

# EXECUTIVE QUESTION AND ANSWER

Presented by Innoveer Solutions  
and Akamai Technologies

# Q&A

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**SN: What were the business needs that led Akamai to invest in CRM?**

**PF:** During its infancy, Akamai did not have any formal business processes or standard methods of collecting information. We realized that in an industry like ours, “first to market” is critical. Therefore, investing in CRM was important from the onset, as we required the capabilities and tools that could form our foundation on which to develop our business processes, collect our customer data, and scale and grow our company. We then researched numerous CRM technologies, selecting the one that best matched these business needs.

**SN: Did you face any challenges in achieving these outcomes when implementing your CRM program?**

**PF:** After deploying our CRM platform, we realized that from a business process and informational flow standpoint, it did not enable a holistic understanding of the interdependencies within our business, but rather gave us silos of discrete, non-integrated solutions. Because each department customized the application to meet their specific business needs, we did not achieve our desired outcome of a 360-degree view of customer data. Also, we implemented our CRM program within an environment that has constant business changes. As a result, IT was continually enhancing the system based on these requirements without a high-level, long-term map of what our company, customers, and partners truly required to succeed.

In addition, with a constantly growing business, it can become difficult to support from a technology or data standpoint, and companies can become disconnected. When this happened at Akamai, individual departments began managing information and processes outside of the system, and communicating through spreadsheets instead of within the system.

To address these issues, we looked for a way to ensure a holistic view of our organization and our data, as well as to provide a level of accountability regarding decision-making – with reviews and checkpoints for all business units to justify investments prior to implementation of any changes. We began meeting cross-functionally to open our communication lines, and as a group, define our processes, understand our gaps, and prioritize our initiatives through quarterly enhancement releases. We completed a business process analysis to better align our technology with our growing business – gathering requirements and introducing change in a timely and easy manner for our customer-facing processes.

**SN: What enhancements did you make after deployment of your CRM System?**

**PF:** During phase one of our program, we implemented a transactional CRM system. While

this system enabled us to capture an abundance of data, the data was not organized or aggregated to enable effective decision-making. In other words, our CRM system could not tell us which customers to target or which product was selling the most and why. Therefore, we did not have the necessary answers or data model to answer these questions, pull information from our system, and quickly make decisions.

To address this critical need, we began building a long-term approach and framework to solve these problems and better understand our data and how to use it to support our ongoing business. Following our enhancements, the results were significant. Our user adoption increased, and we began collecting a larger amount of information – both broader and deeper – for our teams to use to further understand, monitor, and grow our business.

**SN:** How do you currently measure the success of your CRM program and its impact on your business?

**PF:** We measure our success and metrics by many criteria. The first is system usage – if user adoption is high, then we believe that this is one sign that our system matches our business. Second, if our executives are managing the business based on the information within our system, then we also view that as a signal of our success. Management is currently using our CRM system to monitor the business from forecasting to pipeline activity to close-loop marketing. We have an improved understanding of our prospects, leads, and customer relationships, and our data is more accurate, relevant, and provides real value to our employees.

**SN:** What advice would you give other high-technology companies in the process of planning or enhancing their CRM programs?

**PF:** It is critical that executive sponsorship drives support of the system and changes within it. A successful CRM

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program requires a business sponsor with a holistic view of the “customer” throughout the entire process – not merely representing the sales or marketing needs – but someone who will drive the overall CRM strategy and vision and act as the litmus test for introducing new elements and changes.

Second, it is important to “market and sell” the program to all stakeholders and constituents by articulating the “what’s in it for me” for every individual user. With the high rate of attrition and relocation, particularly among middle management, there are always new users to introduce and acclimate to the CRM program. You need someone internally who acts as the diplomat, who has excellent cross-functional relationships, and who can communicate, train, and pitch the system – to ensure continuity and ongoing program success.

Third, taking a “big bang” approach by trying to implement too much at one time can result in significant business disruption, low user adoption, and ultimately, CRM program failure. Keep it simple during the design process and ensure you have a complete understanding of what attributes and information you require, so that you only have those attributes you need, not the 50+ available. It is easy to believe that if you have all of the available attributes during the design state, you can solve every possible business problem. However, when you implement them, if you are not able to update or police them, they will not be properly used, user adoption will be low, and data will be inaccurate. Focus on quality, not quantity, and allow your reporting needs to drive additional complexities.

Lastly, integration – both technology and process – with other parts of the organization is critical when numerous departments and people are adding information to the system. All groups within your company must understand how information is used and added by other departments, so that they can locate information quickly and ensure that the data is useful in helping to effectively conduct business.

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**SN:** What are the next steps for your CRM program?

**PF:** Now that we have completed the “end-to-end plumbing” of our CRM infrastructure for sales and marketing, we can use the same approach for our professional services and support groups, manufacturing business unit, and legal and finance teams. By expanding our system, we will be able to more efficiently use our CRM application to manage production, in terms of our manufacturing capacity. This will help us better meet our customer needs, while lowering our overall cost of goods sold – giving us a distinct competitive advantage.

Once all of our departments are working with a common CRM platform, our TCO will significantly decrease, and our future state will have the necessary tools, processes, and information to improve, scale, and grow our overall business.

#### **ABOUT INNOVEER SOLUTIONS**

INNOVEER SOLUTIONS, an award-winning customer strategy and solutions consultancy, provides advanced customer management services to high-technology and healthcare companies, among others, in the areas of planning and strategy, technology implementation, and optimization. The company’s deep industry knowledge, broad technical skills, and Multishore Methodology enable organizations to address their critical customer-facing issues and achieve an integrated view of all customer information. With an exclusive focus on customer management since 1998, Innoveer has worked with more than 300 organizations to increase their overall business growth, improve internal efficiency, and enhance the customer experience.

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#### **ABOUT AKAMAI TECHNOLOGIES**

AKAMAI is the global leader in distributed computing solutions and services, helping organizations grow their online businesses without growing their IT infrastructures. The company created the world’s largest and most widely used on-demand distributed computing platform, with more than 14,000 servers in 1,100 networks in 65+ countries.