

It is not as simple as buying a CRM system.

There is still a fascination and push towards CRM but do organisations have a clear understanding of how they wish to operate? CRM is generally regarded as being an IT system but in reality it is a way of life. Customer Relationship Management is a term that can mean so many different things to different people.

Neighbourhood officers may want to look at particular customers, estates or even areas for analysis of behaviour. Customer Service staff will benefit greatly from being able to access the history of a customer's engagement with the organisation. Repairs staff would find it really beneficial to look at historical activity at certain properties and analysing real cost. An organisation may want to identify frequent callers and consider delivering services in an alternative way.

When thought of as a system CRM should be an enabler rather than a system that drives business processes. Too many organisations invest in a CRM system without the customer service strategy being in place to develop and design the business upon.

Organisations should have a clear vision and strategy for the future. A number of questions need to be asked to determine what the customer relationship should be before implementing a system that will manage it. For example, how important is it to know who your customers are? Most people would say very important but for some organisations it may not matter, it is a simple transaction. So when a customer calls its landlord to report paint has been spilt on their front door wouldn't it be better to be able to see that they have a history of suffering ASB. The alternative would be to talk to them about how they may have to pay for the paint to be removed, not a caring service or even a joined up approach!

It is not as simple as just buying a CRM system, it is a culture and a way of life. The organisation has to be prepared to make these changes to support CRM rather than expecting CRM to be the answer.