5 Before you invest in a CRM system, ask these questions

A CRM primer for all institutions

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Introduction

In today's tough economic climate, higher education institutions need to reduce costs, stay agile, and provide better student services—or lose their competitive edge. So it makes sense that constituent management relationship (CRM) solutions have gained widespread use. In a recent study by industry analyst Ovum, only 10 percent of institutions reported not having some kind of CRM.[1] Simply having a CRM system is not a panacea.

For example, when Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, California, USA) purchased an enrolment management solution, it knew that what it really needed was an adaptable solution with a much broader reach. Specifically, it needed the capability to expand across the student lifecycle (not just admissions) and it needed to facilitate collaboration across multiple departments and functions—many of which did not typically work together. This vision prompted the university to choose a system that could grow with it. "You have to look at how various offices in the same college collaborate with other administrative offices, like financial aid or the Academic Resources Center," says Jean-Paul Andrieu, Director of Planning and Systems of Loyola Marymount University. "If you aren't a student and you are having challenges collaborating with the campus in general, well, that's a problem."

Loyola Marymount University's foresight paid off in spades. By recognising that department-specific systems would not meet their long-term needs, they implemented a comprehensive solution that had the capacity to grow with them.

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1. Nicole Engelbert and Navneet Johal, "2013 ICT Enterprise Insights in the Higher Education Industry report," Ovum, 2 October 2013.
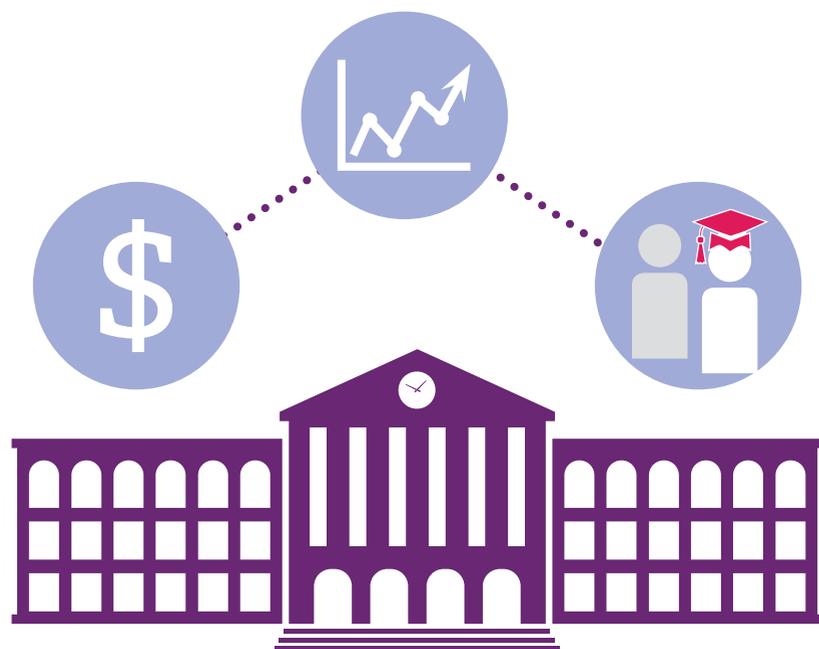
CRM Adoption Across the Institution

PROSPECTS	STUDENTS	ALUMNI AND FRIENDS
Undergraduate	IT helpdesk	Donor programmes
Graduate—Professional	Academic advisement	Alumni relations
Graduate—Other	Career services	
Continuing education	Financial aid	
	Institution	
	Residence life	
	Instruction	

KEY:

Very little adoption	Early adopters	Growing	Strong	Well-established adoption

Source: Nicole Engelbert, "The value of institution-wide CRM presentation," Ovum 2013.

Think of CRM as an enterprise communication tool that can help you manage the relationship along each step of the student lifecycle and beyond.

### If Amazon knows my name and what I like, why don't you?

Students expect a level of personalisation most institutions aren't used to providing. They expect to be able to do what they need—like access their grades, register for courses, or schedule an appointment with their advisers—when they want to, from wherever they are. They expect that what you promised in terms of a student experience will be delivered—sooner rather than later. The same information that makes life easier for students helps your faculty send meaningful, individualised communications such as recruitment letters to best-fit students or donation requests to alumni. To meet those high expectations is going to require the entire institution working together and sharing information. Above all, it means that the whole system has to be agile enough to change when necessary. That's how fast your students expect things to get done.

