not inform the users about the change and they did not know how to use the tools).

With the help of dashboards the tool should allow eliminating not profitable prospects [1]. Also we need to check our current customers and check if there are some that are only consuming our resources. We should not invest in them, or we should try to change an agreement to make them profitable for us. Dashboards show also ratios, which help tracking the customers' profitability. If we were to lose a customer we need to know the reason: either the offer is not compelling enough, or the price is too high, or there are some other reasons. But the main point is that we need to know that a deal is about to get lost. In case of problems with a customer we should know such information well in advance to be able to react. Currently we do not know if we have such cases.

CRM has to be some sort of sales management tool to follow salespeople's activities [1]. We should get their performance data and talk to them about the value they are bringing to the company.

We need to have all customer data visible in one place to help allocating R&D costs, which are currently the biggest costs (close to 80%), to our customers [1]. We also need to know who the most paying customers are (No. 1 priority!). The financial aspect can be

one type of criteria; other types of criteria include also being first in the branch doing a novel type of business.

Requirements, features, design, and usability

A list of requirements, features, and usability requests was compiled based on the participants' wishes and actual experience with different CRM tools.

The two major requirements for the CRM tool in Piceasoft are: light and agile. Functionality will be added as a tool and the company's needs develop. It is not wise to have one tool to cover all company's needs. It is better to have more tools that are light in design, functional, and help people. The tool will be used if it is easy to use; if it gets too complex nobody will use it. The other aspect of light is functionality, which is used infrequently. These elements could be stripped from the list of actions and only keep the absolutely necessary features, which are: entering the data and sharing the knowledge.

There is a concern and an actual business risk that people keep information to themselves and not make it available to others. A list of planned software updates needs to be available (added by an R&D responsible), which could be matched with the salespeople's promises to potential customers. Both parties would be able to add items to the list. This would help all the parties involved in closing the deals.

If a tool is developed in-house there is a risk of having exactly the same kind of tool that already exists on the market. A lot of time and resources would be spent to get a similar tool. There is also concern about external tool integration – would it be possible or not? The only wish is to keep it similar to existing tools.

Communication: in the current ways of working most of the information is kept in the emails. There is a clear need to organize both incoming and outgoing communication. It is stressful to have an overview. There is always a feeling "did I forget something?" Activities or notes in the tools could be tagged (with dates; when the item was added, and when its follow-up date is and who is responsible). Also voice communication logs could be stored in the system.

Prioritization: activities and also important customers are prioritized within the CRM. This helps to differentiate customers. With prioritization in place we could have some

control of our sales agents' work. When a case would be classified as a must they would have to prioritize their work accordingly. Prioritizing might be conflicting with their personal priorities. These need to be sorted out in discussions. One of the values of this system is that it would reveal these conflicts.

Grouping of customers: customers could be grouped, so we would know which customers use certain pricing models. This would allow also easy updates and follow-up, and re-classification (from opportunity back to lead) based on the progress of the sales process.

Usability: CRM is seamlessly integrated to the sales agent's daily routine; it is a part of his life. The CRM tool needs to be usable on the fly. This means it can be used online and offline as well. There is no point in having a tool that only works online. Microsoft CRM looks like Outlook. It is even a part of Outlook, which makes it easy to use, although it is sometimes too complex. Views can be minimized, in order not to lose an overview. The tool needs to be portable. It works on a smartphone, tablet and on a laptop (responsive design: UI must be able to adapt to smaller displays and remain functional).

Graphics and visual elements are not of primary concern. Visual elements should be used to highlight the important things. Example: We would not deliver what we have promised to a customer. We should use some sort of colour coding or some sort of icons. Only by looking at the system information it should be fast to understand what is important concerning our customer's situation and our product operations related to the particular customer. The things that matter simply should not be missed: money, timelines… Different parameters could be colour coded: delivery time, quality, number of customer complaints, sales process takes too long and requires a manager's visit. We could have a colour coding implemented, e.g. for invoicing (green: invoice sent, yellow: invoice needs to be sent soon, red: invoice delayed). As little as possible graphics elements should be used in order to make the tool fast and intuitive to use. Indicators need to be developed, e.g. traffic light system to show types of customers.

Visual user interface: an attractive interface motivates people to interact with the tool. An example was given for PipeDrive. Moving customer through the pipeline (by mimicking the sales cycle): by seeing the customers, it was much easier pulling them over the finish line. When closing the deal a salesperson gets visual feedback. UI must be intuitive and easy to understand.

Document management: the latest versions of the documents could be stored in a dedicated place. Everything connected with customer relations needs to be in the tool: roadmap, pricing, features, advertisements, press releases. The tool should also enable easy sending of materials. Also checks need to be implemented showing what kind of material has been delivered and what is yet to be delivered.

Back-office support requires someone who is organized in the back-office, who keeps all information in order. In one sales agent's opinion sales people are "messy" people who do not necessarily keep things in order. Once per week our sales agent sends selected contacts or leads to the back-office. They enter the data to the CRM tool. The tool pushes the sorted data to his smartphone. The contacts should be distributed to the whole sales team, so that everyone is informed. CRM is tool for sharing information.

6.2   CRM solutions comparison

In this subchapter a summary of the three evaluated CRM solutions will be presented from the vantage point of the anticipated needs of Piceasoft Ltd and available resources for the development of a CRM tool in-house. The data collected from interviews was used as the basis for feature prioritisation. The aim of this evaluation is to select which solution's layout and way of working would suit most the current company's needs for a quick, light, and agile CRM solution.

Twelve categories were selected to thoroughly compare the evaluated solutions. Each category will be briefly explained and a reason for evaluation will be given. The evaluation criteria and results are shown in Table 4.

1. Versatility: Salesforce is by far the most versatile tool for all possible company's needs. Zoho CRM has several modules as well, while Insightly is way too simple for Piceasoft purposes.

2. Pricing: Pricewise Insightly is the cheapest, followed by Zoho CRM, and Salesforce. The Price score was divided by the Versatility score in order to obtain the ratio, which shows how the software solution price is connected to the available features of the tools. The ratio depends on the price, number of features offered, and usability of these features for Piceasoft purposes.

3. Free usage: Zoho CRM offers ten free accounts, Insightly two, and Salesforce none.

4. Intuitive design: In my opinion Zoho CRM has most easy to use and logically arranged features, followed closely by Insightly. Salesforce is too complex. Complexity is closely associated with running costs. If a feature needs to be customized, it would require a lot of additional resources.

5. Customization refers to the level tool to which the tool can be adapted to the company's needs and also takes into account ease of the process. Zoho CRM is most intuitive. Salesforce customization is a tedious process, while Insightly does not offer it.

