

Beyond Digital: Organizational Barriers in CRM Implementation in Sales Companies

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Abstract. *Whatever efforts organizations make to achieve success, establishing and maintaining a favorable relationship with customers remains a determining factor. In this sense, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that focuses on improving the lifetime value of the customer becomes a benchmark of interest for companies. This research is based on a case study construction that includes the analysis of the implementation period of a CRM system in three branches of a sales and distribution company, but also the following three-year period of use. The data were collected using the triangulation method, coming from organizational documents, reports, and semi-structured interviews with one person from each subsidiary. To conduct the investigation, the logic of the Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement (ADKAR) model, a goal-oriented structure for change management, was used because the specifications of which were suitable for the field under analysis. The main findings highlighted partial compliance with the ADKAR model phases in the CRM system implementation process in the analyzed subsidiaries, accompanied by positive effects at the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) level. This research can provide support for companies in the field of sales and distribution and not only regarding the proper implementation of a CRM system through ADKAR logic, supporting awareness of the possible obstacles they may face throughout this process.*

Keywords: CRM implementation, ADKAR, distribution companies, barriers.

Introduction

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is an integrated system focusing on maintaining a good relationship with customers, boosting client loyalty, and improving customer lifetime value (Blattberg & Deighton, 1996). To achieve success and distinguish oneself in the contemporary business picture, there is a dire need for organizations to improve their performance, responding to the growing demands of customers and stakeholders (Olariu et al., 2023).

Information systems have been studied for a long time, and success and failure are extremely popular topics. Numerous overall successful models have been created and evaluated in recent years (Davis, 1989). According to Davids (1999), around 65% of CRM implementations fail. The main scope of a CRM is to improve the relationship between the company and the client (Rosenbloom, 2013). Success indicates that the CRM system meets its goals, which include increasing customer relations, optimizing the process, and boosting profitability. Failure in CRM

implementation means that the system fails to achieve its objectives, frequently as a result of poor planning or an incompatibility with company demands (Kotler et al., 2022). Usually, the most common problems are related to data or operational or technical aspects.

CRM implementation means adoption of new technologies and changes in the way of working, a cultural change (Al-Duwailah & Ali, 2013). From this perspective, the employees are the organization's focus. Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement (ADKAR) model was created by Jeff Hiatt in 2003, to help organizations in change adoption, being people center.

Considering these, the present paper aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How can ADKAR model be used to successfully implement a CRM system?

RQ2. What are the barriers in the CRM implementation process in sales and distribution companies correlating the ADKAR model?

Therefore, the purpose is to clarify how CRM implementation can be achieved using the ADKAR model, as well as to identify the reasons for failure in implementing such a system, by investigating Central and East European sales and distribution companies. The originality of this study comes from data sources triangulation regarding the implementation of CRM in the company's branches, but also from the fact that the specificities of the sales and distribution field are highlighted in the framework of ADGAR model.

Theoretical background

Empowering Customer Relationships through CRM System

From an operational viewpoint, according to Bose (2002), CRM is a mix of business procedures and technologies used to satisfy the needs of clients. Although the potential advantages are captivating, CRM implementation must be handled correctly to generate expected results. The focus of the CRM system is on the front-office and is used by front-line employees like marketing, sales, call center, and so on. This system is about interacting with customers about their needs and requirements so that you can offer them more appropriate services and products in the future (King & Burgess, 2008).

Based on the article by Osarenkhoe and Bennani (2007), a process-oriented framework describes three main phases in the implementation of a CRM strategy:

- *Analyzing the current situation* - analyzing to discover customer categories of, understanding client needs in a methodical manner. The main objective of this phase is to diagnose the actual state of affairs by identifying customer behavior patterns and building the groundwork for a CRM plan.
- *Strategy formulation* - using the knowledge collected from the analysis stage to develop a CRM strategy which is customer-focused. Prioritize interaction with clients by aligning business processes and defining clear objectives for the implementation.
- *Strategy implementation* - for this phase is used the 5S framework approach, which contains: **staff and style** (strategy software and cognitive components), **systems, structure and schemes** (hardware strategy and technical components). Otherwise, relationship implementation means consolidation of the structural and social connection inside a relationship by bonding, processes, and systems.

