

A CRM Solution isn't going to help salespeople sell



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All companies rely on sales for their business at one level or another and are having to come to terms with a changing world.

The vast amount of information available via the Internet within just a few mouse clicks, means the roles traditionally assumed by salespeople and customers are changing. The sales process is no longer dominated by the presentation of facts and figures about a product, and there's no point in claiming to offer the best price on the market when the competitors' web site is contradicting you in the next window. Because modern IT has brought about changes to buying - and attitudes to buying, software developers have been addressing the issue that commercial organisations really ought to have some control over - i.e. selling. This has led to the formation of a growing industry built loosely around Customer Relationship Management

software (CRM). But relying on CRM is fundamentally the wrong approach if what you really want to do is achieve more sales.

What's CRM for?

The problem with using CRM to boost sales, is the fact that it's not really designed for this. What CRM essentially boils down to instead, is making the buying process a better experience. Automation is introduced at every possible stage, from the moment the customer logs on or picks up the phone, to the credit card transaction and the delivery of the goods. Databases are configured to give sales staff up-to-date relevant information about customers' account histories and direct mail campaigns are intelligently designed to hit the right doormats more of the time. All of these are valid contributions to the marketing mix, but none is focused on improving sales performance. Many companies have

implemented CRM in response to a tougher selling climate, but effectively they're focusing on reactive service rather than investing in improving their proactive sales process. That's fine if you're sure your customers will be calling you but not much use if you need to go out and generate opportunities.

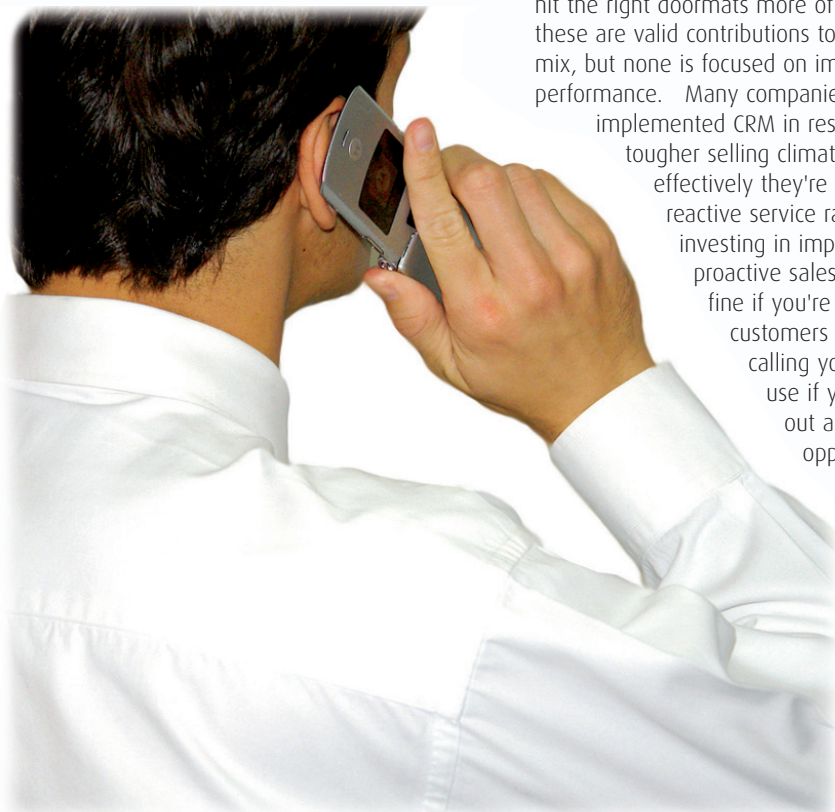
Small wonder then, that CRM solution providers struggle to demonstrate a genuine ROI and talk instead of fundamental changes in attitude and



healthier, customer-focused business practices. If it's a boost in sales you want, CRM is not enough. The fact is that, although buying has undeniably changed, people do still need - perhaps even like - to be sold to. You can bolt on a CRM "solution" to help you make sense of your other enterprise applications, but it's not going to close a deal for you. For this, there is no substitute for effective sales practice.