6. Contacts management: All three tools are easy to use with regards to entering and managing the contacts.

7. Workflow automation: To make workflow automation work in Salesforce a full-time IT expert is required. In Zoho CRM it was fairly simple to setup basic rules. Insightly does not support it.

8. Level of IT support required: This category has been subdivided into two categories: Before implementation and During operations. Salesforce requires a lot of time for initial setup before it can be taken into use. Also a lot trainings would have to be arranged before roll-out. Also expected maintenance costs are considerable. Zoho CRM and Insightly are ready for use immediately after installation and require next to none IT skills to run.

9. Reporting: The range of the reports and ease of customization are the best with Salesforce. Zoho CRM offers some flexibility, while Insightly lags behind the two.

10. Comfort of working with CRM: Both Salesforce and Zoho CRM were comfortable to work with. Insightly had many downtimes or it was sluggish to load.

11. Social CRM integration: all three tools include some Social Media support.

12. Mobile app support: all three tools support working with the tool on the go.

Likert scale has been used for evaluating the categories. Evaluations represent my personal experience and opinions from using the three solutions. The scale ranges from 5 (best, easy to learn), through 4 (very good, fairly easy to learn), 3 (OK, OK to learn), 2 (satisfactory, fairly hard to learn), and 1 (unsatisfactory, hard to learn; or feature not supported).

TABLE 4. CRM software solutions comparison;
(Points: 5 – Best; Easy to learn; 1 – Worst;Hard to learn; Not supported)

	Feature	Salesforce	Insightly	Zoho CRM
1	Versatility	5	2	3
2	Pricing vs. Versatility ratio	1/5 = 0,2	5/2 = 2,5	4/3 = 1,3
3	Free usage	1	2	5
4	Intuitive design	2	3	4
5	Customization	2	1	4
6	Contacts management	5	5	5
7	Workflow automation	3	1	4
8	Level of IT support required			
	Before implementation	1	4	4
	During operations	2	5	4
9	Reporting & Dashboards	5	3	4
10	Comfort of working with CRM	4	2	4
11	Social CRM integration	4	4	4
12	Mobile app support	5	5	5
	TOTAL=	39,2	39,5	51,3

The order is in-line with the interview results. According to Piceasoft CIO, the tool price plays an important role in tool selection. When comparing Salesforce with Insightly in the first category (Versatility) the first one is rated much higher. If we take price into consideration and check the second category (Pricing/Versatility) we would give priority to the cheaper one regardless of the richer functionality of Salesforce, especially since it is not an urgent purchase where price does not play a major role.

Intuitive design plays a major role in the tool's usage. One of the interview participants pointed out that illogical steps lead to errors and by simple design these can be avoided and the process can be sped up. Workflow automation is one of the major expected benefits of a new CRM tool. Automated reminders will be sent for each of the completed stages in the sales pipeline as well as for defined KPIs reached. Reporting and Dashboards will most likely not be implemented in the first stage of the tool's roll-out. They will be deployed only when KPIs are thoroughly thought through. Like all modern CRM tools our tool will have to have mobile app support functionality not only for tracking the progress but also for managing the tool on the go.

6.3 Business process models

Based on the participatory action research and the observations of the working processes several business process models were drawn. As described by Payne and Frow (2005, 169) only those processes that intersect each other should be incorporated into the CRM framework. At this point, I would like to extend this recommendation by including also different functions in the organization as illustrated by Tregear (2013) in Figure 34, who claims that collaboration between different functions and processes across organization creates value.
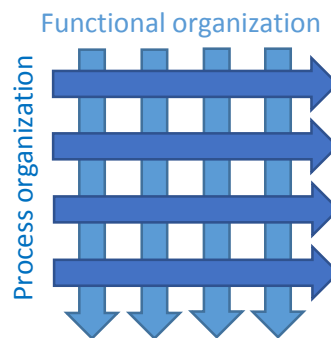
FIGURE 34. Process-centric organisation (Adapted from Tregear 2013)

In this chapter only one high level business process model is shown (see Figure 35). Process specific models are collected in Appendix 2, which due to confidentiality reasons is not a part of the public version of this thesis.
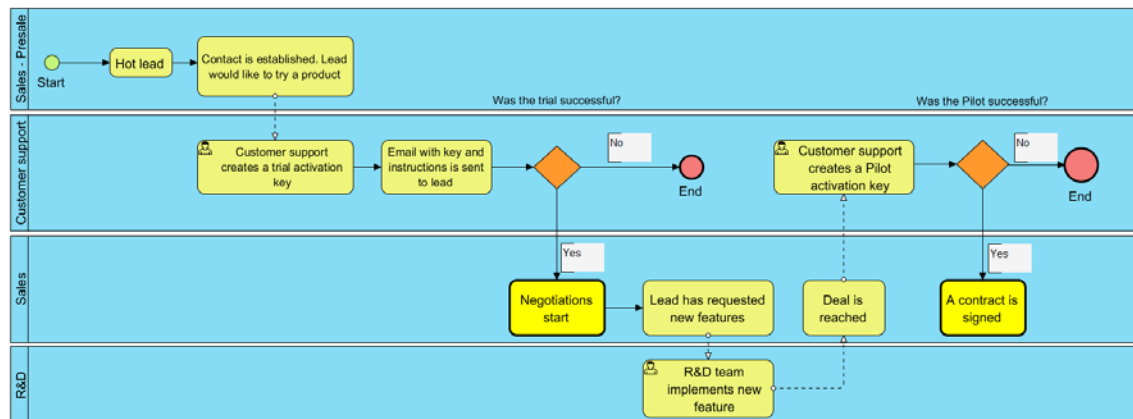
FIGURE 35. High-level business process model

Figure 35 shows the four processes (Pre-sales, Customer support, Sales, and R&D) required to successfully bring an initial contact, through the trial phase, an additional feature inclusion, and the pilot phase to the final signing of a contract. Although the model does not show it, the process does not end there. Customer support offers second tier support for the customer. Also the Post-sales process is actively trying to measure customer satisfaction and include possible cross-sales activities.

6.4   Results synthesis

Five out of the seven interview participants share the view that CRM is a tool. One participant referred to it as a system, which could imply a process or a strategy. Another participant described CRM as sharing and storing information, which also means a continuous process. Viewing CRM as a tool is a limited view compared to Kostojohn et al. (2011, 1), who states that CRM is both a tool and a strategy. When treated as a process it would imply constant improvements; this was not a common view shared among the interview participants. A discussion developed about this finding and a conclusion was drawn that the definition depends on the employees' position in the company. Employees entering the data in the tool see it as a tool. Employees requiring constant updates to develop forecasts see it as a process. On the other hand the CRM definition, compiled from all participants' inputs (see subchapter 6.1.1), is far more comprehensive than any other found in the literature.

