

CLM via a No Code Platform: 3 key factors to driving long-term value from contract management solutions

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Contract management is a seemingly straightforward software category. Most solutions consist of a repository for legacy contracts and templates, a set of workflows for authoring and negotiation support, and reporting tools to catch forgotten renewal dates or measure contracting efficiency.

But ask any organization that has implemented a contract lifecycle management system about their experience, and they will tell you that deploying CLM is anything but simple. This is because, despite attempts by CLM vendors to standardize and digitize the contract management process, contracting rarely fits the one-size-fits-all design of most enterprise software.

The types of data and compliance information a business needs to track vary widely by industry. The geographic and departmental reporting structure of different businesses require radically different approval workflow structures. And the needs of different functions within a single business will even require different levels of access and information to effectively draft, approve, or manage contracts.

Simply put, no two CLM projects are the same because no two businesses contract in the same way. Yet many CLM providers ignore this truth, providing an overly simplistic, “agnostic” solution that falls short of what CLM can—and should—be for businesses.

What’s the answer to this need for subtlety, variation, and depth? Enter no-code CLM.

More than just a buzzword, no-code platforms and CLM are due to come of age. These solutions allow end users to adapt their CLM deployments to their business’ unique requirements, without, as the name suggests, heavy customization via specially coded configurations by the vendor. While seemingly simple in concept—just like CLM—no-code platforms are designed to embrace complexity, but without making the customization process complicated (and, let’s face it, expensive).

This white paper explores the historical challenges of CLM deployments to illustrate how no-code CLM solutions represent the best path forward. It introduces three key attributes of a modern CLM solution—flexibility, extensibility, and connectivity—and explains how no-code solutions are uniquely enabled to deliver ROI from these attributes.

THE PROBLEM:

No two businesses contract in the same way (and no business contracts one way forever)

It's easy to say that all businesses are unique, but when you start to appreciate the scale of those differences, the challenges of a typical CLM deployment start to become clear.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2018, the latest year for which data is available, there were 223,524 businesses in the U.S. with 50 or more employees, spread out over 20 distinct sectors, each of which contains hundreds of their own subsectors and industry groups.

Each of those businesses, depending on their industry groups, trading partners, size, location, and regulatory requirements, has unique contracting requirements.

- In the retail industry, it might be pricing structures for rebates that need to be tracked.
- For healthcare providers, it may be permissions and data archival standards that are needed to comply with HIPPA
- Or for large public firms, it may be ensuring the capture of compliance requirements related to major legislation like the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

Yet across our evaluation of CLM tools, whether from independent CLM-only vendors or from vendors offering CLM as a module in a broader suite, the challenges remain the same.

Within our SolutionMap benchmark, for which we have an active reference pool of more than 1,000 current respondents, we ask a range of both quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions. Yet over the last two years, customer survey respondents frequently cited the

same issues with their vendors. Recurring themes for how customers would like vendors to improve their CLM offerings include:

"We have had to personalise significantly as we are only using one aspect of the software, which has taken time and cost, so the shortcoming is that personalisation is difficult and costly"

"More customisable for users without vendor support."

"My company has quadrupled in size, so we would really love to see better permissions so we can open the system up to groups that should not see much of the contracts, but that group wants to submit procurement requests."

