

Planners still grappling with software

2 February 2010 | by Caroline Munro



Financial planners continue to grapple with customer relationship management (CRM) and platform systems, and integration is once again becoming a key concern.

Highlights of the *Investment Trends 2009 Planner Technology Report* stated that planners continue to report that merging data from multiple sources to produce a statement of advice (SOA) is a key challenge, with more than 30 per cent of respondents stating that integration of client reporting and client management is problematic. One in three planners said they would change their platform or planning software if they could access a more integrated solution.



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Praemium's Warren Gibson said while he could not comment on CRM capabilities, financial planners are still encountering problems with portfolio systems applications, the main reason being a lack of human resources.

“We find there is a distinct lack of administration support in a lot of financial planning practices,” he said, adding that while good administration staff has been a concern for a long time, often the problems occur when staff leave.

“That leaves a big hole in their business,” he said.

The *Business Health/Securitor Future Ready IV* research paper stated “most practices are now underpinned by a strong and robust IT infrastructure and they

appear to be more effectively and efficiently leveraging the recent advancements in client management technology, an assertion that HNW Planning principal Robert Cumming does not entirely agree with.

He said while financial planners were improving in their use of CRM systems, they don't have the systems they need to have full CRM capacity.

“Generally they have hyped-up contact management, but it's not full CRM capacity,” he said.

Cumming, frustrated with the lack of software systems suited to his needs, developed a financial planning system through SYNCRM. He said it was a fully relational database that synchronises into the Microsoft suite of products. Whereas other practices might still be battling with various systems and processes, each with a separate database, he uses just one system.

“If you can't get all the data in one spot, you can't build business flows from it,” he said. “When you have three databases, you have six ways of producing advice; and when you have six ways of producing advice, you've got 12 ways of how you may have stored that advice. So you have an explosion of systems and processes and you have to make a decision whether you are going to employ more staff to cope with that, or whether you are going to spend some money on IT.”

Cumming said many dealer groups often do not provide a proper 'relational' CRM system and that software systems are often built for the isolated planner office.

“Everything should come from the one system and that is what a CRM system should allow,” he said. “The one system should manage compliance registers, SOA templates, commissions forecasting and reporting, model portfolios, investment, insurance and finance reviews and applications, as well as accepting data feeds back from suppliers.”

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