The CRM tool was recommended to be used primarily for sales process but other processes were suggested as well, e.g. Marketing, Research and Development (R&D), Finances, Product operations, Customer support, and Document management. This approach indicates a holistic view of the total operations in the company, which is in-line with a definition of a company as a system of interconnected processes. Above list of processes coincides with the argument of Payne and Frow (2005, 169) that CRM is most efficient when processes intersect. The analysis of the interview results have shown that the input from sales, R&D, and customer support is required for customers' relationships to develop to the full extent possible. Additionally, Figure 35 shows the previously mentioned processes leading to a successful signing of a contract.

When CRM tool is used to its full potential, it offers insights to the customers' activity. Frequently mentioned topics during the interviews were customer prioritization and selection. Hughes (2008, 84) lists four pillars of CRM, the last one being customer selection. Currently Piceasoft does not have an instant overview of our most valuable customers. We know which customers are bringing the most income but we do not have a proper cost allocation in place. With the tool we hope to regain more control also of the planning phase. The third pillar of CRM (see Figure 11 in subchapter 3.3) is customer extension. One interview participant has mentioned cross-selling as one of the CRM benefits, which is in-line with the theory.

All three CRM goals (Figure 12, subchapter 3.3) were directly or indirectly mentioned during the interviews: customer categorization, extending knowledge and preferences about customers, and increased sales volumes with existing customers (based on knowledge about their habits and wishes) as well as new customers (based on customer categorization and placing them to the same classes as existing customers – in this way we would know better what to offer them and how to approach them).

During one interview the topic of having a strategy before any attempt of implementing a tool was brought up. In the strategy, ways of achieving long-term goals are outlined. My first recommended step would be to define what CRM is and what benefits it would bring to the company. As mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter the prevalent view of CRM is that it is a tool. If it would be viewed as a process, a different strategy might be created.

Two interview participants have been a part of teams that have introduced CRM systems to their companies. They both suggested that processes need to be defined first, followed by a clearly formed strategy. Also people must be a part of the process from the start and should be encouraged to use the tool when it is put in place. Training sessions must be organized. All these interview findings are completely in-line with Kostojohn's recommendations (Kostojohn et. al. 2011, subchapter 3.4).

In Table 1 (page 23; subchapter 3.5) five common mistakes and their remedies are listed. Four out of five topics have emerged during the interviews, namely that the customer has to be the focus of the tool, customer retention and customer services are top priorities, and to start with a flexible design that can be later upgraded. One topic, namely to start using all modules at once, is not applicable in our case, since Piceasoft does not have resources to develop all modules from the start. Based on the interview results I see no issues that would lead to unsuccessful implementation and later to lack of use of the tool.

Both interviewed Sales agents are using CRM in their line of work. Both have requested that our system should be simple, usable on the go (with mobile devices), and functional in such a way that would become a part of people's daily lives. These are very concrete expectations that must be observed when designing the tool. Both agents' approaches are in line with the views of Payne and Frow (167; subchapter 3.5) who see lack of commitment as one of the main reasons why the CRM tools are not used.

Customer profitability emerged as a top priority for a CRM tool. To properly assess it, several KPIs would need to be created. Based on the KPIs, metrics will be developed. And based on the metrics, different dashboards can be implemented to the CRM views. Currently there are different tools used in the Operations and Customer support. Dashboards will save lots of time when they will be able to pull data from other tools, which is also one of the top recommendations for using dashboards as described by Lavinsky (2013) in subchapter 3.7.

The interview analysis has produced the list of very practical requirements, requested features, as well as wishes concerning the design, and usability requests. These will be discussed in more details in the next chapter.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter lists recommendations for the CRM solution implementation based on the research results and analysis. The list is divided into two parts: strategy development, and key recommendations. The strategy development is a thinking process that must take place before the requirements are laid out. The key recommendations include requirements and concrete suggestions about the solution's layout and functionality.

7.1 Strategy for CRM solution implementation

The first recommended step is the CRM solution definition that would fit company's current and expected future needs. It must include the elements of CRM viewed as a tool as well as a process that requires constant improvements. Additionally people (employees as well as customers) must be incorporated in the wording.

Processes that will be covered within the CRM solution need to be clearly defined to define the sections where processes intersect (seen from business process models). It also needs to be known in advance, if customer support will be handled by an external tool or it will be a module connected to the CRM solution. Procedures for using the CRM solution need to be put in place and communicated to all employees who will be using the solution. The idea of scalability should be incorporated in the solution design from the very start – as needs emerge there should not be any impediments to add more functionality.

CRM by definition puts customer in focus. From the implementation point of view it needs to be built from outside in (or from bottom up), meaning that special attention must be given to the people who will be entering and keeping the data up-to-date. Sales person's basic need is to share pipeline of prospects, to know about other salespeople's progress, and start creating a common knowledge on this basis.

KPIs need to be defined well in advance. Based on KPIs different types of dashboards can be designed and developed taking into consideration different users' position in the company hierarchy.

From the design point of view the solution must be light and agile, meaning it is easy and intuitive to use, it has low hardware requirements, it runs smoothly via internet, it is not rich with graphical elements; changes can be done implemented quickly and with low need for resources.

If other tools should be integrated, the overall functionality must not be impaired. Integration should only be attempted if it will bring an added value; this can be reduced processing time (e.g. for invoicing) or increased visibility (e.g. managers will see data across markets).

Short- and long-term benefits must be laid out before the solution is presented to the Piceasoft Ltd core group, responsible for the CRM solution development and implementation. An example of the short term benefit is an automated invoicing, which would replace the current process that requires three employees and usually takes more than one working day to complete. An example of the long term benefit would be cost allocation to the customers.

7.2   Key recommendations

Before any module implementation the user levels and roles must be defined. The solution should allow grouping the users based on their position in the company and geographical location. When groups are defined information sharing, tracking and task assigning becomes easier.

The module that must be implemented first is contact management. A common platform is needed to share knowledge. Based on the contact information customer cases will be prioritized. In this category two things are most important: the current customers and the most important prospects.

The following modules should be designed and implemented next: Documentation management, Communication marketing, Product development, and last but not least Customer support. Based on own observations, there is an immediate need for a basic task management module that would allow tracking and prioritising daily tasks and bring some order to decision making based on the overall priorities. Additional benefit is the prevention of data loss.

The minimum requirement for the Documentation management module is storing and sharing of sales presentations, instructions, and document- as well as email templates. A possible upgrade of the Documentation management module could be a Knowledge database for sharing instruction material with the customers (applications usage instructions, instructional videos, instructions for external access to Piceasoft tools, and Frequently Asked Questions documents, etc.).

