

## 14.12: Tools of the trade

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### Collaborative CRM tools

Collaborative CRM refers to a process that combines customer data across all facets of a company. For example, queries regularly submitted to the technical support or customer service arm of a business can be used to inform product development and website content. Instead of various departments collecting their own customer data and using this in isolation, data is collated so that all channels make informed decisions based on the holistic customer experience.

MindTouch ([www.mindtouch.com](http://www.mindtouch.com)) is an example of a CRM product that offers collaborative authoring. This means that multiple users can simultaneously edit shared documents while maintaining an audit trail and version control.

### Social CRM tools

Social CRM tools perform a number of functions, from standardising the collection of data from social media channels to automatically posting links and accepting friend requests. These tools can also be used to identify customer sentiment within social media channels.

BrandsEye ([www.brandseye.com](http://www.brandseye.com)) and Simplify360 ([www.simplify360.com](http://www.simplify360.com)) are examples of social CRM listening tools that collect data on brand mentions across social media channels online, in real time.

### Operational CRM tools

Operational CRM tools deal with the most obvious channels that relate to customers: the front end of a business and its customer service. From a web technology point of view, operational CRM informs the website a customer sees as well as their entire online user experience.

Two examples of operational CRM tools are OnContact ([www.oncontact.com](http://www.oncontact.com)) and Zoho CRM ([www.zoho.com/crm](http://www.zoho.com/crm)).

### Sales and marketing automation CRM tools

Sales force automation ([www.salesforce.com](http://www.salesforce.com)) uses CRM software to manage sales cycles and to collect customer sales data. The software enables businesses to track leads, schedule transactions and communications with potential and existing customers, and generate detailed reporting on the sales process.

Marketing automation tools identify current customers and use their response information to manage email marketing lists. The tools can also identify prospects, as well as unhappy customers.

HubSpot ([www.hubspot.com](http://www.hubspot.com)) offers a marketing automation tool that allows companies to generate and send behaviour-driven emails.

Analytical CRM tools Analytical CRM tools allow companies to record, save, and investigate customer data to better understand customers through their behaviour. For instance, data collected about the nature of visits to your website can be used to make informed decisions about where to focus attention based on customer behaviour. Past purchasing behaviour of customers can be analysed to predict future purchasing behaviour. Data can be used to segment customers and tailor communications. These tools can help target marketing campaigns at customers and predict future sales and customer spending.

KXEN ([www.kxen.com](http://www.kxen.com)) is a popular analytical CRM tool with the ability to forecast customer behaviour and shed light on customer preferences and spending power. It also allows you to tailor marketing campaigns to specific customers, segmented by various demographics.

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