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Evolution of Customer Relationship Management Practice in Nigeria

There are no businesses with customers .Its just that the ways we treat our customers are different . That is why some businesses are making more customers steadily and some businesses are complaining of no sales.

That is not how it supposed to be if you know the origin or evolution of Customer relationship management practice in Nigeria.

In this article, I want to open our eyes. I am sure this article will help some of us to decide whether we have been treating our customers right or not. You just have to trust me and read the article to the end.

The customer relationship management practice that I want to talk about is all about doing business from customers perspective. You will not take any decision without considering how it is going to affect your customers generally.



Customer relationship management (CRM) has become a core part of how businesses operate and grow. But CRM wasn't always digital, automated, or even standardised. Understanding the evolution of CRM helps us see how far [customer engagement](#) has come—and where it's heading next.

In this guide, we'll explore the three phases of CRM, the emergence of CRM practices, and how modern CRM systems are transforming business today.

What Is the Emergence of CRM Practice?

The emergence of CRM practice began when businesses started focusing on building long-term customer relationships, rather than just making one-time sales. In the early days, customer data was stored manually, through spreadsheets, Rolodex cards, [or simple databases](#).

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As customer bases grew, businesses needed better ways to manage interactions, personalise communications, and track buyer journeys. This led to the rise of structured CRM systems, which gradually shifted from paper-based records to software platforms.

CRM evolved from a reactive tool to a proactive system that helps attract, convert, retain, and delight customers.

What Are the Three Phases of the Evolution of CRM?

The evolution of CRM can be broken down into three main phases:

#1 Manual CRM (Pre-1990s)

Businesses relied on in-person relationships, phone calls, and physical documents. Data tracking was limited, and insights were based mostly on personal memory or simple logs. There was no automation—just traditional customer service

Digital CRM Systems (1990s-2000s)

With the rise of computers, companies began using software like ACT! and GoldMine. These systems helped store contacts, track interactions, and manage sales pipelines. It marked the beginning of digital transformation in customer management.

#3 Cloud-Based & AI-Powered CRM (2010s-Present)

Modern CRMs like Salesforce, HubSpot, and Zoho introduced cloud storage, real-time analytics, automation, and AI.

These tools not only track interactions but also predict customer behaviour, segment audiences, and enable personalised marketing at scale.

The CRM system became a full-stack growth tool—integrated with email, social media, support, and analytics.

What Are the Stages of Customer Relationship Management?

Customer relationship management involves four core stages, which align with the buyer journey:

#1 Customer Acquisition

This is the process of attracting and converting leads into paying customers. CRMs help track marketing campaigns, manage leads, and measure conversion rates.

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#2 Customer Retention

once acquired, keeping customers loyal becomes the focus. CRM tools support this with email nurturing, loyalty programs, and automated follow-ups.

#3 Customer Expansion

Cross-selling and upselling opportunities grow customer value. CRM insights help identify what products or services to recommend next.

#4 Customer Advocacy

[Happy customers](#) become brand advocates. CRMs help identify your top promoters and encourage testimonials, referrals, and reviews.

These stages help businesses build stronger, longer-lasting customer relationships.

How Has the Evolution of CRM Systems Influenced Modern Business Practices?

Modern CRM systems have dramatically reshaped how businesses operate. Here's how:

1. **Data-Driven Decisions:** CRM analytics help teams understand customer behavior,

preferences, and buying patterns

2. **Personalised Marketing:** Marketers can segment lists and send tailored messages that match user intent
3. **Sales Automation:** Sales teams can automate follow-ups, manage pipelines, and close deals faster
4. **Customer Support Integration:** CRMs link support tickets, chat history, and feedback into a single profile
5. **Remote Work Compatibility:** Cloud-based CRMs allow teams to work from anywhere and stay connected

This evolution has made CRM tools central to customer experience and long-term growth strategies.

Popular CRM Platforms That Shaped the Evolution

Several platforms have played a major role in CRM's growth. Below are some of the platforms

1. **Salesforce:** Pioneered cloud-based CRM and remains a leader in innovation
2. **HubSpot:** Made CRM accessible to small and medium-sized businesses with a free platform
2. **Zoho CRM:** Offers an affordable, all-in-one CRM suite for global businesses
3. **Microsoft Dynamics:** Combines CRM with enterprise resource planning (ERP) for large organizations
4. **Pipedrive and Freshsales:** Focus on intuitive interfaces and sales-driven features

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These platforms reflect how CRM has evolved from a basic contact tool to a powerful business system.

The evolution of customer relationship management has changed how businesses attract, engage, and grow with their customers. From manual records to AI-powered automation, CRM has gone from a back-office tool to a central driver of business success.

Understanding the phases and stages of CRM helps companies choose [the right strategies](#) and tools to meet today's customer expectations.

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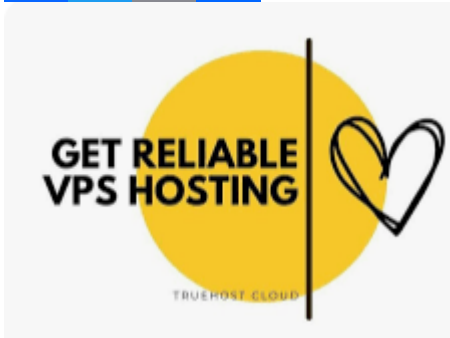
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PS: I know you might agree with some of the points raised in this article or disagree with some of the issues raised.

Please share your thoughts on the topic discussed. We would appreciate it if you could drop your comment. Thanks in anticipation.

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