

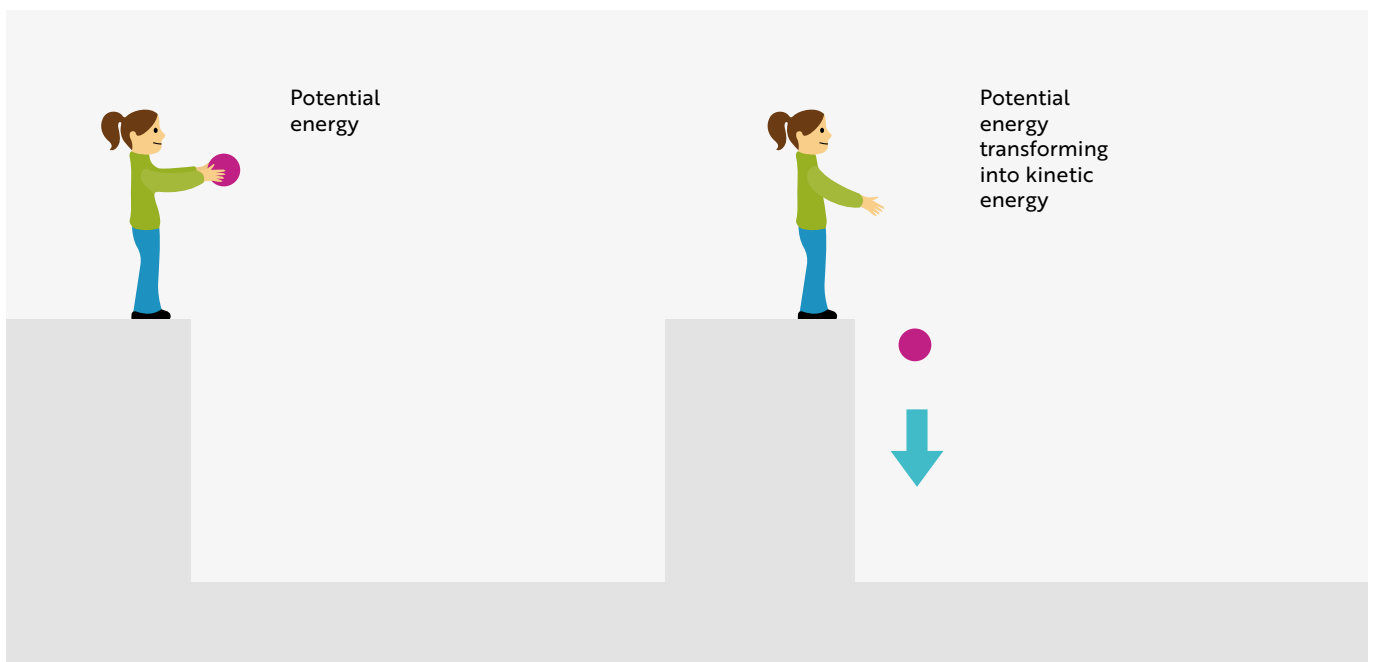
Pretty Woman, Field of Dreams and Physics: How to Achieve CRM Success

By Robert Beach

'We think you got a lot of potential, Kit De Luca' ¹

Bear with me for a minute. Think back to your first physics class and specifically the instruction around different types of energy. The one that I remember most, for some unknown reason, is the example of holding a ball in your hand, with your arm extended in front of you while you are standing. While you are holding the ball, it's (obviously) not moving, it's not really doing anything other than just being a ball.

But the moment you open your hand and release it, the ball falls to the ground. Of course, we know that the ball falls due to gravity, and maybe a few of us remember that while it is falling it produces energy related to its motion. But it also had energy while it was in your hand. This energy is related to the ball's potential for motion, and so aptly named potential energy.



Your CRM project has a lot of potential energy

You've garnered support from the executive board (and even a few influential partners). You've conducted focus groups with your lawyers to understand what they want and need. You've planned and re-planned and managed and led the project and your teams. You've engaged experienced consultants to help with the implementation.

Configurations have been applied, systems have been integrated, reports have been written, power users have been trained, pilot groups piloted, support teams ready to support. You've done all the right things and have 'successfully' launched the new CRM system. But, after all that effort, all you've really accomplished is to create the potential for CRM success.