That's where a CRM solution can help. Unfortunately, many institutions don't understand that CRM is not just a piece of software. Rather, it's a comprehensive strategy supported by technology that helps you more effectively manage relationships with specific groups, such as prospective and current students and alumni, over the lifetime of each relationship. So it is designed to unite the institution by breaking down departmental silos and creating uniform workflows that result in a consistent experience for the full student experience and beyond—from prospect to alumnus.

A comprehensive approach to CRM does this. The right system can be configured to help you meet your goals and strategies, it remains as nimble as your changing needs.

By asking a handful of key questions upfront, you can choose a CRM system that doesn't just fulfill one discreet function but rather, provides effective relationship management throughout the entire lifecycle.

The Constituent Lifecycle

PROSPECTS .... STUDENTS .... ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

Investigation/ Evaluation | Application | Enrolment | Experiential Learning | Academic Resources | Student Development | Student Life | Alumni Relations | Development

RECRUITING .... STUDENT SUCCESS .... ADVANCEMENT
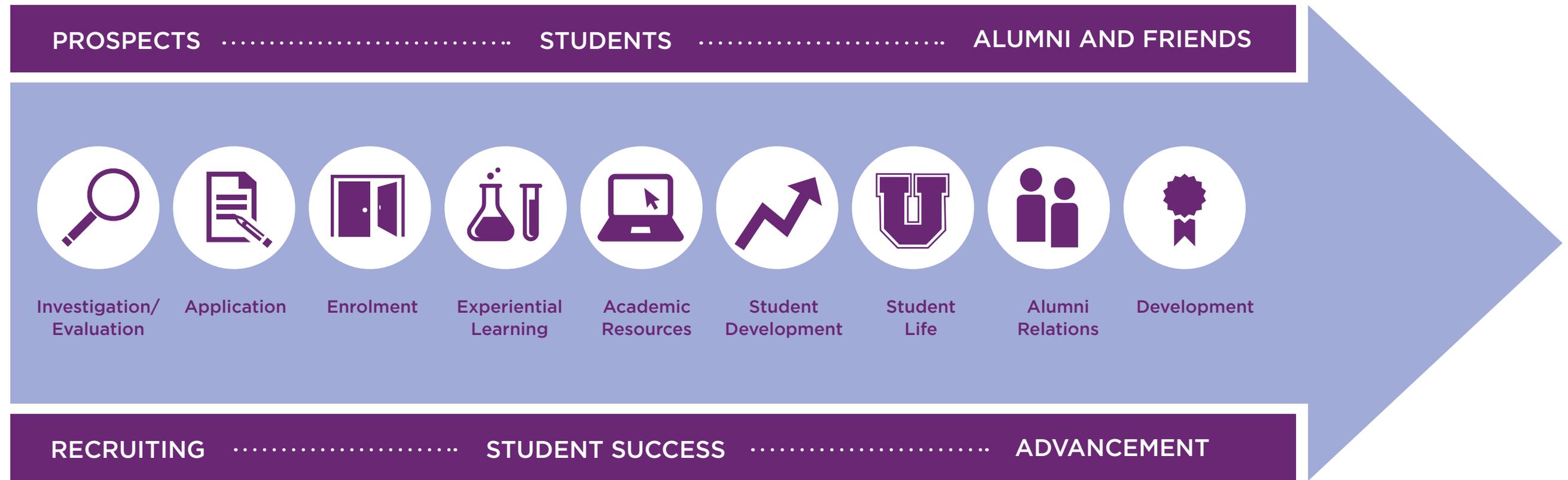
5 questions to ask before you invest

Question 1: Do we choose a generic enterprise-class or higher education-specific solution?

There are plenty of solid, generic CRM platforms available today. The trouble is, once you buy the platform, you have to then invest time, resources and money to make it work for you. That means you'll have to add functionality to address recruitment, enrolment, student success, retention and advancement challenges. Then, you'll need to add all the data fields and events that make those customisations functional. Where are the data fields? How do the data models work? Once you figure that out, you've got to map those to department business processes and workflows. Then you've got to integrate all of that with your learning management system and your student information system. Every time there's an upgrade or the CRM platform changes, you've got to do it all again. Look at total cost of ownership. You had to customise it to make it work and then you have to continually invest to keep things working.