According to Chalmeta (2006), the following factors stand out as being successful for CRM implementation: management awareness; defined objectives and vision; creation of a board; the formal description of coordinates; monitoring to prevent time slipping; creation and agreement of

the project plan; avoiding resistance to change; determine the level of participation; evaluate the results; motivate staff. Chalmers (2006) also identified the following elements as contributing to CRM failure: considering CRM as a pure and natural technology; absence of management support; absence of a customer-oriented culture; inadequate preparation process; low-quality data; absence of change management; insufficient of vision and strategy; failure to consider the end user in the design of CRM solutions.

Customization of CRM systems varies by industry. For example, the retail sectors prioritize sales and marketing automation, while service companies concentrate on retention and customer support (Payne & Frow, 2005). Regions and cultural differences can also influence CRM implementation. Data protection is mandatory with strict privacy laws such as those of the European Union. Technological implementation also differs, emerging companies use rudimentary technologies compared to developed markets (Buttle, 2007). Our research is focused on a goods sales and distribution company. This type of company is a non-production company. Its main role is to concentrate on the relationship with the customer (Rosenbloom, 2013), no matter on which or in how many channels it activates. This role is translated into an intermediary between producer and client (Rosenbloom, 2013), which is impossible to do without close attention to supply chain and risk management.

Using a CRM empowers a company to manage all main activities: coordinate more channels at the same time, understand client behavior, have clear visibility on sales activities, connect stock availability to sales needs, improve the accuracy of quotes, reduce the answer time to the client and, not less important, ensure collaboration between the sales team and other departments. Regarding the need for attention to external factors, this means that STEP DEL factors (Johnson et al., 2017) are not too difficult to supervise; here are some examples: social (how people prefer to communicate), technology (mobile access to information), economic (information about the external competition, sales forecast), political or demographic change in a region, environmental (client preference for sustainable products), legal (respect GDPR requirements).

One of the main inside challenges of sales and distribution is internal competition between sales channels or between salespeople. Each salesman and channel has his own target, and associated bonuses. For the customer, it did not count on which channel to purchase, as long as he was solving his problem at the best prices. CRM can be used as a collaborative tool (Greenberg, 2010) by accessing information anytime, from anywhere, working with so that client need is accomplished, and by having a dedicated committee to solve this kind of disturbing situation.

Exploring Theories of Organizational Change

As time passed, numerous theories have been formulated that address organizational change. In the following, we will briefly address the main ones, so that later our study will focus on approaching one of the theories from an applied perspective.

Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) is a methodical procedure that guides the development and administration of software systems. It contains iterative and sequential stages designed to transform objectives into usable software (Dávila-Campos et al., 2024). According to Dávila-Campos et al. (2024), the SDLC is critical for Business Process Management Systems (BPMS) and is divided into two primary approaches: rigorous and agile. The SDLC model often uses phases such as planning, analysis, design, development, testing, implementation, and maintenance (Sommerville, 2016).

Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains how organizations and individuals adopt new technologies. This theory focuses attention on the procedures and components impacting the implementation of unusual ideas and technologies (Mohammadi et al., 2017). It identifies five adopter types based on their level of desire to embrace innovation, according to Somerville (2016): innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and legguards (or resisters).

The *Congruence Model* is a framework that points out the necessity of alignment between an organization's strategy, structure, culture, technology and process with the goal of achieving optimal CRM performance (Buttle, 2007). This model makes the CRM system to be viewed as a sociotechnical system that has to be designed and implemented so as to coincide with the organizational needs (Buttle, 2007).

The *Technology, Organization, and Environment (TOE) Framework* is a model which examines the variables affecting how innovations are utilized by companies (Chatterjee et al., 2022). The adoption decision is influenced, according to this model, by three factors or dimensions: technology, organization, and environment. The TOE framework is known for offering a complete understanding of the process by integrating internal and external factors that influence technology adoption decisions (Chatterjee et al., 2022).

The *Control Objectives for Information and related Technology model (COBIT)* is a comprehensive IT framework. Its main objective is to help organizations in efficient management of IT operations. This model enables us to make a clear identification of continuous growth and improved alignment with business goals (Meiharsiwi et al., 2024).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory describes how people feel uncomfortable with opposing ideas and actions, which motivates them to search for consistency (Festinger, 2022). This theory is important for understanding a client's behavior in an economic environment, especially when customers are upset with a product or technology that does not meet their expectations. Buttle (2007) explains that upset clients may either reject the product or excuse its weaknesses, which may result in a loss of market share.