From the UI point of view the design must be simple but attractive enough to motivate people to interact with the tool. The key points will be highlighted and colour-coded. Indicators need to be developed, e.g. a traffic light system. For the sales purposes the pipeline system must be defined beforehand, including definitions of opportunities, leads, hot leads, and similar.

Workflow must be intuitive and automated as much as possible. Currently the communication is based mainly on emails. The amount of emails needs to be reduced and key information needs to be stored in a central location with easy access to everyone involved in the particular process.

CRM solution needs to be usable on the fly; online as well as offline. Solution should be portable: it must work on a smartphone, tablet and on a laptop. The solution should be able to synchronize contacts between the database and users' mobile devices.

KPIs need to be defined, which would in turn allow dashboards design. Dashboards must include real-time tracking, showing historical data and forecasting, as well as report retrieval functionality. Also customized reporting covering the whole markets needs to be developed, including sales reporting.

An optional feature is chat. Sometimes an information is needed instantly and answering emails just takes too much time. One requirement could be a capability of saving chats related to specific customers. Chat with customers is currently not an option as we only offer a second tier support.

Website feedback could be directly connected to the CRM solution. This way we build a contact database for marketing communication when people would add consent to receive marketing material.

8   CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Objectives of the thesis outlined in the introduction have been reached by listing the key recommendations in chapter 7. Answers obtained from the analysis of the interviews were so detailed and broad that all four research questions were answered with ease. Own observations and reflections based on action research, combined with literature review and interviews analysis were so extensive that allowed building a strategy, which goes well beyond the scope of the initial objective. Subchapter 6.4 Results synthesis links research findings with literature sources, which proves thesis reliability.

According to McDonnell and McNiff (2014) the nature of action research is continuous and cyclical, consisting of own work evaluation, improvements based on other people's feedback, and implementation of changes. Based on observations one business process model has been drawn (as shown in subchapter 6.3) but to successfully explain it, a fresh theoretical approach (a process-centric organisation presented by Tregear, 2013), not explored in the preceding literature review, has been introduced. If we take a look at the briefly mentioned discussion in the first paragraph of subchapter 6.4 and combine it with Tregear's (2013) definition, we can conclude that a new research cycle has already begun.

Piceasoft has beside in the Nordic countries a firm footprint in German speaking markets. One of the key selling propositions is a fully localized user interface and localized support, including manuals in local languages. With the expansion to other European countries, Americas, and Asia there is a clear need for more organized localization efforts.

As mentioned in chapter 6.1.4 with the introduction of a CRM tool all the customer touchpoints need to be re-evaluated. Piceasoft is moving from undifferentiated towards differentiated marketing strategy, from one-size-fits-all types of messages across different target groups (e.g. consumers, B2B customers, and investors) and all customer touchpoints (website and social media) towards more targeted approach.

These two fields, localization and marketing, represent the company's immediate areas of interest. As they require a more in-depth analysis and research, they could become two attractive thesis topics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview summaries and Topic highlights

Seven interviews are summarized. Content is presented in an academic language and personal context has been removed. For the purpose of the next phase (topic selection) *keywords* have been *italicised*.

INTERVIEW No. 1; Face-to-face interview

Interviewer: Sebastjan Brezovec, Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd
TAMK student, International Business, 4th year

Interviewee: Samuli Kivinen, CIO, Piceasoft Ltd

Date: 10 November 2015; **Time**: 14:05 – 14:40

The aim of the interview was to answer the research question: How to evaluate and select software solutions for a company?

Background: The majority of Piceasoft employees come from the ex-Nokia PC Connectivity team

When Mr Roselius, Piceasoft CEO, asked Mr Kivinen what kind of *software* would be needed for running the software company the *initial consideration* was given the tools the team was *familiar with* when working in Nokia. The main criteria were *usability* and *price*. Since price is one of the most important factors, especially for start-ups, the selection was focused on *open-source software*. The main investments were for establishing the R&D structure: source control, as well as building and delivery systems. For the majority of the systems there exist many different open-source programs, so the decision making process was not too demanding.

When the company started to *grow* a need emerged for a *comprehensive solution*. Initially Bugzilla was used for tracking open issues. The first *commercial product* implemented was JIRA. JIRA is used for *project management*, *tracking software development* and *testing issues*. The aim was to get a *big picture* of the progress and open issues on the software development and testing side by using one tool.

Constant *checks* are being performed and software used is being *evaluated* and *compared* with *current* and *future needs*. The main motto is that the *tools have to help people in their work*. Some of the tools used were *developed in-house*.

The latest software that was evaluated was an antivirus program, Bitdefender. Before its introduction people had their own antivirus programs and own firewalls installed. Some of the variations were good because when testing, different programs interact differently with the Piceasoft products. The need emerged to *manage the field*, to make all company environments safe. With Bitdefender all configurations are checked *from one place*, which *simplifies* work required, if something goes wrong. Before the final implementation the software was evaluated for one month. One *requirement* was that the software is *light* enough and it does not prevent computer from doing what it does.

Also other evaluations have been performed, i.e. data base replication and clustering. Data is stored on our own servers in the premises. For security reasons only the needed databases are replicated and shared with external parties. Databases are also replicated for security backups. We have at least two backups of all the data in at least two places.

Evaluation starts with an overview of different solutions available on the market. Different *features* and *pricing* models are checked. Luckily many different *open source* software solutions are available, which are *cheap to use*. The downside of these programs is that they *require a lot of configurations* before they can be used. The usability is not always the best. This is the biggest difference between the open source and commercial products, which are easy to configure and maintain. Commercial products include support, while support for open source software comes mainly from dedicated communities.

The discussion turned towards *development* of *own tool* and the available resources for such an endeavour. It depends on the type of tool being developed. For example our resident part-time Tampere University of Technology students are working on test automation tools. They have been working on the project since the beginning of 2015 – it takes time. Smaller tools can be developed and deployed in one day. It depends on the *required functionality*. It is also worth considering what it is possible *to do by oneself* and what needs to be *purchased* outside the company. A need can emerge for a specific tool that *cannot be purchased* and *must be developed internally*. Also the *price* aspect plays an important role. If the price of a commercial tool is too high it can be developed internally.

Another *constraint* is also *time*. When the company resources are busy and a solution is required immediately and the *reliability* must be *guaranteed*, the *cost* is *not* the *most important* issue anymore. At some point one has to pay to get everything working smoothly. If the open source is a viable alternative it can be implemented as well. Almost everything can be done with open source SW but time is usually the most important factor.

The discussion turned towards *Moodle platform,* which the author presented in spring 2015 as a possible platform for Customer support. The frequency of searching for and/or downloading the content could be used for analytical purposes – an early step towards CRM. With more customer visits the more customized experience would be provided.

