

Go West Young Man, Go West ... Westward on the CRM trail

By Alan See

It was claimed to have been Josiah B. Grinnell that 19th century newspaper editor Horace Greeley gave the famous advice “Go West young man, go West.” Many pioneers sought the opportunities of the west. So, go west Grinnell did – to Iowa, where he founded the town of Grinnell and gave land and buildings to Iowa College, which was to become Grinnell College. This summer I traveled west from Ohio to return for my 25th year Grinnell High School reunion. Besides Grinnell College, which is noted to have granted the first B.A. degrees west of the Mississippi, Grinnell’s claim to fame is Grinnell High School and Grinnell College graduate, Robert Noyce. Noyce made basic discoveries leading to the invention of the integrated circuit, and together with Gordon E. Moore founded Intel Corporation. The first college west of the Mississippi, and home of the inventor whose discoveries made the computer revolution possible ... not bad for a small central Iowa town!

Over 150 years ago in the charge to “go West” seldom were mentioned the hardships of the climate, the isolation or the lack of conveniences seen in the populated states back east. The West tested the courage and strength of every man, woman, and child and often only the strong survived. For 21 years Greeley’s penny morning paper was “at the forefront, if not advocating, every radical idea that came into view.” His advice to “go West, young man, and grow with the country” was on the cutting edge. People ventured west on his counsel ... some made a fortune ... others were never heard from again. Had Customer Relationship Management (CRM) been an idea in Greeley’s time he would have been all over it! It’s new, its cutting edge, and it offers opportunity and fortune!

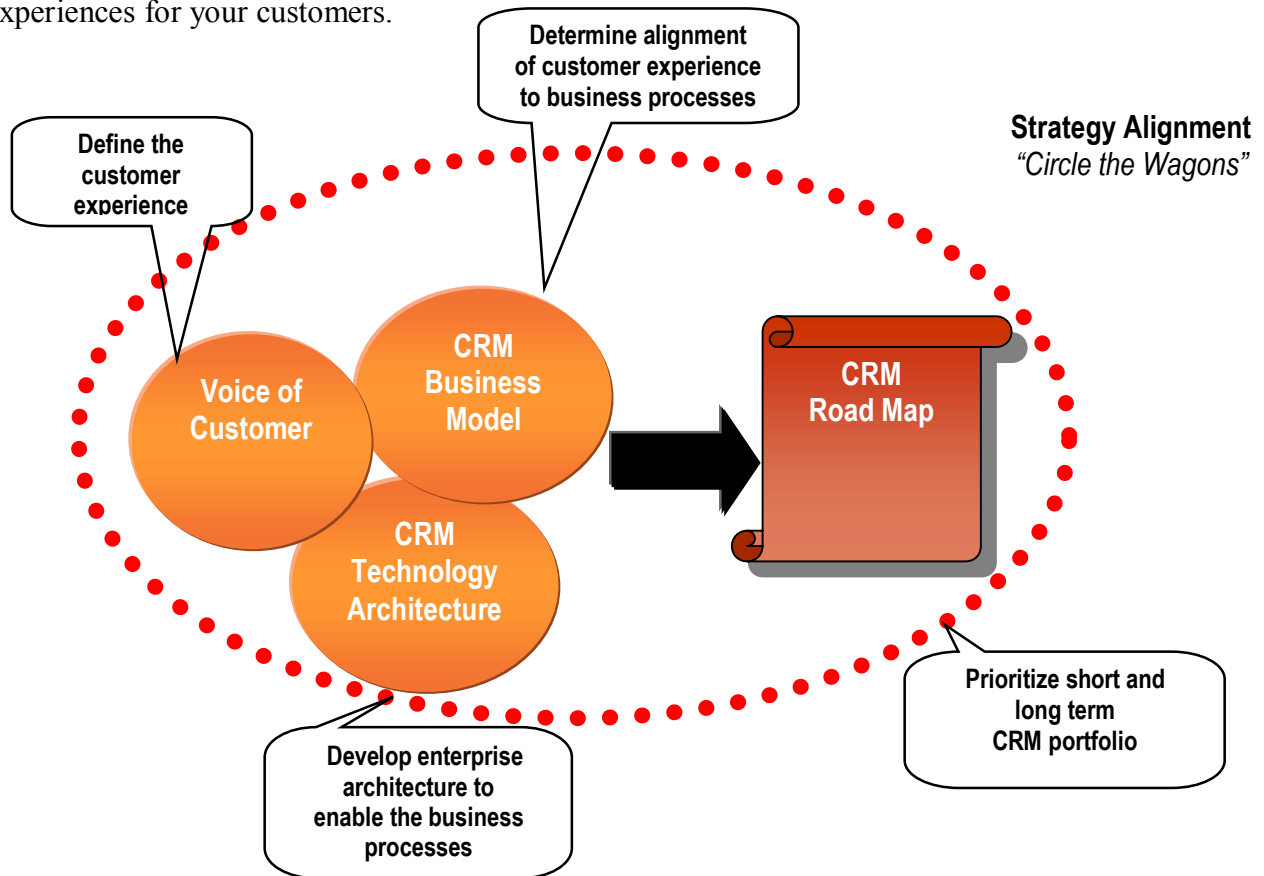
Have you ventured west on the CRM trail? If you have experienced hardship on your CRM journey and feel like you’re stranded in Grinnell, don’t despair. In many peoples’ minds, Iowa now represents “middle America.” A place where most people live stable, comfortable lives, where relationships are strong and where the quality of life is high. Let me share a couple of checkpoints to keep you focused on your CRM journey.