The *Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)* aids in clarifying how and why people adopt and utilize a specific technology. This implies that this model is driven by two processes (Galib et al., 2018): perceptive usefulness (belief that performance and benefits will be high) and perceived ease of use (belief that a technology is simple to learn, with minimum effort). TAM believes that if technology is both useful and simple to use, customers are more likely to embrace it.

The *Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement (ADKAR)* model is a goal-oriented structure for change management and focuses both corporate and individual viewpoints; it was designed by Jeff Hiatt (2006). The model is composed of five essential stages that help people and organizations successfully manage change (Ahonen, 2017).

- **Awareness:** Both teams and individuals must understand the need for change. Teaching people on the change's nature, the reasons and possible risks of not operating it.
- **Desire:** It is necessary to develop the willingness to join in and support the change process. The main goals of this phase are to build trust and promote the benefits for both the individual and the company.
- **Knowledge:** Give employees the information they need to comprehend how to successfully bring about change. Here are included - mentoring, coaching, instructions and transparent communication about the procedures and instruments.

- **Ability:** Offer employees the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and skills to pick new behaviors at the right level of performance. At this stage, guidance is needed to overcome obstacles, and people require constant assistance.
- **Reinforcement:** By appreciating efforts, celebrating victories and continuously resolving any issues, you can help to ensure that changes are maintained. The risk of employees returning to old habits must be reduced.

This model has many applications. The ADKAR model highlights that change management and project management must be aligned with each other to generate success. Balance is ensured by implementing technical solutions while individuals accept and make the necessary changes to their tasks and roles (Ahonen, 2017). The model argues that putting change into practice includes not only creating business solutions, like new systems or new procedures, but also paying attention to how people adapt to these changes (Hiatt, 2006). From all methodologies described above, the ADKAR model closely matches the analyzed study case on a sales and distribution multinational company and its subsidiaries.

Methodology

The purpose of our research is to analyze the process that influences the level of CRM usage that can generate client satisfaction level (Al-Duwailah & Ali, 2013), focusing on CRM implementation following ADKAR model steps. Despite the widespread use of CRM and the existing theories for digital application implementation, many companies struggle to properly use and benefit from the information provided. To identify which are the real barriers for sales & distribution companies, we selected a multinational company to analyze. This company has subsidiaries in many countries, including European states.

To diminish the number of variables, we chose three subsidiaries of the multinational company, from different countries, that had started the implementation in the same time period with the same technical implementation team, nominated by the company's headquarters. Furthermore, the three subsidiaries have other similarities: geographical area, turnover, and number of employees. Having these similarities grants us the possibility to analyze ADKAR implementation steps.

The data was collected from documents (minutes of meetings, emails, presentations, intranet newsletters, and collaborative online spaces for information exchange), reports (the ones created as standard reports in CRM for all subsidiaries), and interviews. For a detailed scanning of the situation, we inspect key performance indicators over the three years since CRM implementation.

Regarding interviews, these were semi-structured interviews (Ştefan et al., 2021) conducted with one person from each subsidiary. An interview was conducted by each, because the case studies are limited to the CRM sales module implementation for one sales channel. The final number of CRM users is between 5 and 10 in each subsidiary. All interviewees were informed at the beginning and at the end about the scope of the discussion, the level of confidentiality, and the possibility of refusing to participate in the research. Having this possibility to reject, two of the initially selected people for the interview refused, justified by missing time due to workload and the risk of self-image deterioration. The duration of the interviews was limited to 30-40 minutes. The interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed during recording by the application used. After the interview, each participant received the confidentiality agreement by email, asking to respond if they have any concerns about it.

The interview was initially structured with respect to ADKAR's steps of implementation so that a clear historical view could be created. During the first interview, it was observed that for the participant it is difficult to review the same subject of implementation looking at different moments of time. The second and third interviews' questions were rearranged by subject over time. After interviews, the transcription was manually coded using predefined codes identified from the ADKAR model.

The ADKAR model is a methodology that describes in detail every step with activities that help organizational change. Based on ADKAR recommendations, a list of codes was created for each step (deductive coding). When documents and interview coding were done, the list of codes diminished because not all ADKAR recommendations were respected (inductive coding) (Figure 1).

