

Business Choice Awards 2018: CRM

 SUGARCRM.



 Microsoft



 salesforce



Businesses need Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools for an obvious reason: keep the relationship with customers a happy one. Take a look at the top choices in the category according to PCMag readers.

By Matthew D. Sarrel

Even in the age of e-commerce, relationships are the key to any successful business. In the old days, like 1990, business owners could take the time to build face-to-face personal relationships with customers, making handwritten notes in files or on Rolodex cards about customer preferences, interactions, family members' names, pets' names, hobbies, and other various details.

That process doesn't scale well, so we've developed numerous technology tools to help, the most common being [customer relationship management \(CRM\)](#) tools that organize and manage customer interactions. This edition of the [PCMag Business Choice Awards](#) focuses on CRM services that help businesses build and maintain customer interaction programs and measure their effectiveness.

For three decades, we have been augmenting our hands-on, labs-based product reviews with our Readers' Choice Awards, in which PCMag readers rate the products and services they use the most. The Business Choice Awards extend the [Readers' Choice Awards](#) by garnering feedback about the hardware, software, and services our readers deploy, administer, maintain, and use in a business environment.

In order to help you tap into the collective wisdom of PCMag readers, our survey asked respondents to rate their overall satisfaction, reliability, and tech support experience with the CRM solution they use, plus the likelihood they would recommend it to others.

If you select, deploy, or administer the products in our Business Choice Awards, or if you advise or manage people in these roles, then you know how critical it is to choose the right products. The results of the PCMag Business Choice Awards survey are invaluable when doing so.

Customer Relationship Management

CRM gives you a single place to track every interaction with every customer you've ever had. That's right, everything: chat, email, phone calls, web traffic, orders, support requests, complaints, and more. CRM products have evolved to display a dashboard of customers and activities that can be prioritized, sorted, and reported on. Many CRM solutions now include automation to help you scale to serve internet volumes, where, for example, customers who abandon a shopping cart halfway through a transaction are automatically sent a "how can I help you?" message via the communications medium of their choice.

In this year's Business Choice Awards for Best CRM Solution, we had 98 companies (down from last year's 236!) Nominated, but only six received enough votes to be considered for top honors. CRM is a fairly mature market, so it's not surprising that these are the same finalists that readers have nominated over and over for the past three years. It's also not surprising that, once again, **SugarCRM (\$40.00 at SugarCRM)** wins the Business Choice Awards for best CRM service with top scores in most of the categories.



Business Choice 2018: CRM Overall Scores



Our readers rated SugarCRM a 7.7 in overall satisfaction (down from 8.7 in 2017, although still higher than the previous year's 7.1), an 8.4 in reliability (down from last year's 9.0 and up from the previous year's 7.2), an 8.5 in likelihood to recommend (down from last year's 8.8 and up from the previous year's 7.4) and a 61 percent NPS (see more below).

Unfortunately, 55 percent of survey respondents reported requiring tech support—that's more than half the customers of SugarCRM needing help. That's the only knock against SugarCRM in our results. By contrast, only 9 percent of Oracle customers sought out tech support.

Digging deeper into recommendation and the accompanying NetPromoter Score: in the past, these scores have been relatively low when it comes to CRM. We've seen a steady improvement over the past three years, and 2018 is no exception. No matter which solution you select, CRM solutions are complex beasts that usually bear the brunt of criticism as companies adapt existing processes to provide customer service at scale.

In a field where products are generally disliked, NPS is a helpful tool for comparing solutions and separating out the best in class. According to the NPS, SugarCRM is the only CRM solution that our respondents would strongly recommend to peers. That 61 percent is slightly lower than last year's 64 percent while remaining significantly higher than the previous year's 33 percent. It's followed by **Microsoft Dynamics**, which saw a huge increase from -3 percent to 33 percent, and SAP at 28 percent (a dramatic improvement from last year's -12 percent). Salesforce and Oracle also had year-to-year improvements. Only ACT! had an NPS that went down, from last year's 0 percent to this year's -8 percent.



WINNERS: Customer Relationship Management

SugarCRM

Every year since 2015, this category has been owned by SugarCRM—this is the fourth time it's taken our Business Choice award. There's no reason to think it won't continue to dominate the customer relationship world with PCMag readers at this point—the company certainly knows how to make its customers happy.

Methodology

We email survey invitations to PCMag.com community members, specifically subscribers to our [Readers' Choice Survey](#) mailing list. The surveys are hosted by [SurveyMonkey](#), which also performs our data collection. This survey was in the field from May 14, 2018 to June 4, 2018.

Respondents were asked to rate their CRM service using multiple questions about their overall satisfaction with the solution, as well as experiences with technical support within the past 12 months.

Because the goal of the survey is to understand how the email marketing solutions compare to one another and not how one respondent's experience compares to another's, we use the average of the email marketing solutions' rating, not the average of every respondent's rating. In all cases, the overall ratings are not based on averages of other scores in the table; they are based on answers to the question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your CRM provider?"

Scores not represented as a percentage are on a scale of 0 to 10 where 10 is the best.

Net Promoter Scores are based on the concept introduced by Fred Reichheld in his 2006 best seller, *The Ultimate Question*, that no other question can better define the loyalty of a company's customers than "how likely is it that you would recommend this company to a friend or colleague?" This measure of brand loyalty is calculated by taking the percent of respondents who answered 9 or 10 (promoters) and subtracting the percent who answered 0 through 6 (detractors). ([For more, read PCMag's Top Consumer Recommended Companies for 2018.](#))

If you would like to participate in PCMag's monthly Readers' Choice surveys and to be eligible for our monthly sweepstakes promotion, [please sign up today](#).