

# Business Opportunities

## Extend Your New Year's Bliss: Take Better Care of Your Customers

(NAPSA)—If you're the owner of a small or medium-sized business and you haven't made good on all your New Year's resolutions, don't despair just yet. There's still time to do something good for your company, your employees and yourself: Take a look at how technology—such as Microsoft Business Solutions CRM—can help automate the way you build better relationships with your customers.

Your employees will thank you for making their jobs easier, and there's a good chance your customers will show their appreciation by conducting business with you more often. In an age in which it's far more costly to find new customers than to retain existing ones, delivering superior service is critical to your success.

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are more than 5,740,000 small and medium-sized businesses, or companies with from one to 500 employees, in the country. This segment employs more people than the large and more widely known Fortune 500 companies and has equally important information technology needs. Today, business owners are embracing customer relationship management (CRM) technology, because it is readily available and affordable, simple to install and maintain, and as easy to use as an e-mail system.

"CRM technology should help your salespeople manage leads and opportunities, measure and forecast sales activities, efficiently track and monitor customer communications, and automate manual and time-consuming processes across the sales spectrum," said Dave Batt, senior director of Microsoft CRM. "Among the benefits of a well-equipped sales force are shortened sales cycles, higher closure rates and greater customer retention." That's good for all businesses, including yours.

CRM technology also should include features that help increase your company's customer service capabilities. The product you select should be able to handle an increase in customer requests without your having to add employees or skimp on qual-



**You've got to hand it to them: Many small businesses are finding new feelings of security with the help of customer relationship management technology.**

ity. This means your employees will be able to provide customers with the consistent, efficient service that plays a huge role in customer satisfaction, while keeping the costs of service delivery low.

Ambrose Employer Group LLC, a New York City-based provider of outsourced human resources, payroll and employee benefits administration services, realized that as the company continued to grow, it lacked a central repository for client information. Ambrose sought a CRM solution that could integrate with the company's Lawson HR system and make it easier for its human resource specialists to perform their jobs. "Microsoft CRM clearly has had an incredibly positive effect on our ability to service our clients. Its ability to help us proactively muster internal resources to attack an issue has been a tremendous plus. And our response times are better because we can track the length of time issues have been open," said Greg Slamowitz, the company's co-chief executive officer.

Other factors to consider before you acquire CRM technology include the product's ability to work in harmony with other business management systems you are running. The technology should be simply configured, easy to use and highly customizable to meet your unique business needs.

For more information on automating your strategy for managing customer relationships, please visit <http://www.microsoft.com/businesssolutions/crm>.