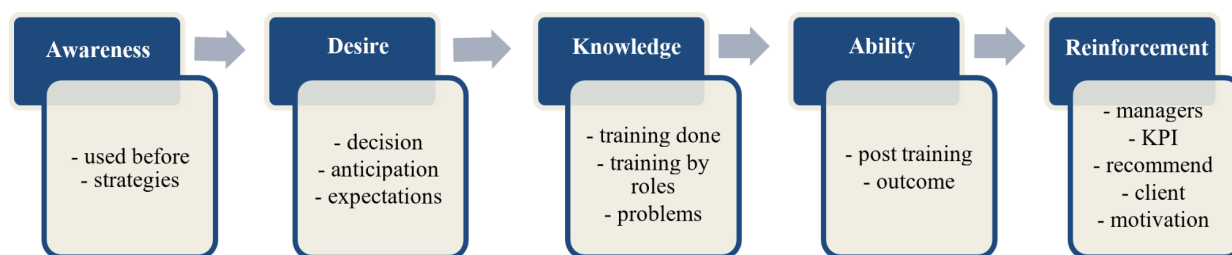


Figure 1. ADKAR interview coding

Source: adapted from Karambelkar and Bhattacharya (2017).

All the interviewees were involved in CRM implementation, and they are still using it today. They were trained by the technical implementation team, they participated in CRM testing, and they sustained the training and assistance of the final local user.

Results

Results are presented below by ADKAR phases with the emphasis on the *Reinforcement* phase. Our research is not limited to 6 months of CRM implementation; it is extended to a duration of 3 years after implementation. Thus, it is possible to observe the impact on CRM usage.

Each phase contains the main questions included in the interview and results from documents and interviews. Only the *Reinforcement phase* contains Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) because only after implementation did the measurement started. This mix of information sources enables an undistorted view of the case study. Also, the comparison allows triangulation: what information from the interview was confirmed by documents and what facts are not covered in one of them. No meaningful divergence between them was found.

Awareness

In all subsidiaries, the management team was involved in the decision of CRM implementation, although only one country considered the possibility of analyzing alternatives. Between the moment of decision and the start of implementation, it was more than one year due to technical problems and technical implementation team availability. The same team is implementing CRM all around the world. After the announcement of the implementation plan by the technical implementation team, the local management nominated a project manager and a

project team according to the requested task to be performed. The plan communicated by the technical team included just the main steps: preparation, training, testing, go live, hypercare.

Comparing the ADKAR model with our study case, we can say that the awareness phase was partially respected (Table 1). Firstly, a local implementation or change plan was not done by the local project team, they shaped the activities to the central plan. Neither a subsidiary plan for technical activities, training or communication was done. Secondly, communication was released only towards the management team; they were able to ask questions and address concerns. For future users, it was just general information about the upcoming implementation, no dialogue, questions or worries were expressed or requested. The link to personal objectives and daily tasks was not created.

Table 1. Interview main questions for Awareness phase

Interview questions	Expected answer	Expression used
1. How was it informed about the implementation of the CRM in the company?	Official information by email and in department meeting	Respondent 1: "It was an MD meeting" Respondent 2: "was an internal information in the company"
2. What challenges did you anticipate during the implementation process?	Technical issues Resistance to change	Respondent 1: "It was just a task" Respondent 2: "No, unfortunately not" Respondent 3: "any kind of CRM has some issues regarding customer confusion based on VAT code"
3. What was the initial expectation for CRM implementation?	Availability of information for decision making	Respondent 2: "We wanted... I'm sure we wanted to change our CRM" Responder 3: "have one platform clear image of the market"
4. How did the organization approach the change to CRM?	Nominate project manager and project team	Respondent 1 & 2: "...lot of preparation with Austrian colleagues"

Source: authors processing, based on interview answers.

Desire

All subsidiaries had used a similar tool to CRM. This tool was not communicating with other internal applications, and in some cases was replaced with reporting files archived in the cloud. A comparison between the local process and the CRM flow was analyzed so that gaps could be identified. Special attention was paid to the transfer of data from existing old applications to the new one.

Comparing the ADKAR model with our study case we can say that the desire phase was not in general respected (Table 2). No special activities were done to answer the future user's curiosity "How my job will be faster, easier or more successful after CRM implementation". It did not clearly create a sense of urgency, and neither the advantages of future usage of CRM. The opinion of employees was not requested.. Also, no system of rewards, financial or nonfinancial was established for early adopters.

