

CRM AND DATABASE SOFTWARE COMPARISON

Real Solutions For Busy Professionals

SPECIAL REPORT

Provided by RealAssist

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Database Basics

There are a great number of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), contact management and database software packages available on the market – it almost seems as though every month a new contact or database management tool enters center stage. And, although most of these programs are similar in their design, each system has their own unique qualities. The question is, *how do you determine which one is right for you? What criteria do you really need in a database management tool?* (Incidentally, we will be using the terms “*contact management*” and “*database management*” interchangeably throughout this report.)

We have put together this comparison report with the hope that we may be able to assist you in choosing the right database management tool for your business requirements. We have also provided you with tips and tricks for using some of the tools to establish and build lasting relationships with your prospects and clients.

Do You Really Need Contact Management Software?

Absolutely! You are professional – you are successful – you need to remain successful. The one sure-fire way to maintain your level of success is to *properly* manage and maintain your clients, prospects, colleagues and other contacts (and, yes, even your competitors!) Oftentimes, we will hear the question, “*Can’t I just use my Outlook?*” – The simple answer to that is “*sure you can*” – if you just want to maintain a list of people with whom you have contact.

Yes, Outlook can perform many, many tasks, however, setting them up can be somewhat cumbersome, especially if you have no experience with customizing your options. And, from experience, we can certainly testify that 95% of people we have spoken to on this issue rarely go beyond the capabilities of Outlook’s email and calendaring functions.

So, what contact management software is right for you? – We’ll be getting to that shortly.

Imagine, if you will, that you are buying a new car – we can all agree that every car has similar basic qualities; four wheels, a body and an engine. You can upgrade your options, increase your power and have a professional mechanic to maintain your vehicle. It’s when you actually open the hood and see the guts of the car that things start to differ. The same can be said for your database or contact management tool.

Although each software program may appear to be the same on the outside, every one is unique in their own special way. And, not to disparage the car manufacturers, you can either drive the Cadillac of databases, or you can choose to cruise around in a Hyundai – the choice is ultimately yours.

Not all contact management software packages are created equal.

Yes, they all store names, addresses and phone numbers. Some have calendaring capabilities, most have an activities (or a to-do) list. But this is where the similarities begin to subside. We now move into the realm of what is called “*customization*” – the latest trend in databases. In today’s competitive market, it’s simply not enough to use the canned software that comes in a box. Every software company has their own idea of what is the best way to keep in touch with your contacts, and similarly, they all provide their own unique method of doing so.

One of the principal requirements we see on a regular basis is the ability to customize your database so that it performs in exactly the way you want it to. Let’s go back to the car analogy for a moment. If you purchase your car off the dealer’s lot, it will typically come with automatic transmission, power windows, power locks, CD player and, A/C. The car will get you from points A-to-Z, and you’ve probably paid a fair price for the vehicle.

But let’s imagine you’ve had a stellar year and business is booming. You may even be thinking about catering to a more discriminating client base – *you want the Lexus*. But don’t stop there! You also want to add leather-heated seats, GPS, a built- in DVD surround sound system and fingerprint recognition technology. Will this car still get you from point A to Z? *Yes*. Chances are, however, that the dealer doesn’t have this particular *custom* car on the lot -- it’s going to take a few weeks before you’re able to drive it – and, it’s going to cost a few more dollars than the first car.

Again, we can compare this to your database. If you’re happy with the off-the-lot Hyundai, then you’re probably comfortable using Outlook to manage your contacts. But, if you really want to impress your clients, you need to go with the Lexus. This is where we cross the threshold into the software packages we’re going to discuss. Again, keep in mind that there are literally hundreds of packages available – we’re not going to tell you that you *must* go with any of the tools identified in this report. We’re simply going to give you an objective view of the most common database tools that we see on a regular basis for busy professionals.

So let’s start doing some tire kicking now ...

In this report, we will be reviewing the following database solutions:

- FrontRange GoldMine®
 - ACT! by Sage
 - Maximizer CRM 10
 - Salesforce.com
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* Not all features of all the solutions have been explored, however, we have provided Internet website addresses for you to investigate each company.