Worse, the inflexible nature of some generic platforms can force you to change your successful business processes to fit the system. The cost of rewiring successful processes doesn't just include time and money, either. It can hurt staff productivity, which can lead to "mutinies," where people refuse to adopt the system.

The problem with generic, enterprise-class systems is it's hard to know what you don't know. Going back and reconfiguring for unexpected needs can take significant time. The result is often a CRM that is designed for those who were most closely involved in its development rather than the complete set of users. So, what once seemed like a cost-effective answer becomes more and more costly in terms of time, money, and morale. That's why, although CRM demands the largest market of any enterprise software—estimated to be some $36.5 billion by 2017[2]—actual use of these systems is measured at only one percent.[3]

2. https://www.aabacosmallbusiness.com/advisor/gartner-predicts-crm-36b-market-2017-184547931.html

3. "4 Reasons Why You Should Custom-Build Your CRM System," Caspio blog, (13 September 2013), accessed 2 May 2014, http://blog.caspio.com/paas-in-action/4-reasons-why-you-should-custom-build-your-crm-system/.

Hidden costs of generic platforms

SUPPORTED TRAINING TIME
PLATFORM COSTS

DIMINISHED RETURNS
UNDERUTILISATION
PROCESS CHANGE TIME
CUSTOMISATION COST/TIME
UNSUPPORTED TRAINING TIME
PLATFORM COSTS

HIGHER-ED SPECIFIC

GENERIC

More and more higher education institutions are choosing systems that are tailored to their needs from the start. Even at 90 percent adoption, education spending on CRM is dwarfed by that of industries like manufacturing and banking. Often unable to keep up with the pace of CRM development, higher education-specific systems can quickly become outdated.

The key is finding a system that is both tailored to meet your needs and built on a platform that is widely used. Think about it this way: would you rather have a small solution run by a small team of developers or an advanced system that gets the funding, support and investments needed to develop the most innovative approaches to CRM? Look for a hybrid system that is built within a familiar interface, which shortens the learning curve.

Global education spending in 2015

Gartner identified the top 10 strategic technologies for the education industry in 2015 and provided recommendations to education leaders regarding adoption and benefits.[4] It is not a list of what institutions spend the most time or money on; rather it is a list of strategic technologies that Gartner recommends and should have a plan for.

$67.8 billion
in 2015

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4. http://www.firstpost.com/business/global-education-sector-tech-spending-exceed-67-8-bn-2015-gartner-2130605.html

Question 2: How does the CRM system integrate with my existing and future technology?

Every higher education institution has its own unique set of technology solutions for core administrative areas that, while outside the CRM loop, often rely on related data. Imagine how you might do things differently if you could see all the important information you needed, compiled in a unified view, and could share that information with others. Imagine if you could track interactions with prospective students, enrolled students, and alumni on a daily basis. It would help you create distinctive experiences, establish strong relationships early, and sustain those connections with communications that matured over the course of a lifetime. This is how enterprise systems with an open architecture offer significant time and resource savings over siloed ones.

In addition, integration with knowledge worker applications—like email and database programmes—and process-enhancing software—like data imaging—can help ensure a smooth adoption for faster return on investment. This also enables single sign-on access which is not only convenient, but amps up security controls.

Beyond existing systems and software is the question of the future. Open architectures and application programming interface (API) accessibility are the best way to ensure that your CRM system not only fits what you have now, but also remains viable for the future within an ever-changing technology landscape.

Question 3: Is the system configurable to our unique business processes?

During your evaluation process, make sure you can answer "yes" to this question. Your CRM implementation is an ideal time to take a fresh look at existing processes and introduce both streamlined business processes and software automation simultaneously. When you go beyond software implementation and configuration to look at business process improvement, you can evaluate and rebuild business processes and then support them with technology to enhance efficiency and speed adoption.