A role for technology

So does that mean that IT has no part to play? On the contrary, technology is an inescapable part of today's sales process - what salespeople could live without their mobile phones for instance? Technology though, needs to be used appropriately. No amount of technology is going to turn a poor salesperson into a great one. But there are ways to turn ordinary salespeople into effective players. Consider the following scenario: You run a successful stationery distribution company. ►►►





You have a product book of some 20,000 lines and a customer base numbering around 3,000.

You have an outbound sales team of six representatives. The success of your company depends on the performance of these half-dozen individuals, but how do you know that they are reaching their full potential? To succeed, your sales force must not only have an in-depth knowledge of their product lines, they must also be fully aware of the opportunities and threats within their existing and potential customer base. The jargon for this balance between technical and commercial awareness is "product and situational fluency," and it's a lot to grasp for one individual. The very best sales performers succeed because they can achieve this dual fluency, but for the majority it's a struggle, and there are inevitably compromises. Some salespeople become product specialists, adept at identifying cross-selling opportunities but with a tendency to focus on a narrow selection of favorite customers and to miss the bigger picture. At the other end of the scale are those who devote themselves to knowing the market inside out and can tell you exactly who's buying what from whom but, through lack of sufficient product expertise, may miss subtle sales opportunities when they're in front of a customer. For most, this choice is simply the inevitable consequence of having to deal with a huge volume of information or data. But managing data is what computers are so good at, so it makes sense to look for a way to use IT to improve the working life of the salesperson by removing this need to compromise.

Sales intelligence

Successful sales depend on identifying the right opportunities and delivering the right package. All the information needed to find these opportunities and make the right deals is somewhere within your company's databases. A sales intelligence solution will automate the extraction of this knowledge and deliver it to the sales troops. Sales intelligence software monitors and analyses the buying patterns of customers by drawing data from existing accounts and enterprise software. Irregularities, and other trends in customer spending, trigger alerts that translate into sales leads delivered straight to the relevant sales representatives. The result is an increased share of customer spend, higher profitability, improved customer retention and increased marketing response. Companies that have implemented sales intelligence solutions, regularly report a return on investment of 20 to 30 percent. What CRM vendor can boast that? Looking at what IT can do for sales is not 'rocket science' and it does not involve re-engineering your business. It's simply a question of promoting situational

fluency and providing salespeople with the tools they need to venture beyond their normal boundaries and become high achievers. The late American newspaper columnist Ann Landers once said, "Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognise them." Sales intelligence software will unmask sales opportunities so the sales person can concentrate simply on closing the deals.



EDP VECTA Sales Intelligence

EDP's VECTA Sales Intelligence solution is specifically designed to address all the issues above, enabling manufacturing, distribution and wholesale companies to significantly improve sales effectiveness and performance, allowing them to sell more intelligently.

Those that want to experience significant sales growth – quickly and cost-effectively, must begin identifying new sales opportunities at existing customers. After all, in today's tough selling climate, what does help sales people sell is knowing exactly what their customers have bought, need to buy, could buy and should buy.

VECTA Sales Intelligence incorporates many important elements of CRM, yet goes much further for sales focused people. VECTA allows sales and marketing managers to identify purchasing patterns, customer drift issues and opportunities within existing accounts. VECTA's active alerts and reminders foster a more proactive sales approach, informing you of what your customers have bought, might buy and have stopped buying, enabling you to act quickly and generate up-sell, cross-sell and switch-sell opportunities, using targeted VECTA marketing campaigns.

For salespeople out of the office on the road, VECTA is directly accessible from web browsers and via mobile phones, ensuring the delivery of Sales Intelligence to the point-of-sale.

Research shows that an average salesperson costs companies £254 per day to employ. For far less than the price of a sales rep's monthly mobile phone bill, why wouldn't you provide them with a sales tool that is even more valuable? With VECTA, salespeople now have the means to sell more on every call they make.

