

How to Improve Sales Productivity, Forecasting, and Results

A White Paper by Soffront Software, Inc.

Abstract

The world of business is ever evolving and expanding, presenting companies with numerous challenges as they try to increase sales and become more profitable. The sales department struggles to keep track of leads and other opportunities. Contacts are often lost, resulting in lost opportunities. Disconnected business processes across various departments using different applications complicate the ability of employees to share customer information. Today's growing businesses are looking for a better way to improve efficiency and increase sales.

This paper discusses the challenges faced by the sales department and examines how sales automation and CRM software help solve these challenges. Details include the following "how to" items:

- Enhance efficiency and productivity
- Increase opportunities by improving lead tracking
- Improve the opportunity management and forecasting process
- Identify and focus on the most profitable opportunities
- Decrease reliance on your IT department without compromising customization
- Improve sales visibility and communication, while reducing repetitive data entry

Get Your Sales Team Ready

Today's sales reps need tools and solutions that make their jobs easier not more complicated. They need robust, cutting edge features that will allow them to do more in less time - make more calls, set more appointments, close more deals, and earn more revenue.

Effective Sales Automation software gives you all this and more. It is capable of automating workflows and eliminating redundant tasks. Time lost doing repetitive data entry and paperwork is not only frustrating - it steals valuable time away from pursuing legitimate sales opportunities.

Large corporations have learned the secret of sales automation and integrated customer relation management solutions to leverage their resources more efficiently. In contrast, studies show that only 20% of mid-market companies have adopted some form of CRM as part of their corporate toolset.

Today's affordable and robust CRM software is a way for mid market companies to move ahead of their competition and gain the competitive advantages of a much larger company.

Cover More Ground in Less Time

Shouldn't your sales team be spending more time selling your product and closing deals than scheduling activities and making appointments?

Efficient sales automation software allows your sales reps to automate key activities: scheduling appointments, creating tasks, organizing leads and opportunities, and generating reports.

In addition, integrating email with your CRM system expedites sending quotes, reports, or any other information to your customer. The availability of standardized email templates or proposals further speeds the sales cycle.

A customized workflow guides your sales team through various steps in a sales process, minimizing lost opportunities and ensuring tasks don't fall through cracks.

Soffront CRM allows your sales department to improve productivity and leverage cross sell/up sell opportunities in a fraction of time.

Import and Assign Leads

Keeping track of leads and contacts through Excel or other database systems is an archaic process that wastes valuable time. The Soffront Sales Automation module of Soffront CRM tracks leads from initiation to closure, improving efficiency and productivity.

Soffront CRM's lead management feature lets you automatically import leads from various sources and auto-assign them to sales reps based on geographic location, priority, or any other business rule. This feature provides easy access to all leads and opportunities and allows you to know where your leads are in the sales process.

It also allows everyone to have a 360-degree view of the leads, ensuring that someone is assigned to the lead and is following up on the opportunity.

With an add-on module, Soffront Leads, you can collect leads from your website using a fully configurable form and transfer them automatically to the Soffront CRM database. The leads can be assigned automatically, based on configurable assignment rules.

Having all of this information in a central place within Soffront CRM provides a powerful, complete view of the customer relationship and sales process. Mid-sized companies can take advantage of this power to reduce costs, automate sales functions, and create significant customer value.

Complete Customer View

The beauty of a fully integrated CRM system is that you don't need any other software to keep track of all the information relating to your accounts, contacts, opportunities, quotations and sales orders. A robust CRM software system will consolidate details such as addresses, contacts, notes, activities, quotes, and purchase orders/invoices all in one place for easy reference. Your sales rep should be able to access the complete account history (including audit trail) at the touch of a button.

Better forecasting

An intuitive CRM system is a valuable tool for providing better forecasting and opportunity management. A user can specify a dollar amount and associate a probability for each opportunity based on the stage in the sales process.

This means that it is possible to calculate what your pipeline is worth at any point. Soffront CRM allows you to run forecast reports for an individual sales rep, a sales manager (and the team), or the entire sales force. Since you know the amount and probability associated with each lead, you know where to better focus your efforts to meet your numbers. More concise information allows sales reps and managers to better utilize their time and efforts by focusing on higher probability or higher reward opportunities.

Quickly, Easily Implement Changes

A key ingredient to the successful implementation of any sales automation solution is its acceptance by the organization's IT department. These departments typically prefer solutions that require as little of their time as possible for implementation and maintenance.

To ease implementation burdens, a successful CRM solution for mid market companies should provide tools that ensure easy customization and sufficient support from the CRM provider.

Many of today's software solutions have limited features and limited customization, requiring a company to force fit the solution to meet their needs. Soffront Sales Automation tools are so simple to use that non-IT personnel can easily customize the software to fit their needs. This high level of flexibility and ease of customization is crucial, because the software must match your company's processes in order to be successful.

The ability to make customized changes without extensive IT resources gives Soffront a clear advantage for fast and effective implementation. Non-technical employees can take advantage of easy-to-use tools to customize database tables and fields. New fields can easily be added or existing fields deleted. Complex sales team hierarchies can be created and maintained without coding. You can easily render reports in text format or colorful graphics, including trend lines, bar charts and pie charts. You can also customize graphic reports, featuring immediate detail through clickable drill down, without taxing IT resources.

Things to Look for When Considering Sales Automation and CRM

Prior to the selection of any system, it's important to find a company that will work with you and fit the technology to your needs. Larger CRM companies have traditionally looked at the mid market as a simple downgrading of their enterprise - wide solutions without any particular focus on the specific nuances of mid size business needs.

A scaled down version of an application designed for a large enterprise probably won't meet the needs of a mid-sized company as well as an application designed specifically for the mid market.

You should base your ultimate decision on your organization's specific requirements, but the following advice will provide a good start:

- When exploring solutions in Sales Automation and Customer Relationship Management, the most important thing to look for is a technology partner with enough experience in the mid market to understand your specific problems and needs. The most frequent mistake mid market companies make involves treating CRM as simply a software investment instead of an investment in a technology partnership.

Effective solutions can only be created when a technology partner takes the time to analyze your current methods, needs, and goals. Soffront has the experience, and the resources to be your technology partner.

- Sales Automation solutions should have the flexibility to work as part of a larger CRM solution provided by the vendor or be adaptable by that vendor to software solutions you may already have successfully implemented. Sales solutions may be advantageous on their own, but true integration with other customer touch points is a valuable and powerful component.

Any customer is only as loyal as their last interaction with your company; therefore, the implementation of an effective sales automation system as a part of an overall CRM strategy is essential. Soffront has the breadth of solutions and the flexibility to integrate into all areas of your company for optimal performance.

- Solutions should offer you flexibility of ownership, as every company has different needs. Soffront offers its Sales Automation and full CRM application suite in hosted or on-site mode. This flexible use model provides you with the power to make the business choice most fitting for your organization.
- The solution you choose should also be modular, to allow for future changes and growth. Soffront's solution is modular, allowing you to implement just the features you need now and expand the solution as your business grows. Soffront's sales automation can even be combined with existing software solutions within your company to create a custom tool set.

Soffront Software - Experience, Technology, and Focus

Soffront Software Inc., a pioneer in the CRM market since 1992, offers end-to-end, fully integrated CRM solutions consisting of sales force automation, marketing automation, order processing, customer service, employee help desk and asset management, self-service knowledge management, project and defect tracking.

For more information on how Soffront CRM can help your business build a more efficient and effective sales team, improve opportunity management, and enhance the forecasting process, please visit www.soffront.com or call 1-800-SOFFRONT.

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