

Should you build a custom CRM?

A 5-minute decision checklist and a rough cost guide — so you can place your project on the scale before you talk to anyone.

1 Do you actually need custom?

tick what's true

- ☐ You keep shadow spreadsheets next to your current software.
- ☐ Per-seat pricing is turning into real annual money.
- ☐ The tool can't hold your actual workflow.
- ☐ You need an integration no vendor offers.
- ☐ Your data is an asset you can't easily get at.

Two or more ticks? A custom build is worth pricing out.

2 Which one are you?

2026 ballpark, roughly

Small / standard case

One team, a fairly standard pipeline, one or two integrations. Off-the-shelf may be enough — or a lean first version.

≈ \$7,000–\$15,000 · 4–8 weeks

Bigger / non-standard case

Several roles, custom logic (pricing, approvals, commissions), 5+ integrations. A custom first version.

≈ \$15,000–\$25,000+ · 2–4 months

3 What moves the number

Integrations	The biggest surprise line — two is a different project from eight.
Custom logic	Your pricing rules, approvals and workflows — the reason you're not just buying SaaS.
User roles	Admins, managers, reps, a client portal — each adds screens and permissions.
AI features	Scoring or an assistant add ~15–30% (data prep, evaluation, guardrails).
Data migration	Getting messy history out cleanly is easy to underestimate.

4 How we de-risk your project

-  **You own code & IP**
From day one — no lock-in.
-  **Demo every sprint**
You see progress, not promises.
-  **Fixed-scope phase one**
A defined MVP with a fixed price and date.
-  **Start small, expand**
Later phases are funded by the results of the first.

Get a free, no-obligation estimate

A clear scope, timeline and price range within 1 business day. No pitch, no pressure.

smerdoff.com

Telegram · @alexeysmervov

alex@smerdoff.com