Table 2. Interview main questions for Desire phase

Interview questions	Expected answer	Expression used
1. What strategies were employed to motivate employees to embrace the change and adopt the new system?	Presentations, events, incentives or examples from other countries	Authors comment “The word strategy was not understood or did not make any sense for responders.”
2. Were there any incentives or disincentives used to encourage adoption?	Incentives examples	Authors comment: “All the examples received were implemented after Go live.”
3. How did you think the relation with the client will change? How was it in reality?	Easier client management	Respondent 2: “No change was expected”

Source: authors processing, based on interview answers.

Knowledge

The project team training was held by the central implementation team, for one week with 3 hours each day. The first training session was postponed due to technical issues. One of the interviewed participants responded during the interview that he trained himself a lot because after implementation he replaced the initial project manager. He was trained by the central team with some delays. Training to the final users was done by project managers. The training was personalized by participants’ roles. The training continues nowadays; to be done for new employees by the project manager. The duration varies from 2 hours to 6 hours. Manuals were provided after training mainly in English, and partially in the local language. Other forms of teaching were used like: demos, mini-guides, exchange with other countries, and mentoring.

Comparing the ADKAR model with our study cases, we can say that the knowledge phase was in general respected (Table 3), except for a clear evaluation of training that could have provided some action for the ability phase.

Table 3. Interview main questions for Knowledge phase

Interview questions	Expected answer	Expression used
1. What training or other development programs were provided for skills learning?	How the training was done	Respondent 1: “we had lot of trainings” Respondent 2: “So we had I think one week of this really big training...” Respondent 2: “we gave them all these materials so they can study by themselves” Respondent 2: “a training calendar and she made regular training sessions for my colleagues separate with the sales guys and service” Respondent 1: “I sent on calendar invitation” Respondent 1: “I learned by myself” Respondent 3: “work with this demo version for few months”
2. Was the training tailored to the different roles and responsibilities of employees? How?	Particularities by type of job	Respondent 1: “So we trained shop managers for each shop center and we have a goodwill that they trained their shop assistant...” Respondent 2: “it was half of the sales department. So it was quite enough and then we trained for each sales department.” Respondent 3: “online training for several months. It was a presentation step by step how the platform works for each department”

Interview questions	Expected answer	Expression used
3. How was the training done by the Key user to the final user?	By type of users	Respondent 1: "So separate for salesman and separate for service guys" Respondent 2: "I make separate sessions. That means regarding entities"

Source: authors processing, based on interview answers.

Ability

During the testing phase and hypercare phase, all exchanges were done by email or internal chat, but there were not recorded any assistant tickets in the official CRM application. At the end of the training, a Q&A session was organized, but no official evaluation of the training. On the day of Go live, the central technical team announced the event by email providing some basic recommendations. At the end of the hypercare phase, the central technical implementation team performed two actions. Firstly, the approval to consider the project was closed by the local project team. Secondly, an official email was sent to the management team in order to inform the finalization of implementation and to thank the local project team.

Comparing the ADKAR model with our study case, we can say that the ability phase was partially respected (Table 4), but it did not check the ability of the final user. It was a lack of the management team in promoting the first successes in using the CRM. Also, no question was asked to the final user if they have issues in using it (others than technical issues).

Table 4. Interview main questions for Ability phase

Interview questions	Expected answer	Expression used
1. Have you encountered technical problems during implementation?	List of problems	Respondent 1: "to search for new customers... doesn't work properly" Respondent 2: "not technically"
2. What obstacles did you encounter during implementation? What do colleagues complain about?	List of issues	Respondent 1: "... doesn't speak English..." Respondent 2: "language was a really big issue" Respondent 1: "lot of administration" Respondent 2: "too many administration things" Respondent 2: "maybe the slowness" Respondent 2: "activities closing... because of the KPIs" Respondent 2: "the data update... was very difficult" Respondent 3: "we still have some part number missing sometimes in the quotation" Responder 3: "it's working difficult the platform because a lot of people work inside" Respondent 3: "takes around 30 minutes to create" Respondent 3: "garbage information put it inside which cannot be useful in the future"
3. Did you have a follow-up meeting after training?	List of activities done after training to check the ability	Respondent 1: "I have to try to support my colleague in the usage of CRM." Respondent 1: "it is very helpful or useful if we do some process some business case together" Respondent 1: "I had this regular supporting" Respondent 2: "It's not follow-up training but each department has some small meetings every week..." Respondent 3: "Yes, we had an at the end was surveyed for this"

Source: authors processing, based on interview answers.