Checkpoint #1:

Check Your CRM Roadmap. What’s that ... you loaded up your wagons to head west without a roadmap? You don’t like to ask for directions ... and decided you would follow the first westward trail you came upon. In fact, you may have found that only part of your wagon train has made it to Iowa because the other half circled back to the old family farm back East.

In many ways, executing CRM is similar to a westward journey. It’s a formidable prospect and complex challenge. A CRM journey is a long distance effort that requires a vision of where you want to go, a map, buy-in from the entire organization, proper equipment, and a safe vehicle. CRM projects usually involve different departments. Traditionally sales, marketing, and service have been on different wagons. Marketing blames sales for not closing leads, sales blame marketing for not generating quality leads, and service blames them both for too-high expectations. It may feel like it goes against their pioneering spirit to work together. The challenge of aligning various CRM initiatives to corporate strategy and the creation of an ensuing roadmap that sets out defined benefits throughout the transformation program is a

critical success factor. The response to this challenge is to circle the wagons around a CRM strategy alignment. The CRM strategy alignment takes an enterprise wide view of CRM vision and strategy, and translates this into a roadmap that ultimately helps create compelling experiences for your customers.



Checkpoint #2:

Check your compass regularly. A compass is an instrument for determining directions by means of a freely rotating magnetized needle that indicates true north. Your CRM compass ... or dashboard, is a set of regularly tracked measures directly linked to the metrics that matter most (your true north) to your CRM vision and strategy. The CRM dashboard allows you to monitor CRM performance by serving as an interface to critical CRM data and enables your organization to circle the wagons around the vision and strategy contained in your roadmap. No project is complete without a means for measuring how well it is delivering the value that was intended. Measuring, analyzing and acting on key metrics in the areas of customer acquisition, penetration, and retention will help keep your customer-driven CRM journey on track.

Like a westward journey, a true CRM transformation takes place in several stages. Whether you homestead in Iowa or continue west your CRM roadmap and dashboard will enable your organization to ensure that all employees understand and share the CRM vision and know their role in achieving it. The journey may be tough at times and you will encounter setbacks along the way, but with map and compass in hand ... "Go West young man and grow with the country."



Alan See, sales & marketing executive, consultant, and educator. Alan is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Phoenix. His 20 years of industry experience cover a broad range of areas including sales, sales management, strategic alliances, sales channel design and operations, sales process design and improvement, product management and product marketing.

Phone: 937.470.4118

Email: AS2461@aol.com

www.marquiswhoswho.net/ALANSEE