

SugarCRM: Sixty Second Sugar Snippets

Podcast Script: Executive Sponsors

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Welcome to this sixty second Sugar Snippet. My name is Andy Dreisch and I'm the Vice President of Sugar's Online Team. Today we're going to talk about a key component of your company's CRM initiatives—the Executive Sponsor.

CRM is a major undertaking and vitally needs an executive sponsor. An executive sponsor is someone who is ultimately responsible for budgetary and resource allocation – and for assessing return on investment. In other words, an executive sponsor decides which software to buy, signs the check, and finds and drives the people to implement the CRM solution. The executive sponsor also serves the important function of advocating for the CRM implementation team.

For most organizations, the executive sponsor is either the CIO or the VP of Sales. There are pros and cons with each of these choices. A CIO tends to focus on the technical resources that will be needed to install, to customize, and to administer the system. That makes it very convenient to get the right people to run the software. However, the CRM system is treated much like any other software, such as the accounting system or a billing system. If the VP of Sales is the executive sponsor, he or she can focus on the users of the system, to make sure they have a tool that they can use but oftentimes lacks control over implementation details. Your style of organization will best determine the right person to select as the executive sponsor.

Not only can the executive sponsor smooth budgetary issues and allocate the right people for the project, but this person ideally is high enough in your organization to enact some fundamental changes in culture that CRM sometimes represents. If the VP of Sales tells all the sales reps “you must use the CRM system to log your deals” then there's a pretty good chance that the sales reps will do just that. But don't forget the importance of providing carrots to go along with those sticks. CRM often involves culture change, and such change is better enacted with the wholehearted support at the highest levels of the company.

All too often I have seen CRM projects flounder because they were driven by a single person who didn't have enough authority or resources to make the project successful. My advice to you—make sure you have an executive sponsor in place before your project starts. Your project's success depends on it!

And that's your sixty second Sugar snippet. Goodbye!

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