Moodle was checked and it looked like a *viable option*. Discussions got interrupted during the summer vacation and did not resume in the autumn. Mr Kivinen mentioned that the discussion would resume with the software development team. So far the impression was very positive. Moodle can be *easily integrated* to the Piceasoft systems.

INTERVIEW No. 2; Skype interview

Interviewer:	Sebastjan Brezovec, Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd TAMK student, International Business, 4th year
Interviewee:	Trinesh Champaneri, Country/Sales Manager, RemoteA UK Ltd http://www.remotea.co.uk/
Date:	10 November 2015; **Time**: 22:00 – 22:40

The aim of the interview was to get more insight into different CRM software solutions and ways of working with CRM tools.

Background: Mr Champaneri is the author's friend and has been asked to share insights into tool selection and daily use because of his position (sales manager) and his experience with using a CRM tool on a daily basis.

The questions from Table 3 (subchapter 5.3.4) were used as a basis for the interview.

<u>What is CRM?</u>

CRM is a *tool* used to keep all *customer activities* on *track*. Any team member can *pick up* from the point where another team member has *left* off.

Where do companies *profit most*?

There are two ways of answering the question. Two different CRM tools are used in the company: one is used by Sales people (in further text: Sales CRM) and the other is used company-wide (in further text: Custom CRM; it was developed in-house and customized to meet the company's needs). The Custom CRM is helpful for *managing existing customers* (by *logging who* has been *contacted*, and *by whom* and *what* has been *offered*). It is used to track all activities in the company. As it is very old it has been found limiting their business in terms of new sales growth. This is why Sales CRM was introduced. It is particularly useful in *tracking leads* and *promoting* them to *opportunities* – using the *pipeline approach*. The company would like to have *one tool for both purposes* but still has not found the perfect solution.

Custom CRM: internal, high security (developed in-house; outdated, basic, slow; requires VPN when on the road): a must for all the contacts & activity (because the company is dealing with medical devices). It is very impractical to use.

What *other processes* (besides tracking customers and sales activities that were already mentioned) could be *included* in the tool usage?

The discussion evolved around the *clarity* of the processes defined, whose aim is to *understand customers* better. A *strategy* was defined *before* the tool was *implemented*. The *pipeline system* was laid out well before CRM system was taken into use. *Activities* or *notes* are *tagged* (with *dates* (when the item was *added* and when it is its *follow-up date* and who is *responsible*)). *Activities* and also *important customers* are *prioritized* within the CRM. This helps to differentiate customers.

Which *CRM tools* have been evaluated and which are *now used* in the company?

For the Sales *CRM* the *requirements* were: *light* and *agile*.

Salesforce has been *evaluated*. It has proven *not suitable* for the purpose. It has a lot of useful features, but for a start-up phase, when a company is entering the market it was simply too massive. The decision has been made to start using *PipeDrive*. PipeDrive has been *in use* for *a year* and it has been *well accepted*. It is *easy to learn* and *quick to use*. The main feature why it was chosen over Salesforce was its *visual interface* – moving customer through the pipeline (mimicking the *sales cycle*). The company has many prospects (clients trying the products) and also many opportunities (close to making a deal).

By *seeing* the customers, it was much *easier to pull them over the finish line*. When closing the deal a person gets *visual feedback*. User interface: the *visual aspect* has a *motivating effect*. Tool can also be *customized*. If a deal is lost it is possible to drag & drop the prospect/lead to a dust bin. Also *ratios* are shown, which helps to *track the progress*, at which stage the potential customers were lost. Another user is using the tool for the Swedish market. There are major *differences between the markets* in terms of finding the leads, working on the deals, and closing them. The CRM tool, when properly configured, can *show* the differences and *pinpoint* the *stages* that need *more work* in order to get better *results*.

Integration with *other tools*?

PipeDrive can be used together with an *app* on a *mobile phone*. *Client info*, if entered into the system is *available on the go*. There is also a *prompt* asking user to *schedule* a *next meeting* immediately after the conversation is over.

What *other processes* are involved?

When sales volumes are low, a sales person is also an account manager, which includes *customer complaints handling* and also *invoicing*. Invoicing is done through the Custom CRM, which *automatically pulls data from other tools* and *creates invoices automatically*. All *items sold* to clients are added as *notes* as well as directly to the list of ordered items. In this way, *invoicing* can be *automated* and also visually tracked from notes. With the low numbers of clients the work is done faster manually, but with sales volumes raising it would be feasible to automate the process.

A *strategy* for the CRM usage was brought up. When *sales* are *low* an *Excel* sheet can handle all the information, but with *growing sales* volumes some more *robust system* needs to be put in place. There is probably a *finance module* available, but it has to be *implemented along with the strategy*. Additionally any *metrics*, e.g. pipeline ratios *benefit* the *company first* not the customer. This is why it is important to have a *balanced strategy* from the very beginning.

INTERVIEW No. 3; Face-to-face interview

Interviewer: Sebastjan Brezovec, Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd
TAMK student, International Business, 4th year
Interviewee: Heikki Tarvainen, VP Sales, Piceasoft Ltd
Date: 11 November 2015; **Time**: 14:45 – 15:10

The aim of the interview was to get answers to two research questions: the definition of CRM and to find out what Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution are.

The questions from Table 3 (subchapter 5.3.4) were used as a basis for the interview.

What does *CRM mean* to you?

It is a tool where *customers are managed* and *contacts* are *stored* for the purpose of their *identification*. Additionally *order statuses* are *documented*. The purpose is to get an *overview* of *customer activities*. The tool also enables easy *sending* of *materials*. *Internally customer statuses* are *shared*. The tool can generate different types of *reports*, showing *historical data* and also *forecasting*. A more extensive usage involves *tracking* all *conversations* and meetings minutes for example.

Where would *Piceasoft profit most* if the tool would be introduced?

In getting *customers organized*: current and potential customers. Important customers can be *prioritized*. Also *orders development* and *customer* relationship development can be *tracked*. The previous view is related to sales. CRM tool can also include *back-office support*, where people working in *support add data* to *assist customers*. The tool can also serve management via *dashboards* and *report retrieval* functionality, instead of everyone being asked about the current status.

Additional *processes*?

Communication marketing: newsletters, product launches, press releases.

Previous experience with *CRM* tools?

Microsoft Dynamics. It was not a positive experience. The tool was *very heavy*, *not flexible*. All changes required additional configuration by external IT experts – users were not able to do the modifications by themselves.

Another *CRM* tool used was at *Ilves Hockey*. The tool was provided by Mepco. The c*ustomization* was done *well* but it was *not used efficiently* enough. The tool was generally

good but only for certain areas, e.g. for boxes booking in the arena during the matches. Other elements were *poorly integrated*.

