Power Your Marketing
and Increase Sales with CRM

Introduction: Why is CRM the KEY to Sales and Marketing?

A highly competitive and customer centric communications environment emphasizes the importance of forward thinking marketing. Keeping notes on phone calls and emails and occasionally following up with a prospect has transitioned into data-driven applications focused on segmentation and highly relevant targeting. Successful companies know the importance of keeping track of all consumer behavior to later tailor relevant and personalized communications campaigns. At the hub of the matter is the customer relationship.

Putting your customers at the heart of your business is a sure route to unlocking sustainable, trustworthy and intimate relationships with your buyers. This process begins with strategic development. Each customer will define their relationship with you differently, as they each have unique needs and interests. Before you get started on your CRM marketing efforts, it is critical that you investigate and conclude what is of utmost importance to your customer.

CRM systems have many core strengths that can be applied to meet the customer's needs on an individual basis. The ability to explore and segment customer preferences is one of the most powerful assets of a CRM system. Many other features are specially designed to support specific business goals, such as sales productivity, management and marketing. Nowadays, with the fusion of CRM and Marketing Automation, the right application can turn your database into a gold mine. From increasing ROI to improving close rates and delivering predictable revenue, the success of both sales and marketing is imminent.

Benefits of CRM Systems: Understanding the Full Scope of the CRM Application

An effective CRM system has three goals:

- To organize and share customer information
- To measure and report across the company to support sales and marketing insights
- To assist in communication and collaboration between customers and employees

One of the highlights of using a CRM system is that there is a central location for all contacts and leads, allowing the marketing and sales teams to find the most up to date contact and behavior information. A CRM system particularly excels as a platform that manually captures leads, contacts and sales opportunities and assists in the management of the sales team. Keeping track of opportunities is another key task that the CRM facilitates. By allowing the sales team to record all details, from phone conversations and marketing communications to monitoring interactions and purchase history, sales management is better able to use the information to forecast and manage further action steps.

A company must be able to track when to follow up with leads, discern whether leads must further be qualified and provide any necessary support to enable the close of a sale. By gaining a full understanding of the CRM system features and using the CRM to automate business processes like data capture via web sign up forms, email marketing and blogging, it is possible to see instant increases in revenue. CRM systems all have very unique and important features, from segmentation to marketing automation, social integration and reporting, which enable the execution of important targeting and personalization elements.

Organization is also a fundamental component of the CRM system. By being able to sort and categorize individuals based on their purchase history, placement in the sales pipeline, past inquiries and other important behaviors one can view a set of contacts that spans across multiple groups. In addition to featuring special functions like a project manager, the CRM system is also a convenient way to assign particular actions to the sales staff and monitor the progress.

According to benchmark studies, increasingly affordable small business CRM applications account for,

- Revenue increases of up to 41% per sales person

- Decreased sales cycles of over 24%

- Lead conversion rate improvements of over 300%

- Customer retention improvements of 27%

- Decreased sales and marketing costs of 23%

- Improved profit margins of over 2%

Marketing Automation and CRM: Use Your Data Efficiently and Effectively

Not all CRM systems will maximize your sales and marketing efforts. According to Gartner analyst, Robert DeSisto, "As many as 85% of companies that buy CRM software to automate sales efforts don't pick the right tools because they fail to define business objectives or develop processes for meeting those objectives."
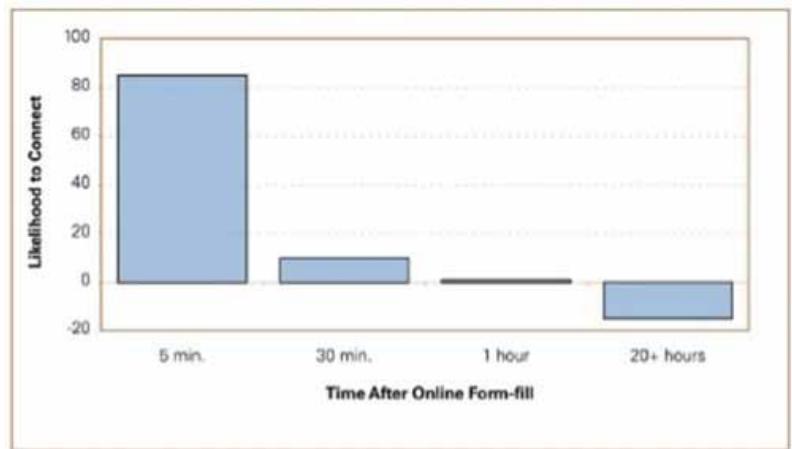
This means that getting clear about what your customers want from you and how you are prepared to meet those needs is the FIRST step in automating your sales and marketing efforts and management. So, where do you begin?