> "Whichever CRM tool you choose to deploy, you're going to find that you're dealing with the implementation and automation of customer facing business processes," writes Denise Holland in the article *The Synergy Between CRM Deployment and Process Improvements.*[5] "Modifying your CRM software implementation approach to go beyond simple software configuration, and fully include business process improvement or reengineering, will clearly deliver both an increased efficiency and return on your technology investment."

Implementing the software alone is a missed opportunity. As you revisit your existing processes, take a good look at what's working and what's not. Look at steps or workflows that can be cut—or replaced with automation. Make sure you include the people that do the work in the process; they understand the processes and their limitations today, and their buy-in and engagement is critical to the overall success of the implementation.
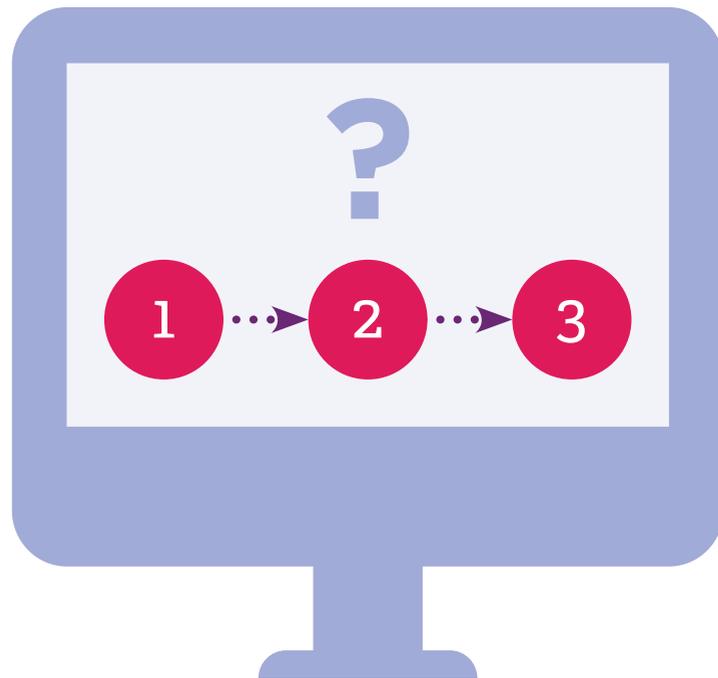
5. Denise Holland, "The Synergy Between CRM Deployment and Process Improvements," CRM Search, accessed 2 May 2014, http://www.crmsearch.com/bpr.php.

Take advantage of the implementation to set parameters and thresholds for universal processes like ranking applications and managing students at risk. Preload and preconfigure the right fields, scripts and data sets into the system to save time and standardise data input and naming conventions. Let your users help you create the views and dashboards that are most useful to them—without custom coding—to boost user adoption and decrease dependence on IT. Go through each process to identify cracks in the system. Those malfunctions may be potential opportunities to plug in the CRM software and create a powerful system tailored to your needs.

Question 4: How should we deploy a CRM system?

Historically, many institutions have selected to deploy on-premise because of the greater control it can offer. This approach requires more on-campus resources to maintain and secure the system. By contrast, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) is more nimble and can save your institution money, at least in the short-term.

The good news is that now you don't necessarily need to choose one over the other. You can choose to deploy one solution on-premise and a different solution as a SaaS. Alternatively, you can select a deployment method now and switch to another model as the needs of the institution change. The point is you can have both control and flexibility.

**SaaS
"THE CLOUD"**

ON-PREMISE

Off-site or on-site, the choice is yours.

SaaS "THE CLOUD"