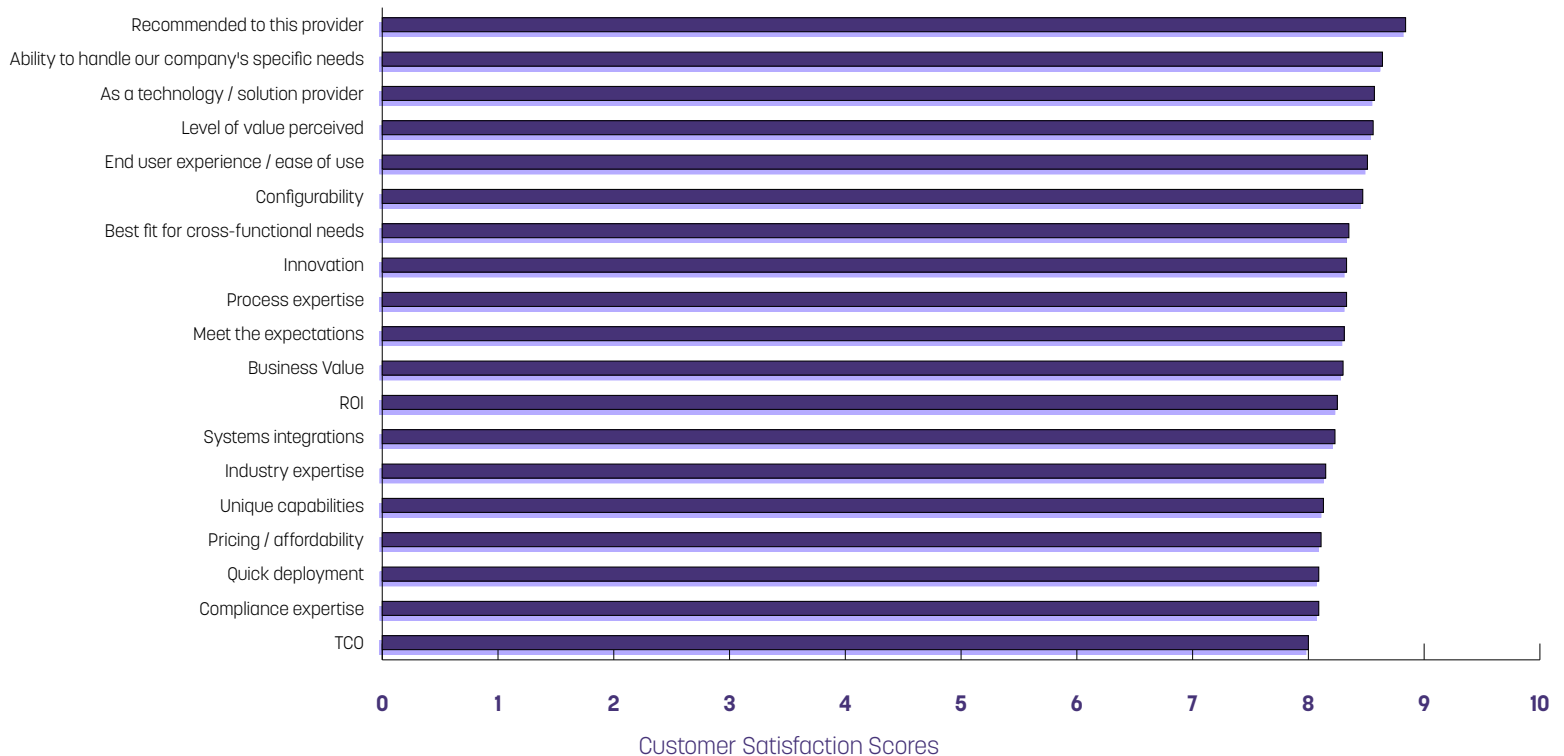
"The feeling that we are being nickel and dimed along the way for each change we need to make to the system."

"Tends to need our input to develop something valuable to a user."

"Team lacked ... the ability to advise on how best to configure the system for our business and how to achieve benefits from the system."

To wit, our SolutionMap customer survey data indicates that recurring themes in the open text responses—high total cost around maintenance and configuration, lack of industry or compliance expertise needed to advise on unique configurations, the amount of time it takes to implement customizations before go-live—represent the five lowest satisfying scores in our CLM customer benchmark for CLM-specific requirements.

Customer Satisfaction Scores Benchmark: CLM SolutionMap Fall 2021



Notably, respondents did not necessarily struggle to get their CLM to adapt to their unique requirements or configured to their specific requests. Where they struggled was in speed to set up such customizations, accessibility to the compliance or industry expertise needed to make these changes, and affording the process of doing so. Customers also rated lowest the ability to deliver unique capabilities, an indication of cross-market blandness in terms of features delivered.

Why is this? To put it bluntly, the current generation of CLM solutions are largely repositories for contracts with workflows and business rules built on top of them in an “agnostic” fashion—that is, without any regard for industry, business

function, or user-specific requirements. A generic, “agnostic” solution may work for a company’s first CLM deployment, while they are establishing baseline contract management maturity. But after deploying and using such tools, many businesses realize that their initial CLM deployment is inherently limited, which causes them to go back to market for a second, third, or even fourth CLM tool.

To obtain the true potential from a CLM solution, businesses need better. They need software that can flex to any requirements, extend into any scenario and connect to any data or environment where contracts are needed. This is the promise of no-code CLM.

THE SOLUTION:

No-code platforms bring flexibility, extensibility, and connectivity to CLM

Before we explore the potential of no-code solutions for CLM, it first helps to step back and define what a no-code platform is.

A no-code framework is a programming platform that uses a visual development interface to enable non-technical users to build applications by dragging and dropping software components to create a full app. Users don't need any previous coding experience to build applications using no-code. Such platforms accomplish this by generating ready-to-use code blocks—a series of code for a given function—that can be dragged and dropped into place to run under preset limits.