Ask yourself these important questions,

- Who are the different types of customers that I deal with and what are their behaviors?

- What am I capable of providing that will help them meet their objectives?

- How do my products and services differ in value from my competitors?

Better Timing for Telemarketing Follow Up Calls

- What are the weaknesses of my products and services and how do I turn them into strengths or at least minimize them?

- What channels are the most effective way to reach my customers?

- How can I learn more about what my customers want and need from me?

Once you have re-evaluated your goals and tailored them to meet the desired objectives, you are well on your way to choosing the most effective software. CRM systems that offer marketing automation features like email marketing tools, survey builders and social integration are some of the most powerful tools available to you. These specialized features help companies improve efficiency and effectiveness and ultimately increase the ROI on your CRM.

How do I leverage marketing automation with my CRM system?

One of the biggest impacts of marketing automation on your CRM system is the ability to deliver more qualified leads to the sales team. CRM systems assist in prioritizing leads and clearly identifying which leads must be followed up with immediately versus leads that still need to be nurtured. This process breaks down into a couple key points:

- Automation: Instead of communicating with groups of leads on a manual basis, marketing automation enables fully automated email marketing and social media campaigns. In addition to saving time and money in both marketing and sales, it allows for more penetrability throughout various target groups.

- Nurture: Companies with longer sales cycles find it challenging to time the sales follow up with each lead until they see an indication of active interest. By automating lead nurturing you are able to develop leads that are not ready for a sales discussion.

- Prioritization: Automating your marketing will also add much more information to a lead profile. By making available the full activity of the individual as well as the social media history (see section "The CRM Landscape: Why You MUST Apply Special Features Like Social CRM") sales people can learn more about their prospects before they actually make the sales call. As information is viewed in real time, the timing of sales calls can be much more appropriate. A great example is alerts. If a sales person receives an alert that the lead is currently viewing the website or clicked on an action call, then the sales person can reach the lead at the right time.

- Consolidation: Marketing automation has several features that assist in increasing the quality of the CRM data, such as appending duplicates and identifying merging of records. If you have multiple locations where data is stored a marketing automation system will assist you in importing the information and holding data from multiple systems.

- Prediction: A significant component of managing marketing and sales activities is the ability to predict effectiveness from information. Automation integration with the CRM system provides data to help manage the revenue cycle based on metrics. Metrics make revenue more predictable and indicate how marketing and sales are both contributing to the company's bottom line.

Marketing automation for CRM assists in the generation and development of leads until they are ready to interact with the sales department. In effect, the delivery of better and more qualified leads to the CRM system is directly correlated to the use of marketing automation. The impact of this integration results in improving close rates for sales, delivering more predictable revenue and equipping sales reps with the right tools for success.

The CRM Landscape: Why You MUST Apply Special Features Like Social CRM

Today's CRM systems are much more intuitive than they were five years ago. Features are geared toward assisting various sized companies build and manage effective relationships. Innovative CRM systems contain features that have revolutionized the way that companies communicate with clients and prospects. CRM technological trends include,
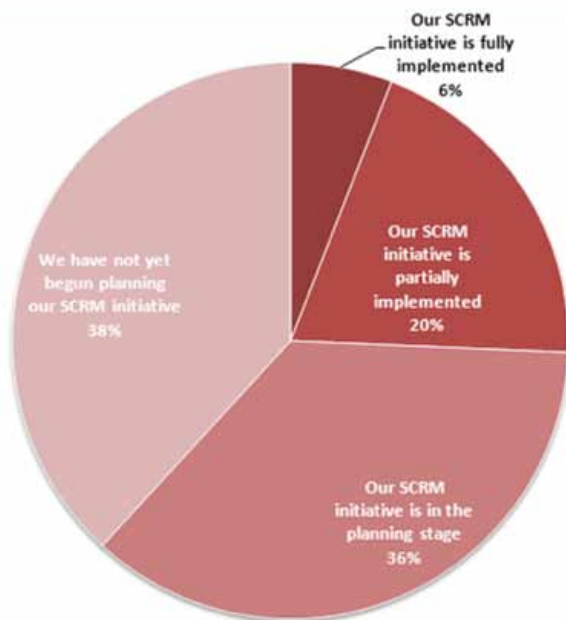
- Social Media Integration