Reinforcement

Frequent support to the final user was provided in all countries. The one that performed best has regular open doors and visits to the users’ workplace, compared to the others that have only on-call support. Standard KPIs and personalized KPIs were created by the project manager and provided to the management team, although sometimes they were not checked monthly (Table 5). In one of the countries, incentives were clearly formulated, linked to CRM KPI from the beginning. Two of the subsidiaries were established two years later.

Table 5. Interview main questions for Reinforcement phase

Interview questions	Expected answer	Expression used
1. What do you think went well during the implementation? What do you recommend for future implementations?	List of good practices	Respondent 1: “...really nice to use and see the connection with other apps” Respondent 1: “...make an administration day...” Respondent 2: “understand the importation of the system... CRM is not for checking but support daily work” Respondent 2: “...be positive... accept ... So they need to go step by step” Respondent 2: “Twice a week I have a special open door for all my colleagues” Respondent 2: “make visits through our country to see what they are doing and to explain why” Respondent 3: “the support of the [central] team to all colleagues including me” Respondent 3: “clean the database” Respondent 3: “the possibility to put inside the VAT number of the customer from the government database”
2. How does the management team sustain the implementation of CRM?	They encourage the usage of CRM	Respondent 1: “...tried to find some small but really important things that convinced our colleagues that this is really good tool to work with” Respondent 1: “...we had another management and at the implementation and I can say about the current management” Respondent 2: “...they were positive and they put this information in a positive way to others” Respondent 2: “he was a strict one. He has big authority” Respondent 2: “So they were motivated at the end with a financial bonus...” Respondent 3: “allow us to take as much time as possible for training. They encourage this as often as possible, and from this point of view I think it's a good thing”
3. What measures had been taken to ensure CRM usage? What about KPI?	KPI are measured and check monthly	Respondent 1: “...to create some dashboards and some views in different entities to check their work” Respondent 2: “...in general KPIs we set were fine...” Respondent 3: “users they need to use the CRM” Responder 3: “was no incentive... only the KPI... at the end of the semester and the year... a scorecard to get the bonus”

Source: authors processing, based on interview answers.

Only after implementation key performance indicators were starting to be measured. In all countries it was recorded an improvement of the KPI from year to year, as you can observe in

Figure 2. The continuous effort made by the key users and management team is visible. The missing elements from implementation are still visible three years later; the average usage is slightly above 50% on average. The global usage of CRM remains constant in all the years analyzed, because each year new countries join the CRM usage. More experienced countries advance in usage, and new countries balance them with moderate usage.

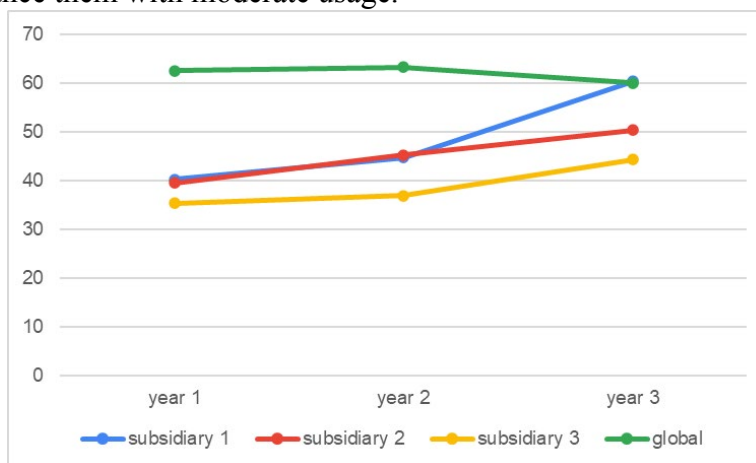


Figure 2. CRM usage evolution in percentage for the three subsidiary comparing to global usage

Source: subsidiaries CRM.