'If you build it...they will come' ²

Unfortunately, when it comes to CRM, they will NOT come. No one in the history of CRM applications has willingly, on their own initiative, fully engaged with their company's CRM system. This is especially true amongst the people for which CRM is supposedly designed and built. Salespeople hate it, account managers and client executives don't see the need for it, lawyers ignore it. The only people that really use the system are those in marketing and business development or sales support. We're seeing a growing trend in law firms to NOT deploy their new CRM systems to lawyers, instead relying on ERM products to passively 'harvest' relationship data and then ask marketing and BD teams to pick up the slack.

Whether these approaches are right or wrong is the subject for another time. The point here is that this lack of adoption is predictable and related to another fundamental physics concept – Sir Isaac Newton's First Law of Motion. Basically, stuff that's not moving wants to stay not moving, and stuff that is moving wants to keep going in its current direction. The bigger the stuff is, and the amount of forces on it, determine how hard it is to get moving and how hard it is to change direction or stop.

In a 2014 article entitled 'The Physics of CRM', Marshall Lager introduces the concept of relating the Laws of Motion to CRM projects³. In the article, he talks about how the size and complexity of a business impacts its ability to build momentum around CRM initiatives.

This is true for CRM, and also in almost every way that a business wants to change. I know law firms that have deployed large, name brand Experience Management applications to make pitch and proposal generation easier for BD personnel, yet those same people continue to produce proposals the old way – by opening the last proposal they worked on, editing it, and saving back to the DM system.

People – the people that you need to use your new CRM system for it to achieve real success – are more likely to continue working as they always have, even if it's not great, or to not do anything at all.

What to do about it?

CRM success has been elusive for many law firms. We believe that this is largely the result of the two concepts presented above: potential and momentum. To achieve success and value, you need to increase your potential energy and get people moving in the right direction.

One of the most important things that you can do to set your CRM project up for success is to define success in business terms AND acknowledge that implementation is only the first step. As we've discussed previously, the goal isn't 'to deploy', it's to realize some quantifiable business value. That said, the quality of your implementation absolutely has an impact on the project's potential. Much like a physics experiment where the design and planning and execution determine the success of the experiment, so too will design, planning and implementation activities influence ultimate CRM success.

Creating the right momentum is more challenging. The term 'change management' is thrown around and paid lip service on virtually every CRM project, incorporating things like 'naming' the system, getting the managing partner to send an email in support of the project, and making certain that training and support is in place. These are all important, but they are afterthoughts.

Change must be included as part of the overall project definition and planning. We think that one of the most important questions to ask is 'how does the firm need to change in order for us to achieve our goals?' If a goal is to drive more revenue from your best clients, maybe relationship partners have to have their billable hours targets reduced. Maybe they need more specific BAR targets. Maybe they need different financial targets to promote collaboration and cross-selling. Perhaps the firm needs to invest in a professional account manager. The point is if you don't understand how the firm needs to change, you will never be able to implement an effective and long-lasting change program, and people will continue on as they have before.

At a time of unprecedented pressure on law firms globally, getting value for money and realising financial benefit has never been more important – so it doesn't take an Einstein to realise that defining those specific success measures upfront followed by supporting them throughout makes complete commercial sense.

So, go on, get moving. You've got a ton of potential!

About the Author

Robert Beach is CEO of Pinnacle US and has spent the last 20 years advising law firms and other businesses on CRM technology and success.



About Pinnacle

Pinnacle is an international business and technology consultancy serving the legal industry, with locations throughout the United Kingdom, United States, and Europe. The firm advises its clients on practice management systems, risk and new business intake, and marketing and business development solutions, with the overriding aim always to help them extract maximum value out of their technology investments. Pinnacle is increasingly the 'go-to' partner for business development projects built around the TRE and Intapp suites, with expertise across CRM, experience, pricing and master data management.

Footnotes

1. From the film 'Pretty Woman'
2. From the film 'Field of Dreams'
3. 'The Physics of CRM', written by Marshall Lager and appearing in Destination CRM.
www.destinationcrm.com/Articles/Columns-Departments/Pint-of-View/The-Physics-of-CRM-96240.aspx