FASTER TO IMPLEMENT

LOWER INITIAL COST

HIGH SCALABILITY

ON-PREMISE

LOWER COST OVER TIME

GREATER CONTROL

CONTROL OF SECURITY
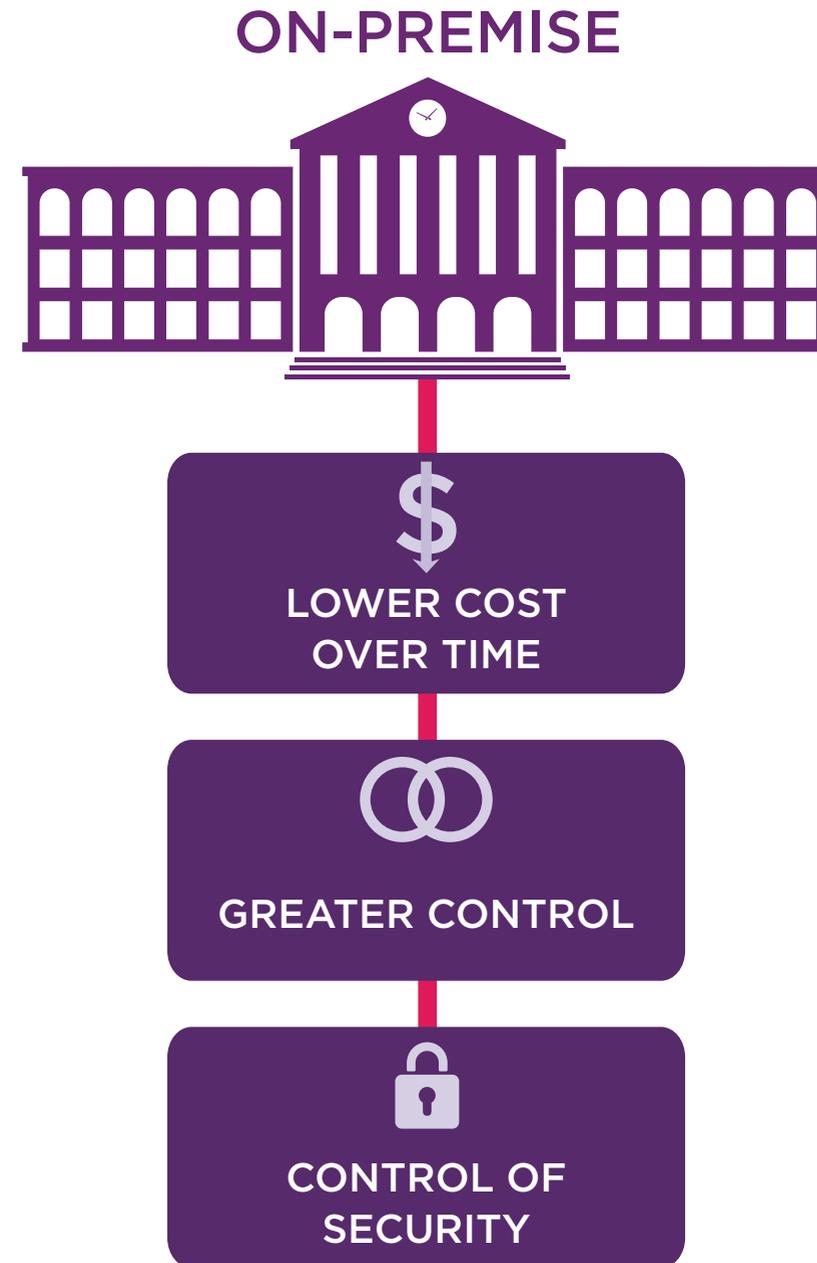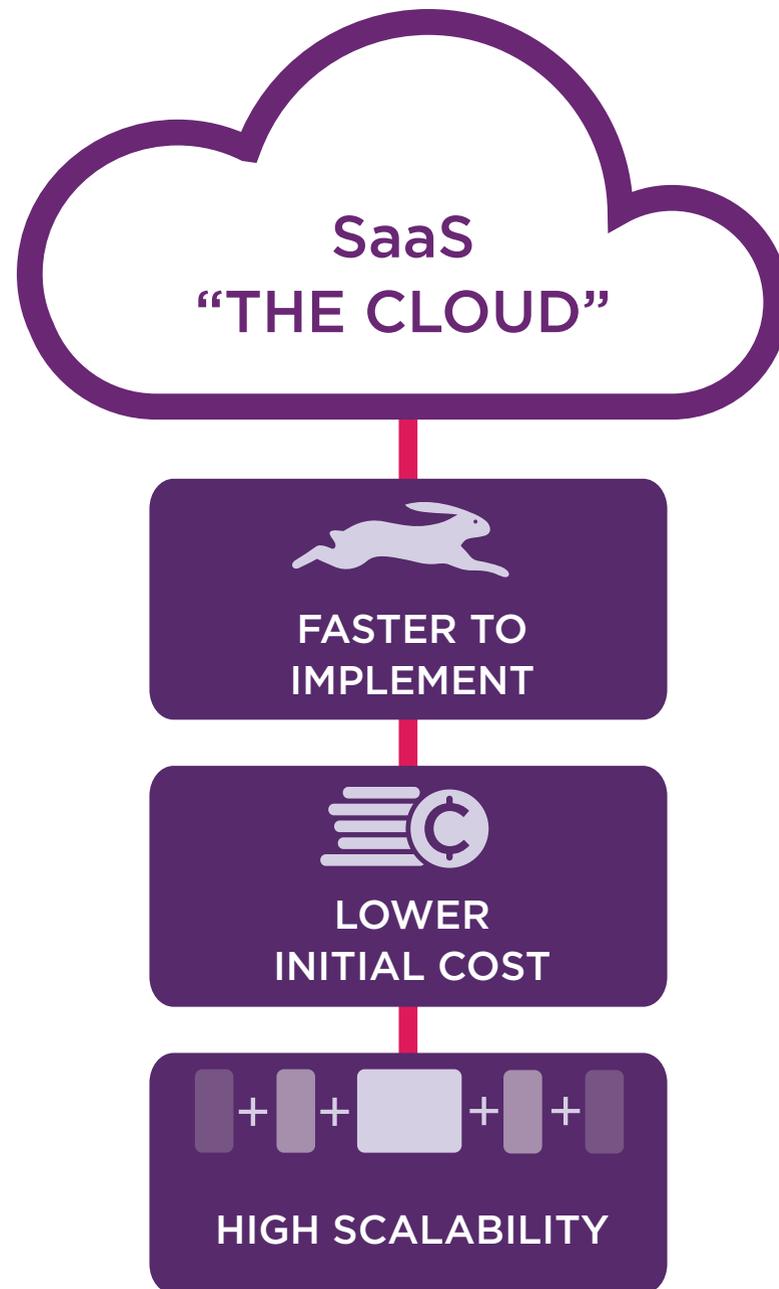
Question 5: How will we manage the change?