Tool design?

Experience with using MS Dynamics was shared. *Status upgrade* (e.g. from lead to opportunity) was very difficult, it *was not intuitive* or *logical*. Users needed to *perform many steps* to upgrade a lead.

An example from *PipeDrive* as described by Mr Champaneri (see Interview No. 2) was given. Mr Tarvainen agreed that the *logic* could be *similar*, but before any requirements are presented different options should be discussed. Experience has shown that illogical steps led to errors; s*imple design* can eliminate them, and the *process* can be *sped up*.

Did you participate in the implementation of the tool?

Yes, partly.

What was the path of *introducing the tool*?

The *features* of MS Dynamics were *introduced*, followed by the *training*. Then *requirements* were *collected* (features, number of users).

What *features* would you need in the tool?

A list the *contacts* (from prospects, leads, and opportunities to customers). The following information is a must: types if customer contracts. Then some *indicators* need to be *developed – traffic light system* was suggested. Also *checks* need to be *implemented* showing what kind of *material* has been *delivered* and what is yet to be delivered. Customers could be also *grouped* with regards to the *customers' pricing models*. This would allow also *easy updates* and *follow-up*, and *re-classification* (from opportunity back to lead) based on the progress of the sales process. On a regular basis the *forecasting* could be updated taking into consideration the present status and the planned activities. The start should be *light* and in the further steps *functionality* can be *added*.

Time frame for tool introduction?

The *first modules* could be introduced already in the *beginning of 2016*. At the start not everything should be final, only *small steps* need to be taken: e.g. a *list of customers*; for major customers we need *account managers*; this also allows *prioritizing*. For potentials

that are not yet business for us we do not need key accounts but still need to track all activities.

Account manager's *responsibilities*:

Even in Nokia one account manager never managed only one customer but *several at once*, and not only the big accounts, but also small ones. In this way an account manager had an *overview* of the *total value chain* from the retailer all the way to the operator.

External *tools integration* (e.g. Outlook: to track emails and calendar appointments):

It is not necessary. CRM is not a calendar tool. The *primary focus* must be on the *customers* (quotes, conversations… *key things* for each account). The tool could be integrated with *other tools* to allow *reporting* and seeing *progress in real time*.

Automation:

A welcoming thing would be the *upgrade* from a lead to an opportunity when an event is triggered (e.g. a test activation key is sent by the Customer support team). When the contract proposal stage is reached the potential customer becomes visible on "everyone's radar." When customer is using our software, the amount of their operations could be tracked (a clear move from Sales only to Operations module of a CRM tool). In case of inactivity for a prolonged period of time the tool could send a ping to raise an alert.

Tracking customers & Dashboards:

We could have a *colour coding* implemented, e.g. for *invoicing* (green: invoice sent, orange: invoice needs to be sent soon, red: invoice delayed). Mr Tarvainen started drawing on the whiteboard… We need to *define* the *KPIs* and start tracking them and using the colour coding as well. One example of KPI can be using the tool with a certain type of contract (number of operations with annual license, usage license, and prepaid license). Another example could be the purpose of using the tool (switches, diagnostics, or erasure operations). Also *errors* could be tracked and analysed (at some point there could be a sudden drop in use. We could analyse the data and try to find the root cause for not using the software. It could be a technical fault or we changed the functionality and did not inform the users about the change and they did not know how to use the tools).

INTERVIEW No. 4; Face-to-face interview

Interviewer: Sebastjan Brezovec, Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd
TAMK student, International Business, 4th year
Interviewee: Risto Kivipuro, Member of the board, Business development, Piceasoft Ltd
Date: 12 November 2015; **Time**: 13:30 – 14:00

The aim of the interview was to get answers to two research questions: the definition of CRM and to find out what Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution are.

The questions from Table 3 (subchapter 5.3.4) were used as a basis for the interview.

What does *CRM mean* to you?

It is a *system* providing *information* about our *current customers*, how they are using our solutions, how *successfully* they are *doing business* with our solutions especially how do *our solutions help* their *business*. The system should also *prioritise* our activities with *emphasis on sales*, to get as many as possible prospects, more leads. From leads, based on the information available in the system, we could *prioritise* what *prospects* we should *invest* in (time, resources) in order to *get a deal*, to *sign an agreement*, to get more money. On the other hand, the tool should *allow eliminating not profitable* prospects. Also there is a need to check our *current customers* and check if there are some that only *consume* our *resources*. We should not invest in them, or try to change an agreement to make them profitable for us. CRM has to be some sort of *sales management tool* to *follow salespeople's activities*. We should get *their performance data* and talk to them about the *value* they are *bringing* to the *company*.

What *other processes* could be included in the tool?

R&D process, *product operations*. They should be *linked* to this system without any *bottlenecks*. At any given time we *need to know* what we have promised to each of the customers. We work close with them. They have *different* kind of *requirements*. They give us *feedback*. All this *information* needs to be *visible in one place* to help *allocating R&D costs*, which are currently the biggest costs (close to 80%), to our customers. We also need to know who the *most paying customers* are (No. 1 priority!). The *financial aspect* can be one *type of criteria*; other types of criteria include also being first in the branch doing a novel type of business (examples are: a) totally online solutions embedded in the customers' systems and b) MAC OS X solution). Whenever we do road-mapping or the product planning this information should be available.

Design?

Graphics and visual elements should be used to _highlight_ the _important things_. Example: We would not deliver what we have promised to a customer. Some sort of _colour coding_ or some sort of _icons_ could be used. Only by _looking_ at the system information it should be _fast_ to _understand_ what is _important_ concerning our customer situation and our product operations related to the particular customer. The _things that matter_ simply _should not be missed_: money, timelines… Only by looking at the system one should get the most important information fast and in a visual form.

Example: in one project there was a system of alerts: yellow, orange, and red. If a project got a red alert status the CEO was immediately notified and there was a 24-hour timeslot available to make an action plan how to mitigate the situation. Different _parameters_ could be _colour coded_: delivery time, quality, number of customer complaints, the sales process is taking too long and requires a manager's visit.

The main idea is to _help all parties involved_. We do not only take _care of_ the _customers_, but also of our employees, in this case _sales people_. If we were to lose a customer we need to know the reason: either the offer is not compelling enough, or the price is too high or there are other reasons. But the main point is that we need to know if a deal is about to get lost. Currently we do not know if we have such cases. This system will also _force salespeople_ to _report_.

We are dealing with sales agents. How do we _separate_ a "_business must_" from a "_business optional_" task? How detailed should a reporting to the system be?

