Max Lab 1a – Creating Your First Salesforce Database

This was truly a valuable and yet quite fun exercise. And frankly, one of the aspects of the class I very much looked forward to learning and becoming more efficient at using. I've always been intrigued by Salesforce in general, but it's not something widely in use at my company, so there was never much need to learn more. Like many managers I imagine, I figured it was a business tool mostly used by Sales and Marketing folks. However, I was quite surprised to learn that my assumptions were far off the mark.

I learned how to construct an "object" table that could contain useful customer information and be updated in real-time from anyplace at any given time. And that it could be easily modified to meet current or future customer demands or opportunities. As a manager, having such a powerful tool at your fingertips can prove invaluable when it comes to strengthening and growing your customer relationships. It is certainly something I look forward to learning even more about and I'm certain that I haven't even scratched the surface of its possibilities. And the notion of creating an app is very cool and something I hope to utilize even more as the class progresses.

As for what I'd tell a job interviewer, I'd merely indicate that I'm not only proficient in using Salesforce in my role as a manager, but understand how valuable it can be in cultivating and growing customer relationships. Not to mention, it's a powerful collaboration tool for use with both internal and external customers.

Max Lab 1b – (Queries and Reports) Slicing, Dicing, and Nifty Visuals

Well, this was certainly an interesting exercise and I wasn't nearly as lost as before. However, I'm beginning to get the hang of working with this relational database and gaining a better sense of how powerful and flexible Saleforce is, not to mention, how to perform queries and construct reports.

Doing this once doesn't make me an expert by any stretch of the imagination, but it did give me a feel for performing queries and constructing reports in ways I wouldn't have thought prior could be constructed. Salesforce is lightyears ahead of the relational databases I've used before, such as FileMaker Pro. Again, this just strengthens my previous conviction that learning Salesforce is a must for all aspiring and existing managers, because it allows you to gauge the current business environment if the data is available or can be gathered. In addition, it allows you to easily perform queries using existing data and more importantly, customize them in just about any possible configuration. The only limit it seems is one's imagination.

I also loved the report generating capabilities offered by Salesforce and could easily imagine the types of useful reports that could be created for just about any business situation. And as a manager, this is another powerful tool to have at your fingertips. Yes, using Excel is perfectly fine, but it offers nothing close to the versatility and flexibility of Salesforce. At least, not in my humble opinion.

As for what I would now tell a job interviewer after finishing this exercise? Everything I mentioned previously, but also that I can use it to perform any multitude of queries in response to a given problem and develop solutions as a result. In addition, prepare valuable reports that will effectively assist in strategic planning.

Max Lab 2a – The Case of the Lost Integrity

As we peel back yet another layer of this powerful relational database known as Salesforce, I continue to be impressed not only by what it can do, but how truly easy it is to modify an existing object table, make it more refined or build upon it to add even more capabilities. Furthermore, how easily one can make corrections when problems arise with existing data collection or issues surrounding redundancy.

My pitch to a job interviewer (like how I phrased that?) wouldn't change much after this exercise. In my opinion, this is more nuts & bolts type of information that quite frankly, an interviewer would have little interest in knowing. I would simply re-emphasize my working knowledge of Salesforce, how I've used it to meet growing customer expectations, find solutions to problems, provide more value to customers, and as a result, improve overall business performance. Lastly, that my knowledge of Salesforce makes me a much more efficient and effective manager.

Max Lab 2b – Data Fright ll (the sequel)

This was perhaps the most difficult of the Salesforce labs thus far, because it involved data modeling and introduced more complex relationships (e.g., one-to-many). Frankly, I'm still trying to get my head wrapped around the concept of data modeling, but can see how it can be used to refine the relationships between entities. This is definitely something I would need to spend much more time doing to gain a better understanding of the process. Working through the exercise once simply wasn't enough to fully grasp the theory, at least for me, so would require much more practice to completely learn how the relationships relate to one another.

However, it still proved valuable enough to boast about during my interview, so now my "pitch" to a job interviewer would not only include all my previous experience with Salesforce, but also that I'm experienced with creating and working with data models. And as a manager, I can use this experience to further support the company's business requirements.

Max Labs 3a – NeedSuperpowers? Go Cyborg w/SF…….. 8-O

This was definitely the most complex and for sure, labor intensive of all the labs to date, but it was certainly understandable given the nature of what we were being tasked to accomplish. However, it was well worth it and gave a much better understanding of how CRM systems can be tailored to track and ensure effective communication so customer satisfaction remains at a high level. And as I've stated previously, working through this once isn't nearly enough to become proficient in constructing/modifying relational databases like Saleforce, but it certainly does provide a working understanding of the process involved. I thoroughly enjoyed the lab.

As for what I would tell a job interviewer moving forward? I would simply say that I'm well versed in using CRM systems, specifically Salesforce, to improve and sustain a high level of customer satisfaction for both internal and external customers. Nuff said…

Max Labs 3b – How to Be a Better Borg

This final Saleforce lab certainly lived up to all the hype and was by far, the most fun lab of all. I continue to be in awe of the power and flexibility of Salesforce and the ease by which it's able to integrate systems. What I especially found interesting was how it utilized social media tools to obtain information from within a business organization. A very useful feature, indeed. I also can see the value of automating processes so that they're automatically scaled to handle growing volume. Another nice feature…

As for what I'd tell an interviewer now that I've managed to muddle my way through all the labs. I'd confidently acknowledge my expertise in the use of CRM systems to help enhance how an organization deals with customers, so that the highest level of customer satisfaction, and thus sales, can be achieved. And to really impress, I'd mention that I possess specific skills pertaining to my ability to:

- Configure tools like *Salesforce Workflows* to automatically create and assign customized tasks.
- Utilize internal social media tools, such as *Saleforce's Chatter*, to communicate efficiently within and across the organization.

- Generate HTML code, using *Salesforce's Web-to-Lead*, to implement web forms that convey lead information directly to a database, while triggering auto-response email rules, and take users to specified landing pages.