- Smart Phones/Portable Devices

- Cloud Computing or SaaS (internet based and hosted data and software)

- Predictive Analytics

- Integration with email programs and personal one-to-one emailing

Your CRM system's integration with multiple other systems as well as analytics capabilities give your team the ability to not only view past behaviors and trends, but also to predict them. Combining such trends with powerful applications like real time social network data feed, SMS text marketing or email drip marketing streamlines the drop cycles and keeps communication consistent.

What is Social CRM and How Can it Boost my Sales?

Most CRM solutions will capture the basic transactional information. Much of this data can be greatly enriched by social information. Account managers can greatly benefit from viewing additional insights when building relationships with stakeholders within an account. Viewing relationship or profile information from LinkedIn or accessing information services from Jigsaw or Hoovers helps:

- Establish mutual ground

- Prepare for a sales call

- Offer background research

- Improve the flow of a conversation

Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Social Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=3,342

It is clear that prospects and customers are spending more time online than ever before. Valuable information like business needs, purchase timing and preferences are being shared online, every minute. This is why social media offers an unparalleled platform for the expression of business challenges. Statistics have proven that sales people that utilize social media to follow their prospects and customers have higher close rates and shorter sales cycles, primarily because they are building the right kind of relationships with them. While social media is still a preferred way to build community and relationships, companies' are still failing at harnessing its full potential by integrating the data with their CRM systems.

4

A big challenge to integrating Social CRM, is that the social media arena is being utilized to hunt and gather data for cold calling, but not to engage and build relationships. The danger in not understanding relationships before pushing a sale is that it positions many marketers and sales professionals as spammers that invade privacy and promote irrelevant marketing. One of the biggest areas of improvement, however, is that of gathering and applying data from these portals to drive a business strategy. A myriad of useful information for your business goals is contained within social media platforms, and a CRM system allows you to gather this data into the right place and analyze it. Information is useful in helping to figure out which strategies are working and which ones aren't. Tracking is also a great way to analyze data. Observing the use of certain keywords and questions for example, can demonstrate who is interested in what and how frequently they're engaging on the topic. This type of information can help you to assess strengths and weaknesses in your communications program and help your team identify improvements.

Your goal is to harvest this unstructured information from the social landscape and add it to your structured customer database. Doing this can not only boost the power of your customer database and increase sales, but it will also improve your services and establish more precise marketing.

- Facebook: Monitor news feeds and activity streams

- LinkedIn: Access profile information and discern whether you are able to elicit an introduction

- Twitter: Read contact tweets directly in the lead record

Finding the Appropriate CRM Channels: The Secrets to Your CRM Strategy

The CRM framework has a great deal to offer you in terms of communications management, such as integration with email, web forms, blogs and forums, but it is of no value if you don't know which channels work for you.

Let's look at some effective ways successful companies have applied their strategy to pick the most appropriate channels for their CRM efforts.

Targeting Communications via Multiple Channels

Monitoring the responses of customers is important for targeting and segmentation. Hyundai ran a campaign in two channels: email and direct mail. They then tracked who clicked and printed the available coupons. This data was then used to identify the e-responsive owners and to reduce direct mail to them and increase the email stream. This was a great strategy to identify the types of behaviors that were most indicative of the e-engaged customers that could be removed from the direct mailing list. Once those individuals were removed from the list, Hyundai continued to monitor the e-activity and the dealer visits to decide on further contact channels. The CRM system is an excellent way to group which individuals receive which communication channels.

Assessing the Strengths of Each Channel

Direct marketers still opt for the three main marketing channels: direct mail, telemarketing and email for CRM. While email is the most used customer retention channel, direct mail and telemarketing are still the most powerful customer acquisition channels. This is not to say that one channel is better or worse than the other. It is important to decide on a combination of different channels and append the appropriate content to them. E-commerce, for example, has grown exponentially. Promotions and sales for online stores are often delivered through social media networks. In this case social media networks are being used as an integrative channel versus treated separately. Your CRM system will help you to manage and apply different marketing campaigns in various channels like email, web sites and social media.