With _prioritization_ in place, we could have some _control_ of our _sales agents' work_. When a case would be _classified_ as a must, they would have to _prioritize_ their work accordingly. Prioritizing might be conflicting with their personal priorities. These need to be sorted out in _discussions_. One of the values of this system is that it would _reveal_ these _conflicts_. There is also a conflict with the type of _information_ they would like to _share_.

There is a concern and an actual _business risk_ that people _keep information_ to themselves and do not make it available to others. There needs to be a _list_ of _software requirements_ (added by an R&D responsible) which could be _matched_ by _salespeople's promises_ to potential customers. Both parties would be able to _add items_ to the _list_. This would help all the parties involved in _closing the deals_. In the current ways of working when we keep

most of the information in the emails it is stressful to be on top of everything. There is always a feeling "did I forget something?"

Integration with other *tools*?

Marketing. We are using MailChimp for sending newsletters. This tool could be integrated so we could track marketing activities with each customer. Also Social Media interactions could be tracked.

Customer touchpoints:

We have a website, Linked-in, Twitter, and Facebook accounts. When we are *introducing a CRM* tool all the *touchpoints* need to be *re-evaluated*. The customer newsletter was a success. Constant updates on the website and in Social Media help to affirm our position with the investors. Articles for example in Kauppalehti (Business news daily) help a lot.

Timeframe to implement CRM?

A natural timeline would be at the *turn of the year*. It is a *new fiscal year*. Similar to people who are making New Year resolutions also companies do the same. It might not be realistic, but this would be an ideal point. Step by step! The first information that could be made available could be *customer cases*. In this category two things are most important*:* the *current customers* and the most *important prospects*. Also *requirements for* the *metrics* for these two categories need to be defined. Also *customer retention* is at the top of the list of priorities.

Mr Kivipuro expressed two important thoughts. The first one is about the essence of making business: "Business is optimizing and maximizing money" and the second one is about private investors investing their money into Piceasoft operations: "Business is public communication" (Kivipuro… 2015).

INTERVIEW No. 5; Skype interview

Interviewer: Sebastjan Brezovec,	Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd
	TAMK student, International Business, 4th year
Interviewee: Dirk Fleischer, Sales agent, Germany	
Date: 12 November 2015; **Time**: 15:10 – 15:35	

The aim of the interview was to get answers to two research questions: the definition of CRM and to find out what Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution are.

The questions from Table 3 (subchapter 5.3.4) were used as a basis for the interview.

What does *CRM mean* to you?

It is a *tool* that can be used to *save contacts* data for all customers, also *conversations* (voice calls and emails). This keeps *everyone* in the sales team *informed* of the *status*. CRM is also a *sales planning tool*: sales per customer on a monthly base. CRM is also a *tracking tool* for *sending reminders*. CRM is *daily life product* for a *sales manager* (back-office people (see interview No. 3) would save all customer related issues in the tool) so the sales manager would have all data at hand. CRM is a powerful tool for storing contacts and customer relationship information.

How do you treat your contacts as an external consultant to our company? *Confidentiality issues*? Conflict of interests for sales agents' data?

The answer revolved around the current ways of working. On a weekly basis *contacts* and selected leads are once per week *sent* to the *back-office*. The data is *entered* to the CRM tool, which pushes the *sorted data to* a person's *smartphone*. All these contacts can be shared with Piceasoft. The *contacts* should be *distributed* to the *whole sales* team to keep *everyone informed*. CRM is a tool for sharing information.

Any *experience* with CRM tools?

The tool being used is *Microsoft Dynamics CRM*. It has a neat feature of *tracking* all *email conversations*. There is a possibility to *mark* each *message* separately if it should be stored in the database. This is *useful* when *sending contracts*. In this way all people involved will see the email. The process needs to be *defined* beforehand. The rest is a part of the implementation. Everyone needs to *follow* the *process*. Also it is important to have someone organized in the back-office who keeps all information in order. Sales people in his opinion are "messy" people who do not necessarily keep things in order.

<u>Would you have a list of "must have" and "nice to have" *features for Piceasoft CRM*?</u>
"Must have features": *contacts storing* (such as email conversations), *overview* for head of sales. Reporting: their company sends an automatically compiled report via email every Sunday evening. The report contains an overview of the sales in the current month and a volume forecast for the next period. Two other features are *tracking* (if an action point is assigned to someone a person is *automatically reminded*) and *volume planning*. A "Nice to have" feature would be a log of telephone communications (voice calls).

<u>What *other processes* could be included in the CRM?</u>
Generally it is a strong sales tool, but it can be used for *cross-functional alignment*; e.g. *Marketing* can use it, *Production* can benefit from it. The question is *at which point in time* it makes *sense* to implement a tool for the *whole company*? In their company, the tool is in place but not widely used. CRM is mostly used by sales people, but it is an *opportunity* if *everyone* is *on board*. It can be also a *cross-country alignment* – sales people from *other countries* would have *access* to the tool and this is where it is the *most powerful*. A tool could incorporate *Document management*: the latest versions of documents could be stored in a dedicated place. Everything connected with customer relations needs to be in the tool: roadmap, pricing, features, advertisements, press releases.

<u>*Timeframe* for implementation?</u>
2016

<u>*Usability*? *Design*?</u>
The CRM tool needs to be *usable on the fly*. This means it can be used *online* and *offline* as well. It needs to be *portable* (works on a smartphone, tablet and on a laptop (*responsive design*: UI must be able to adapt to smaller displays and remain functional)).
Usability point of view: easy to use. Microsoft CRM looks like Outlook. It is even a part of Outlook, which makes it easy to use, although it is sometimes too complex. Features should include minimizing views so that the overview is not lost

<u>Free discussion:</u>
The CRM tool should help a sales person to get an *overview of customers* in order to *increase sales volumes*. The tool should *keep* and *store data*, to *prevent data loss*. CRM integration to a person's daily routine is important – it becomes a part of a person's life. Tool will be used if it is easy and intuitive. If it gets too complex, nobody will use it.

INTERVIEW No. 6; Skype interview

Interviewer: Sebastjan Brezovec,	Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd
	TAMK student, International Business, 4th year
Interviewee: Roberto Betuzzi, Sales agent, Italy	
Date: 17 November 2015; **Time**: 12:20 – 13:00	

The aim of the interview was to get answers to two research questions: the definition of CRM and to find out what Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution are.

The questions from Table 3 (subchapter 5.3.4) were used as a basis for the interview.

Before the actual interview Mr Betuzzi presented current ways of sharing contacts with Piceasoft. Currently the process is not defined.

The primary goal of CRM should be knowledge sharing. The current process includes saving contacts in an Excel sheet. Different contact categories (prospect, lead, and customer) are coded with different colours. The list is updated once per week and sent to Piceasoft. Sometimes the mails are lost among other emails. The whole process is inefficient. In case a person who built a contact list leaves the company, all knowledge is lost; relationships are not known, established processes are not known, information about the stage of business negotiations is lost. It is important that this information is stored and available for all the relevant people to have access to it.