GoldMine®

If you're looking for one of the most robust, most customizable and most controllable contact management solution, a great place to start is with FrontRange's GoldMine®. While not exactly the Rolls Royce of CRM, it is certainly one of the luxury cars of databases in its own right. It is feature rich and powerful, and not for the faint at heart. We've taken a quote from their web page (www.frontrange.com) to describe what GoldMine® can do for your business:

*“Award-winning **GoldMine®** and **GoldMine® Corporate Edition** are flexible, but powerful, business and customer relationship management solutions that can help you improve sales processes and shorten sales cycles by untangling disorganized contact information, correcting inefficiencies, and automating time-consuming administrative tasks so you can focus on building your client relationships.”*

GoldMine® allows you to increase productivity team-based collaboration, centralized customer information, and tools for streamlining sales and marketing processes. With add-on modules that include flexible web access, mobile contact management, and integration with Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Exchange and even some of the more popular accounting programs, it becomes the ultimate customer relationship management (CRM) tool. And, the icing on the cake is the available industry specific templates, aimed directly at optimizing your particular business (*sounds a lot like car options, doesn't it?*)

Let's look at some of the pros and cons of GoldMine®:

GoldMine® Pros

- Easy to follow “Wizard-based” use
- Integrates easily with common office applications (Microsoft Word, Outlook)
- Superior contact management features
- Comprehensive sales-analysis and forecasting features
- Automated processes can be developed and implemented
- Extensive customization availability

GoldMine® Cons

- Automated process difficult and lengthy to configure
 - Learning curve can be steep if you've never used a CRM tool
 - Cost to implement can be pricey if you need multiple access licenses
 - If you require web access, a hosting server location is required – (additional cost)
 - Cost per use technical support
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ACT! by Sage 2009

For a less expensive and technology rich solution, you may want to explore ACT! by Sage 2009 (www.act.com) -- (You may be more familiar with the name 'Symantec').

For the purpose of this report, we will be discussing the offline version of ACT! 2009 – ACT! by Sage solutions are available in a hosted server environment through authorized, independent ACT! Hosting Providers – you can find out more about them by contacting Sage directly.

ACT! presents a variety of solutions geared specifically at different professionals. *ACT! by Sage for Real Estate 2008* offers a complete system for professionals in the residential real estate market, enabling you to organize buyer, seller, and property information all in one place. You can also manage your daily tasks from showings to closing details. And, last but not least, you are able to communicate with your clients using custom flyers and letter templates.

ACT! by Sage for Financial Professionals gives you the tools you need to beef up client relations, achieve growth and client retention, all while monitoring standards and compliance. You are also able to organize client (past or present) and prospect data, along with their financial information, allowing you to maintain accurate record and remain current with your contacts.

ACT! Pros

- Simple setup procedure
- Integrates with common office applications
- Strong customization tools
- Extensive contact-management tools
- Outstanding call-management features
- First-rate documentation
- Affordable price
- Online version available (*monthly fee applies*)

ACT! Cons

- Basic administration tools
- Few sales-analysis or strategy tools

Maximizer CRM 10

If you're looking for an inexpensive, easy-to-use, intuitive and feature rich solution, one of the best solutions for its value is Maximizer CRM 10 (www.maximizer.com)

It does not matter if you are a sole proprietor, startup business, have hundreds of employees, or even thousands of contacts, Maximizer CRM 10 has a solution for you. There are a number of multi-tiered solutions to chose from, ranging from Maximizer for Sales, Marketing or Customer Service, as well as a Maximizer CRM 10 Entrepreneur Edition, which is their version of Contact Management software.

Maximizer is available as an offline tool, and the initial cash outlay may be a little higher than a monthly online fee, however, the offline version will still allow you to access the information remotely. There is a Maximizer Mobile version which allows you to synchronize with your PDA.

Maximizer CRM 10 Pros

- Easy to deploy, learn, use and maintain
- Access from any online PC – 24/7 accessibility
- Demo version available
- Best value for total CRM solution
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Maximizer CRM 10 Cons

- Software will eventually need to be upgraded
- Online training is fee based
- Customer support is fee based, and it is quite pricey.

