CPM Group
COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE

6 REASONS:

WHY 70% OF CRM ROLLOUTS FAIL — AND HOW HIGH-PERFORMING CEOS AVOID THE TRAP

A BOARD-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE ON GOVERNANCE, DATA READINESS, ADOPTION — AND WHY THE **PROCESS–PEOPLE–PLATFORM MODEL** SEPARATES WINNERS FROM THE REST.

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Introduction

When CRM projects fail — and most do — the cause is almost never “the system.” It is the structure around it.

A CRM rollout is not an IT implementation. It is a transformation of how your company sells, forecasts, manages customers, and makes decisions.
When CEOs underestimate this, the CRM becomes expensive shelfware. When they lead it properly, it becomes the **operating system of profitable growth.**

How do you know whether your CRM is at risk — or already failing quietly?

Here are the core signals — and how high-performing CEOs fix them before they damage visibility, margin and control.

1. Your CRM is treated as an IT project — not as a management instrument.

If CRM sits in the hands of IT, if governance is unclear, or if commercial leadership “watches from the side,” your rollout will not fail on day one — it will fail slowly, quietly, and expensively.

Symptoms you may recognize:

- Endless debates about fields, instead of commercial logic
- Customisation driven by opinions, not processes
- No executive steering committee
- Sales leaders use Excel anyway

Without CEO-backed governance, CRM becomes a digital filing cabinet — not a performance system.

Ask yourself:
Who truly owns CRM in your company — Sales or IT?
Do you treat CRM as strategic infrastructure, or as software?

Structural fix:
Anchor CRM in Commercial Excellence. Establish a steering committee, decision rights, and a governance model where Sales owns design, IT owns stability, and the CEO owns ambition.
A CRM without governance becomes noise.
A CRM with governance becomes alignment.

2. Your processes are unclear, inconsistent, or not enforced.

CRM never fixes bad processes. It amplifies it.

If your pipeline stages are vague, if conversions are subjective, if every salesperson interprets “qualified” differently — your CRM becomes a library of inconsistent data.

This is why forecasts wobble and why visibility never improves.

Ask yourself:
Are your sales processes truly documented?
Do your leaders coach against clear definitions — or against gut feeling?

Structural fix:
Define the full sales process: lead → opportunity → quote → negotiation → win/loss.
Make the rules measurable. Make the stages unambiguous.
CRM should reflect your process — not expose its absence.
When process clarity rises, CRM becomes a cockpit, not a dashboard.

3. Your team doesn't adopt the system — they don't see the benefit.

You can mandate data entry.
You cannot mandate belief.

Most CRM failures are behavioural, not technical:

- “Shadow systems” like Excel
- Managers not coaching on CRM data
- Sellers who update once per week (or when reminded)
- No discipline in forecasting
- No consequence for non-usage

Adoption is not about training. Adoption is about leadership rhythm.

Ask yourself:

- Do your managers run their weekly meetings from the CRM — or from PowerPoint?
- Do people feel CRM helps them win deals, or just helps you get reports?

Structural fix:
Train managers first, not sellers.
Make CRM the centre of pipeline reviews, forecast calls, and account planning.
People follow what their leaders use — not what their leaders request.
A CRM is adopted when managers live it.

4. Your data is not ready — and every decision becomes questionable.

Bad CRM data quietly destroys confidence in the system.
Duplicates, wrong contacts, missing hierarchies, incomplete fields — they all erode trust. Once trust is gone, adoption dies with it.

The CEO often sees this first in the boardroom:

- Forecasts are inconsistent
- Pipeline value jumps from week to week
- Sales reports contradict Finance

Ask yourself:

- Can you see accurate customer hierarchies, segments, and margin data today?
- Does your CRM reflect reality, or what sellers feel like updating?

Structural fix:
Start with a data cleansing phase — not after rollout, but before.
Introduce data governance roles and quarterly data quality checks.
Connect CRM with ERP, pricing, and Power BI so data reinforces itself.

Data is the oxygen of CRM. Without it, the system suffocates.

5. CRM produces reports, but not decisions

Many organisations have dashboards — but no behavioural change.
They look at numbers, but nothing in the system drives action.

Too many KPIs, too little insight.
Teams debate data instead of solving problems.

Ask yourself:

- Do your dashboards drive weekly action — or do they just look impressive?
- Is CRM a decision engine, or a reporting museum?

Structural fix:
Focus on **5 core commercial KPIs:**
win rates, pipeline health, forecast accuracy, time-to-close, customer profitability.
Visualise trends, not snapshots.
Ensure dashboards connect directly to leadership routines and performance cycles.

6. Leadership routines happen outside the CRM.

CRM adoption is not a training issue — it is a leadership issue.
If managers coach, forecast and prepare pipeline reviews in Excel or PowerPoint, the organisation gets a clear signal: CRM is optional.

What leaders do, teams copy.

Ask yourself:

- Are forecast calls run live in CRM — or via spreadsheets?
- Does coaching happen in the tool, or around it?

Structural fix:
Make CRM the mandatory cockpit for all leadership routines:
forecasting, pipeline reviews, coaching, win/loss insights, performance management.
When leadership moves into CRM, the organisation follows.

Conclusion

Structural CRM failure does not appear on day one.
It appears gradually — in forecast volatility, invisible customer risks, margin erosion, and weak adoption.

This is not an IT topic.
This is a **CEO topic.**

CRM becomes the backbone of commercial performance only when led from the top — with clear governance, strong process, data discipline and leadership commitment.

Modern CEOs steer with system, rhythm and transparency.
CRM is simply the infrastructure that makes this possible.

If you suspect structural weaknesses in your CRM rollout, the best time to fix them was yesterday.
The second-best time is today.

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CEO Checklist: How do you recognise your CRM drives Performance

- [ ] Managers use CRM to run sales leadership routines.
- [ ] Dashboards drive behaviour, not just reporting.
- [ ] Sales represenatives update CRM because it helps them win deals - not because they are forced
- [ ] Data quality is high — and continuously monitored.
- [ ] Customer profitability is visible inside CRM — not only in Finance.
- [ ] Commercial decisions become faster and more fact-based.

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External sources besides CPM research

#	Source	Author	Year
1	*Twenty Years of CRM Implementation Research*	N. Mollaee et al.	2022
2	*A systematic review for the determination and classification of CRM critical success/failure factors*	M.S. Farhan et al.	2018
3	*Critical success factors for electronic customer relationship management (E-CRM) systems*	(unknown Author, V8I10)	2021
4	*Why CRM Projects Fail and How to Make Them More Successful*	Harvard Business Review	2018
5	*The Adoption of CRM Initiative among Palestinian Enterprises*	O.H. Salah et al.	2019

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