What does *CRM mean* to you?

It means *sharing* and *storing information* (prospect: name, state of the negotiation, addresses, phone numbers). At this point of the company's growth we do not have the luxury to create a state-of-the-art CRM. In the first stage we need a *common platform* to *share knowledge*. It may be on a very basic level. Example: if a person in country A enters a contact from company X, and a person from country B sees the company X in the system, he might have another contact from the same company. Persons A and B can connect and the company X is their common denominator. This interaction can lead to increased chances of creating business.

If CRM comes from the top there is a strong possibility it will not serve its purpose. In the first stages the CRM process needs to be *simple* and *scalable* (more features can be added later). A sales person's basic need is to share the *pipeline of prospects*, to know about other salespeople's progress, and start creating a *common knowledge* on this basis.

<u>Where would *Piceasoft profit most* if CRM would be introduced?</u>

Conversation revolved around *dashboards* that should *show hot leads*, *lost opportunities*. If all information is available in the tool, it requires *less additional input* from sales people as the *KPIs* already show the *overall situation* and also *specific information* about each entry (if properly tracked). *Decision making* can be *sped up*.

Usability. About *design*. The initial requirement was that our CRM tool should be light. <u>What do you understand by "*light*"?</u>

UI must be *intuitive* and *easy* to understand. The other aspect of lightness is *functionality* that is used *infrequently*. These elements could be *stripped* from the list of actions and only *keep* the *absolutely necessary* features, which are: *entering the data* and *sharing* the knowledge. The first module should be contact management. This is the very first need. UI in the contact management module: a contact page with all the contact info could have calendar integration with all the scheduled activities. This way we would enhance communication.

<u>When we talk about *scalability* what would be *next steps*</u>?

The next step could be a *Marketing module*, which would include *mailing newsletters*, etc.; a system that allows *profiling contacts* to the level of *interest*, or to the level of *information they need*. A *Project Management tool* could be linked to the tool, but CRM is more a marketing and communication tool.

<u>How about the *visual aspects* of the tool: graphic design? Which graphic elements would you like to have?</u>

A simple CRM is based on a *dashboard* which has all the *information* in a *single view*, or a long page that needs to be scrolled down. Also *search/filtering* functionality is important (by name, by date, by geographic region).

A short demonstration followed: a dashboard showing an overview was presented. Each entry (a contact) was represented by a bar (in a bar chart). By clicking a bar customer details were displayed.

Graphics are of secondary importance. UI is just about a representation of data entered in the tool.

What other SW would you like to see integrated?

None at the moment. Roberto expects that the tool will become more sophisticated as the pipeline grows. Interactions with the tool should become more developed through time. The idea of scalability should be incorporated in the tool design from the very start – as needs emerge there should not be any impediments to add more functionality.

Timeframe for implementation?

ASAP (to stop using Excel). The sooner the better. Already data entering in the tool will take a long time. A special consideration needs to be given to *methods* of *importing* the *existing data*.

The discussion continued about the reasons for and against developing own tool. What about arguments *why develop own tool and why not*?

There is a risk of having exactly the same kind of tool that already exists on the market. A lot of time and resources would be spent on getting a similar tool. There is also a concern about external tool integration – would it be possible or not? The only wish is to keep it similar to existing tools.

The tool itself does not *guarantee* that it will be *taken into use*. Implementation of the tool requires *active commitment* by all involved people. If someone is not active in *entering the information*, keeping them *updated*, and keeping it *live*… it is just a tool. *Procedures* need to be put in place, for example once a day or once per week information must be updated.

For example: *definitions* of a "cold–" and a "hot lead" need to defined. The tool itself cannot distinguish between the two. The standards need to be agreed upon. The bottom line is that it involves everyone's active participation. If no special functionality is needed, it would be recommendable to use one of the existing solutions.

Mr Betuzzi expressed an important thought about the essence of information: "From the sales point of view the real asset is the information itself." (Betuzzi… 2015).

INTERVIEW No. 7; Face-to-face interview

Interviewer: Sebastjan Brezovec, Customer Happiness Specialist, Piceasoft Ltd
TAMK student, International Business, 4th year
Interviewee: Joni Lagerbom, VP, Customer support, Piceasoft Ltd
Date: 17 November 2015; **Time**: 13:30 – 13:50

The aim of the interview was to get answers to three research questions: the definition of CRM, to find out what Piceasoft's requirements for a CRM solution are, and to find ways of incorporating Customer support to a CRM solution.

The questions from Table 3 (subchapter 5.3.4) were used as a basis for the interview.

What does *CRM mean* to you?

A *tool* which helps us *control* the customer relationship *information*.

Where would *Piceasoft profit most* if CRM would be introduced?

The speed of reacting to customers' request and the level of support given could be tracked.

Beside Sales, in what *other processes* in the company would you see a CRM solution implemented?

Customer support and *Sales* are the most important ones. Also *Business development* could be incorporated to the tool. Also *invoicing* and *offers* could be a part of it and checking which *material* is *sent to customers* could be tracked. *Sales must* be a part of CRM. Business development and Customer support could be a part of it. *Document management*: also material (presentations, offers…) are not in one place; some of them are *only in emails*. The main concern is when the *business grows, control* must be kept of what is kept and where. One customer requested customer support via a *ticket system* (all issues should be tracked via a dedicated customer support tool). ZenDesk seems to be a popular tool.

Do you mean *integrating* ZenDesk?

Yes, they would like to have a *direct access* to our ticketing system. The customer in question is currently using JIRA, and so are we. The question was could they have access to our system directly. Instead of having *too many tools* in use in Piceasoft the idea would be to *integrate* some *modules* into the existing tools.

About the *design*. The initial requirement was that our CRM tool should be light. What do you understand by "*light*"?

The tool should be *flexible* and *fast*. If a solution would be purchased, pricing would play a role – pricewise "light" would mean only the necessary features. From the document management point of view: contracts and offers should be there. And invoicing data should be accessible at any time. This would require other tool integration. Another important aspect would be user and country specific access. A tool should be designed in such a way that sales people can see what we want them to see.

How *important* is the *graphic UI* to you (nice looking like Windows, or *basic layout* with only *few graphic elements* that highlight most important features?

As little as possible graphics elements should be used in order to make it *fast and intuitive* to use.

What *other SW* would you like to see *integrated*?

Email integration would be beneficial, because all customer support requests are currently handled via email. We need to consider the *pros* and *cons*. *Outlook integration* would require a lot of resources and make the tool *slower*.

Timeframe for implementation?

The beginning of 2016.