SOFTWARE

CRM Systems Help Analyze Workflow, Profile Customers

By **Trevor Thomas**

Customer relationship management software, according to CRM vendors, can help insurers and agencies focus their people, work processes and technology on strengthening customer service and retention.

CRM systems can be a costly investment. Because they can cut days out of application processing and workflow times, however, they offer the potential for a substantial return on investment, the vendors claim.

Typically, CRM applications are sold in modules, allowing insurers to use whatever functions are most appropriate for their operations. Except where noted, most of these applications run on a variety of systems.

Some of the most widely used CRM products are the following:

• Agility:Insurance, from G2X Corp., New York, is designed to help carriers manage customers, agents and underwriting activities. The system can provide management with a complete history of an agent's transactions, including details on all policies the agent has ever sold.

The system also helps insurance agents to process new business and build customer relationships, its makers say.

Other modules within this system help manage prospects, access policy status or support the underwriting process. These capabilities can be integrated with the user company's back-end system, a G2X spokesman says.

The system can be operated entirely over the Internet and customized to the insurance carrier's specific needs, says G2X.

Agility can be implemented in under 100 days, the spokesman adds. G2X will train company trainers or provide its own personnel to teach end users how to use its system.

Pricing depends on many factors, such as number of users and the functions that the insurance company wants. Costs often range from $500 to $700 per user, the spokesman says.

The company said it plans upgrades of Agility:Insurance in October, then again in April.

• E-Z Data Incorporated, Pasadena, Calif., is launching Version 3.0 of its Enterprise CRM Platform for insurance and financial services in November, a company spokeswoman says.

Enterprise CRM has 22 modules that can be customized, including a contact manager, time manager, policy tracker, security system, automatic reporting and standard reports, the company says. One module allows sales reps to schedule and keep track of financial seminars given to customers and prospects.

E-Z Data says the software can be customized to allow the user to avoid duplicate data entries for advisors and clients.

There is an advisor module to help carriers keep track of agents and a carrier module to help independent agents keep track of their insurers. Other modules enable agents to track products, download policies and manage their workload, the company notes.

The program is entirely Internet based, a spokeswoman says.

E-Z Data says it offers ongoing maintenance and support. It will either train a company's own trainers in using its system or provide individualized user instruction.

Implementation typically takes four months to a year, depending upon such variables as degree of customization and depth of systems integration, says E-Z Data.

Pricing varies according to configuration. For instance, license fees may run to $500,000 for 1,000 users, with unit price decreasing as the number of users increases. Customization and implementation fees can vary from 25% to 100% of a license fee, depending upon the degree of customization and depth of systems integration, the company spokeswoman says.

• Siebel Systems Inc., San Mateo, Calif., recently released Siebel Version 7.5 of what it calls "the next generation of Siebel eBusiness Applications."

> **CRM applications are sold in modules that can be bought as needed**

New features of the system's insurance industry component include integrated broker desktop, preconfigured integration for quotes and claims, pension plan administration and health care referrals, the company says.

Siebel adds that its CRM system includes call center service analysis and agent support features, such as sales campaign execution. Its analytic module allows insurance companies to take advantage of data they capture about their customers to improve sales and service effectiveness, retention and profitability.

A partner-management package allows carriers to evaluate, service and manage information on all distribution channel entities, including banks, broker/dealers, agencies and agents, Siebel explains. Another module lets carriers create group insurance plans.

Siebel says it uses three different pricing models for its systems: employee based, channel based and customer based.

Its employee-based model charges $3,000 to $4,000 per user.

For channels such as agents, charges often range from $400 to $600 per user, a company spokesman says.

For systems that provide customer access to the insurer's Web site, Siebel says it bases its price on the maximum number of users that would be online at any given time, ranging from roughly $3,000 to $4,000 per concurrent user.

• Fiserv Life Insurance Solutions, a unit of Fiserv, Inc., Milwaukee, offers Fiserv Customer Contact Solutions.

Fiserv CCS is typically deployed in call centers and a back office or administrative area of an insurance company and tied into agents in the field. Fiserv issues two to four new releases a year, a company spokesman says.

The latest version, released in July, offers tools that help insurance companies manage customer transactions, workflow and Web services, says Fiserv. Agents can use Fiserv CCS to communicate to their

home offices, such as when requesting beneficiaries be added to a customer account.

Fiserv says it also offers a workflow component to help an agent keep track of what work needs to be done on a given account and by when.

The software can operate off a customer's own servers or be Web based, the company notes.

Typically, Fiserv's system takes four to six months to install, a company spokesman says.

The product also has an analytical component that includes such capabilities

such as account aggregation for affluent customers.

Pricing ranges widely, a spokesman says, depending on the number of components purchased and number of tiers within those components, as well as the extent of support services provided by Fiserv. On the low end, Fiserv systems can range from $125,000 to $680,000 for life insurers with under $100 million in annual premiums, and from $250,000 to $4 million for the middle market.

• The Teradata Division of NCR Corporation, Dayton, Ohio, has an extensive data warehousing and analytical suite of products that includes a CRM component.

Its insurance industry package can perform claims analysis, manage distribution channels, such as agents and call centers, and analyze the effectiveness of each channel, says Bill Sinn, director of insurance industry marketing for NCR Teradata.

An example of the type of analysis available from Teradata is a lifetime value module, which identifies which types of policyholders are

most profitable and which are most costly, Sinn notes.

Teradata released the latest version of its data warehouse early this year, focusing on improved marketing campaign management and communications. Typically, the system can be implemented within 90 days, Sinn says.

The company's software runs on Teradata's own proprietary computer system, which it calls WorldMark.

Pricing depends on many variables, Sinn says, and so can vary widely. Often, the cost ranges from $1 million to $2 million, depending on factors such as number of policyholders and users, volume of data and specific modules selected.
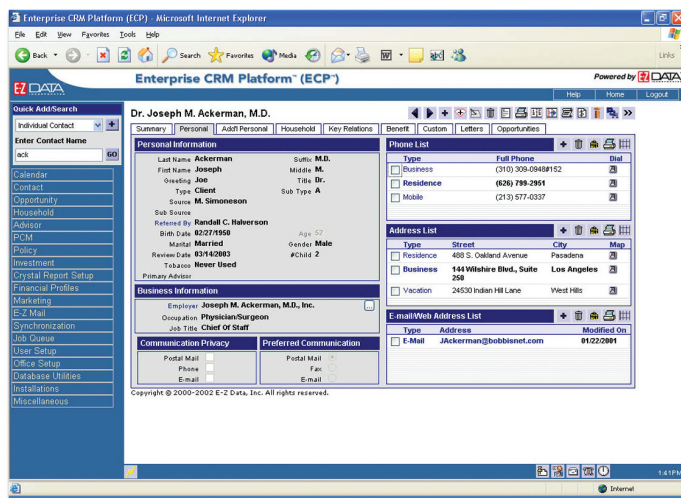
• NaviSys Front Office, from NaviSys Inc., Edison, N.J., is a workflow tool designed specifically for life insurance and annuity processing.

NaviSys Front Office 7.0, released early this summer, features enhanced rule-making to speed up the handling of different functions, the company says.

The product also features Web-based sales illustration underwriting, policy application entry and customer service components, NaviSys adds.

The system streamlines new business processing and, by cutting time from the underwriting process, increases close rates and reduces not-takens, a company spokesman says.

A carrier can run NaviSys Front Office on its own server or off NaviSys's server, the company notes. License fees range from $175,000 to $500,000. **NU**