When applied to contract management, the possibilities are enticing. For example, workflow in CLM traditionally only provides a front end for visualizing business rules and processes and requires extensive custom coding and integration with a separate backend system to implement new workflow rules. A no-code platform allows users to simply point and click to make the changes they need, no coding required.

In particular, no-code platforms offer three distinct advantages to traditional approaches:



Flexibility

the ability to adapt or change any element or workflow to scale processes

- Allows end users to configure workflows (e.g., new contract requests, amendment approvals) to their unique requirements or industry-specific processes
- Enables businesses to address any type of use case—any function (e.g., sales, legal, procurement) or any type of contract with the same core capabilities



Extensibility

the ability to expand and integrate the scope of contract management beyond the document

- Extends contracting integration into adjacent processes (e.g., converting a sourcing award into a contract, driving post-signature contract compliance using GRC-system based auditing processes)
- Anywhere a contract is used, CLM can be useful—often it is the missing link of execution and performance management



Connectivity

the ability to access contracts and contract-related data anywhere, in any environment

- This goes both ways—in the CLM and outside of the CLM
- In the CLM, it's about integrations that bring needed data to your environment when you need it (e.g., risk insights related to specific clauses directly in MS Word or Splunk data directly delivered in the context of a contract to check on performance levels in a hosting agreement)
- Outside the CLM, it's about integrations that allow you to work in whatever environment you want so you can get to your contracts anywhere (e.g., Salesforce, Teams integration experiences)

THE BENEFITS: Adaptability to meet any challenge

Flexibility, extensibility, and connectivity all sound great in theory, but they are helpful in practice, too.

At a high level, here's how no-code platforms improve the ROI of common CLM benefits:



Increased agility and efficiency

- Adapt processes to regulatory, business requirements continuously and independent of your vendor's support staff
- Construct workflows and AI models unique to your business for the insights you need to make decisions quickly



Ensure adoption and usability without customization risks

- Configure your solution to your processes so it "fits like a glove" to how your business operates, not how your vendor thinks you should operate
- Take control of accessibility and personalization to make the application appear and work the way different kinds of end users expect



Break down silos to improve cross-functional collaboration

- Connect to all environments—CRM, enterprise productivity tools, ERP, etc.—to create and manage contracts anywhere they're needed
- Extend the scope of CLM to unify processes and drive commercial value management



Cost savings and continuous ROI

- No change requests, no hidden/extra fees
- Contract record maintenance and compliance times reduced due to extensible nature of CLM solution (capture everything you need on your own)
- Adapt/evolve your deployment over time to prevent shelfware

In sum, most current CLM approaches offer only a siloed, "agnostic" approach to contract management. These approaches work fine at the start, but quickly encounter their own self-imposed limitations as businesses grow, mature, or face unexpected challenges that they must quickly adapt to.

Combining the world of CLM with no-code platforms allows business to circumvent these hurdles, ensuring that a chosen CLM solution will work during, after, and well beyond the initial deployment. In a word, it provides adaptability to meet any challenge.

WHY AGILOFT FOR NO-CODE CLM: The Spend Matters Perspective

When it comes to best-in-class CLM solution on the market today, few providers have a background as unique as Agiloft. Built as a no-code platform and CLM designed from no-code environment from the start, Agiloft has since the inception of our CLM SolutionMap maintained top scoring functionality for all of the baseline/check the box capabilities you need from CLM—and much more. Most notably, the vendor also has posted top customer scores for all requirements, especially configurability (top score of all CLM vendors), ROI, flexibility to unique requirements, and industry expertise (top score of all CLM providers).

What's more, customers consistently laud Agiloft for the exact issues that other CLM references bemoan, citing the vendor's greatest strengths as:

- “Most technically broad application that is plug and play that we have encountered as an organization. Basically an “under the radar” app with tremendous extensibility and impact for the price.”

- “Excellent support/understanding our needs and ease of customizing both for individual user requests and enterprise-wide.”
- “The system is incredibly flexible—there are hardly any limits to how you configure it”
- “Configurability is huge for us. Being able to build a software like we've built our business to carry our current procedures digitally is huge.”

Because of this legacy as a no code platform, the design of the solution has allowed Agiloft to further extend its CLM application into such adjacent areas regulatory monitoring, or to extend CLM into any environment, including Microsoft Teams, Google Docs, and Splunk. Similarly, Agiloft's approach to AI, enabled by its AI Core, uses not a black box but a flexible workbench for you to build your own unique capabilities.

In short, Agiloft's no-code basis for CLM empowers users to do what they need with strong underlying CLM functionality—for today and for tomorrow.

For more on Agiloft's CLM software, visit www.agiloft.com