Salesforce.com

The last player on our list is Salesforce.com. Before, we have discussed luxury cars versus entry-level cars. This one is in a class all its own. We'll call this the Hummer of CRM.

Salesforce.com is a web-based CRM solution for sales, service, marketing, and call center operations. It effectively streamlines customer relationship management, which boosts customer satisfaction.

The tool is offered in a variety of editions. The Personal and Developer editions are for single sales reps and application developers; the Group Edition is available for up to 5 users; the Professional Edition allows you to scale between 5 and 500 users; Enterprise Edition allows you unlimited users (on a per user cost basis) – just a note, AOL uses this particular edition for their CRM; and finally, the Unlimited Edition, which is exactly what it sounds like – unlimited possibilities.

Powerful, customizable, unrivaled sales and support team, Salesforce.com is definitely high on our list of recommendations, regardless of the size of your organization.

Salesforce.com Pros

- Online tool allows you to access where you want, when you want
- Scalability based on the number of users required
- Integration with other applications
- No upgrade fees
- No software to install
- 30-day demo available
- Directly integrates with Google AdWords program

Salesforce.com Cons

- High learning curve
- Customization must be done by individual with experience (administrator)
- Investment cost may be considered high, especially for small business

In Conclusion

Now, at this point, we're sure you're still asking the question, "*But which one should I use??*" As mentioned in the beginning, each software product is unique – and such is the case with each business professional – you are an individual, your needs are unique and you need to make the final choice. What we would like to stress is that you need to evaluate and investigate any product before purchasing or signing any monthly contracts.

To help you further determine what you need in a contact management solution for your business, here are a few key points you may wish to consider:

- Do you currently, *actively* market your business? If so, *how*?
- Where will your new contacts or clients come from?
- Do you currently use or plan on using email marketing and email campaigns?
- Do you evaluate and track the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns? How?
- How are you currently cultivating your established relationships?
- Do you need to share your existing data with other software programs? (ie: PDA's)
- Do you feel that your business would benefit from referrals?
- Does your CRM software need "web-to-lead" integration?
- Do you need "Lead to Opportunity to Client Life Cycle Management" in a CRM?
- Will you require reporting capabilities?
- How many users will need access to the data?
- Do you already have a referral program in place?
- Do you advertise in the media, such as newspapers or radio? Or is your marketing primarily done using targeted mailings or e-mail?

"What Do I Need In A Database Management Tool?"

Activity scheduling, history reporting, contact notes, mail merge functions – these are all the basics. Your contact management solution should also include lead-generation, prospecting and marketing tools. You need to have the ability to search, sort and group contacts any way you want. You want it to be flexible enough that it will interface with third-party software programs.

We firmly believe that the key to any business success is *effective* contact management. It doesn't matter if you have a database of 20,000 contacts – if you are not effectively marketing to them, maintaining mutually beneficial relationships or simply keeping them up to date, your database is going to break down (*just like a car*).

The following chart has been developed to give you a snapshot of the features included in each of the solutions above. We have also given you a general idea of the comparative costs of each solution. Please use this chart as a reference only – it has been designed for comparison purposes only.

Contact and Database Management Solutions Feature / Cost Comparison Chart

Feature	GoldMine®	ACT!	Maximizer	Salesforce.com
Integrate with Outlook	✓	✓	✓	✓
Google AdWords	✗	✗	✗	✓
Integration with Website	\$\$	\$\$\$\$	✓	✓
PDA Integration	✓	✓	✓	✓
Email Campaigns	✓	✓	✓	✓
Customizable	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internet Based	✗	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
Level of Difficulty	3	2	3	4
Third Party Hosting	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	✗	✗
Reporting	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tech Support	✓	\$\$	\$\$	✓
Free Support	✓	✓	30 min	30 Day
Training	\$\$\$	✓	\$\$\$\$	\$\$
Overall Cost*	\$\$	\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$

We hope that the information provided in this report has helped you to explore just a couple of the options available to you for your contact and database management solution for your business. If you would like to further discuss any of the tools mentioned in this report, please feel free to contact us at (905) 446-3333.

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