In two of the subsidiaries (two and three), the management team, linked to CRM implementation, was changed in year 2. This impacted the reinforcement phase. In Figure 2 it can be observed that the new management, after accommodation, acknowledged the importance of CRM usage, and all KPIs improved. In the first country, the general manager considered with “authority” has from the beginning a better usage of the CRM compared to the other two, but the difference is not spectacular. This subsidiary succeeded in having the two best practices shared at the global level in order to improve sales thanks to CRM. A good improvement can be observed for the subsidiary three in year 3, when CRM usage became a priority for the management team. The KPIs were followed monthly and discussed with the sales team. This advanced the country three close to the country two usage.

A good practice used in one country was to show in live mode the impact of CRM in other applications. This helps the user understand how the information is used and aids the client. None of the countries create a special process (BPMS) to include CRM usage. The utilization was based on manuals and instructions. Three years later, the need to have a process was identified and the main process was described. The Centrale team continued to provide assistance on demand, improved CRM applications with updates, trained new project managers if it was the case, and facilitated the transfer of good practices from one subsidiary to another.

A slight difference was identified between documents and interviews regarding incentives. The bonus was not a reward (according to ADKAR understanding) for using CRM. It was more a score card that compensates any salesman for his activities based on predefined criteria.

Comparing the ADKAR model with our study case, we can say that the reinforcement phase was partially respected in some subsidiaries more than in others. The usage is rewarded, but the success is not celebrated. The consequences of noncompliance were: discussions and more training given by the project manager, but a constant management team check was missing. Performance

expectations were more linked to real sales results than to CRM usage. This is the natural behavior of profit oriented companies.

We can conclude that the level of involvement of the management team had a big impact on CRM daily use.

Discussions and Conclusion

This study was conducted with the aim of revealing the barriers associated with the causes of failure in the implementation of CRM systems in distribution organizations, based on the logic of ADKAR model. The research resulted in a study of documents, reports and interviews regarding the CRM implementation activity of three subsidiaries of a multinational distribution company. The main results of the case study indicate partial compliance with the phases of the ADKAR model in the implementation process of the CRM system within the three subsidiaries analyzed. Main barriers in CRM implementation that were identified: a communication plan was not created, scarcity of activities to capture future user curiosity and changes in management team. Respecting just a part of the ADKAR model does not help organizations in CRM implementation. At the same time, significant improvements in their KPI indicators are noted as a result of the decision to integrate the new customer relations component. The focus was on the reinforcement phase since, in addition to the analyzed adoption period, the following three years were investigated, when the usage practices could be closely observed.

To overcome the CRM implementation barriers based on ADKAR methodologies and considering current study cases we summarize into: implicate from early stage all future users with short information and address concerns all the way, be as much as possible available for future users to understand his needs, and embrace diligence towards future users. Separately, for each person that will work for the first time with a CRM: don't stress, take it step by step with curiosity.

Theoretical and practical implications. This study enriches academic literature on how ADKAR model helps to improve CRM implementation processes in distribution companies. Likewise, the research uses triangulation, drawing on three sources of information, namely documents, reports and interviews, to build the case study. Additionally, sales and distribution industry companies and beyond can take this case study as an example to identify the reasons why CRM implementation is or is not done properly in their case. They can use the present case study as a template on ADKAR logic to ensure that they understand and complete each stage adequately.

Limitations and future directions of research. Regarding the limits of the study, its results cannot be generalized because of the investigation of only three situations (Ragin & Becker, 2009). To reduce the impact of this inconvenience we used process tracing (Collier, 2011), we tracked step-by-step the actions done for CRM implementation and compared the usage level in the three subsidiaries. By usage level, we mean key volumetric performance indicators that show how many actions were performed in the CRM. Another risk in small-N case studies is the conflict of interest and bias (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) meaning the difficulty of choosing a representative study case and the researcher's implication. To overcome this, we limited the field of research to one CRM module, the sales module (excluding modules such as services or marketing modules) for one sales channel, and we used different sources of information to ensure triangulation (Yin, 2018). As a proposal for future research directions, the opinion of employees who actually use this system in their daily lives can be taken into consideration with regard to the impediments they encounter. Likewise, balancing the effects that the integration of an AI component in such a system can

generate on customer relations and on the efficiency of the company, minimizing the involvement of human beings, would be a topic of interest. Moreover, to increase the generalizability of the results obtained, the research can continue with the analysis of several related or unrelated industries, taking into consideration implementation in different years, various technical teams, countries outside of Europe, and even a diversity of CRM providers.

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