Many of the top issues affecting the success of CRM in higher education can be traced directly to poor planning, set up, and implementation. Don't underestimate resistance to change. Before you undertake a CRM implementation, make sure the key players understand that strategy and technology go hand in hand. That means looking at the whole picture to ensure adoption, defining who owns the data, and understanding how the system will integrate with your existing systems to minimise negative effects on people and processes.

It is critical that a partner who is not only an expert in CRM implementation but also understands industry best practices is selected. Ideally, your partner offers ongoing services that can help address issues quickly and effectively. Choosing a partner with both experience and expertise can help redesign the business processes to harness the full power of the CRM system.

At its very worst, a CRM initiative can slow down processes and hinder communication. With the right implementation and a skilled partner to support you, it can radically improve processes, free up resources and provide the insight you need to strengthen lifelong relationships.
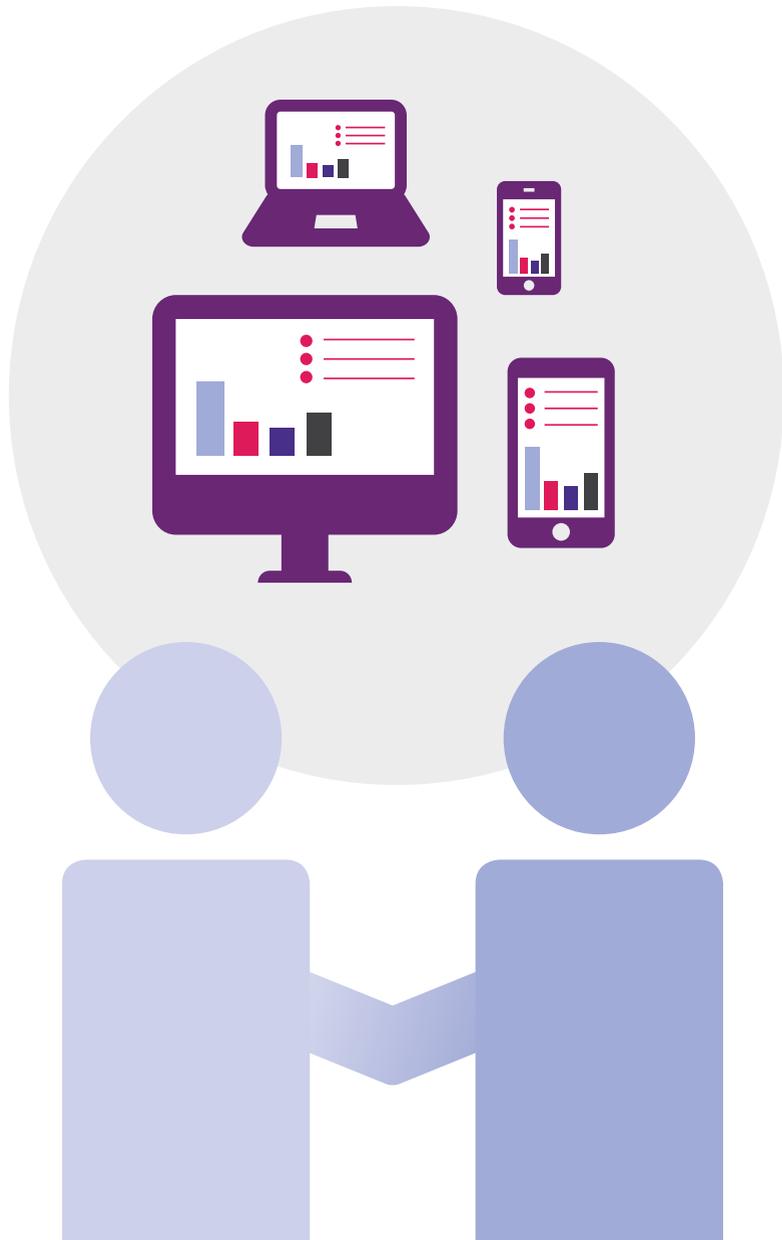
Conclusion

There is the opportunity to shape the future of CRM at your institution. With a broader perspective of the CRM landscape you can select a CRM system that is easy to implement, use, and maintain, so you see a faster return on investment.

By looking at a CRM system implementation as a long-term initiative rather than a short-term project, Loyola Marymount University was able to realise its initial vision. "Students are the life of our university. So we had to look at how they related to different groups on our campus," says Andrieu. "We looked at each student from every single angle of their life—not just academics—to understand how they play, how they communicate, how they build their relationships." This holistic perspective of a student incorporates financial, emotional and physical health in addition to academic performance—and helps the university better engage with the student. "Whatever the goal, the technology can help us collaborate with everyone. We are seeing how it helps from the beginning to end of an average student lifecycle, from the moment a student applies to the university, through acceptance, registration, and orientation, ongoing participation, and ultimately graduation. Then that student becomes part of the alumni community and helps support and spread the word about the university. That is the vision."

Ellucian CRM is a robust set of flexible constituent relationship management (CRM) solutions that can help your institution more successfully recruit and enrol prospective students, support and retain current students, and cultivate meaningful lifelong relationships with alumni and supporters. It's built for higher education on the Microsoft® Dynamics CRM platform, so you don't have to waste time and money creating and recreating the system you really need. It's all here: functionality and speed with minimal IT support needed.

Ellucian CRM helps you:

✓ Understand the relationship with a unified view of constituent interactions

✓ Personalise every communication for meaningful, relevant engagements

✓ Make better and faster decisions with consistent and integrated data

✓ Boost staff efficiencies and redirect their focus to business priorities

✓ Support enrolment, retention, and development goals

About Ellucian

Ellucian helps education institutions thrive in an open and dynamic world.

Ellucian is the world's leading provider of software and services higher education institutions need to help students succeed. More than 2,400 institutions in 40 countries rely on Ellucian to help enable the mission of higher education for over 18 million students. Ellucian provides student information systems (SIS), finance and HR, recruiting, retention, analytics and advancement software solutions. With more than 1,400 institutions subscribing to Ellucian's cloud services and SaaS offerings, the company is one of the largest providers of cloud-based solutions. Ellucian also supports the higher education community with a range of professional services, such as application software implementation, training, education, and management consulting.

To learn more, visit **www.ellucian.com/emea-ap.**

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