5

Using the Channel to Provide Personalization

Your CRM system includes a range of valuable data on each lead allowing marketers to use customer history, profile stats and preferences to personalize their communications. Special features include the ability to create very specific offers to keep the customer experience consistent throughout multiple channels. This is why informing all departments about new information in real time is one of the greatest values of a CRM system.

Understanding Various Needs and Approaches

Certain industries have a track record of being successful in particular channels or at least have certain strengths within them; nonetheless, customers will always have different expectations for communication within these various channels. There is always room to experiment and change up the marketing mix, but it is often a company specific initiative rather than an across the industry shift that determines success. This is why the ability to look at your unique customer data and trends is one of the more important features of the CRM system. By gathering your demographic and behavioral trends and tracking any changes you are able to outline a marketing program that works for your customers, rather than applying something that isn't based on your unique customer infrastructure.

Testing Channels and Learning from Them

The best way to determine the most appropriate channel is to test and learn; and this is the key to customer relationship management. A starting point is to isolate the testing variables (creative, offer, audience and channel) and set up the contact stream to begin evaluating the variables. A best practice is to change only one variable in different versions of a contact channel as over complicating the structures often delivers incoherent and inconclusive results. Begin by testing the offer on the same creative and the same audience, versus testing two different offers on two different creative's and two different audiences.

Getting Started: The CRM Checklist

- **Support:** Make sure that all team members are in accord with the CRM strategy and its maintenance. Implementing CRM for success heavily relies on the support of all team members, ongoing discussions and maintenance.

- **Team:** Assign the appropriate CRM responsibilities to the right team members. Make sure that you are addressing all the needs and concerns of the team by considering each individual roles, responsibilities and customized needs. Your project manager feature is a great way to manage this process.

- **Business Objectives:** It is crucial to define the CRM strategy by the two most important factors: business objectives and customer requirements.

- **Identify Customers:** Your CRM will allow you to apply custom data fields and set them up for different customer groups. Therefore, consider your type of customer across all your touch points (retail, call center, mail, email, catalog, web etc) as various touch points may include different customer profiles.

- **Segment:** By differentiating between the customers you can discern which customers are most likely to convert from the ones that do not communicate or respond to you. Monitoring the level of interaction from blog commenting, website signup forms, forums and email clicks are great benchmarks to creating groups and segmenting.

- **Understand:** What do your customers want and how do they want to receive it from you? Built in features like web forms and surveys give you the ability to directly collect this type of information, while testing response rates via different marketing channels is another great way to gauge what is most effective.

- ✔ **Experience:** Be clear on what you want the customer experience to be. Analyze customer behaviors from your groups and apply targeted marketing to ensure that each segment has the applicable customer experience.

- ✔ **Goals:** What are the goals of the customer experience? Identify important business interactions such as high value and high cost, high involvement and high importance and then evaluate the performance of those goals. How are these interactions being handled by the company and are there opportunities for improvement?

- ✔ **Strategy:** Have an integrated customer strategy that considers which department deals with which customer issues and which customer status. Reference an organizational chart to determine what makes the most sense and what will be most effective.

- ✔ **Data Requirements:** You must define and map which customer data is necessary and where it's coming from. Many different departments may also view the customer data in different ways, but by using one integrated set of analytical data it will be clear how much to invest in certain customers.

- ✔ **Dialogue:** The purpose of accessing available data is to hold an appropriate dialogue with the customers. There are many methods to tailor the right type of conversations: social media, email, chat, phone, website inquiries, forums and blog comments. Ask your customers how they would like to interact with you to ensure trust and value.

- ✔ **Personalize:** Instead of having your customer support personnel read the same generic script to every person, a CRM system allows you to target your service to each individual to make them feel like you value the relationship. Train your staff with the correct processes and equip them with any necessary tools to make each customer conversation personal and effective.

- ✔ **Metrics:** How will you know if your CRM strategy is a success? Set measurable goals and track your progress.

- ✔ **Engage:** Create acquisition, growth and retention programs with the help of your CRM.

- ✔ **Collect:** Ensure that there is an ongoing data collection process. Are you able to identify behaviors, attitudes, needs, intentions? Ongoing data collection ensures that you have the most up to date information.

- ✔ **Monitor:** Track your customer experience by measuring the results and retain a customer-centric mindset to adjust your strategy and make the right choices.

- ✔ **Automate:** Leverage tools like web forms to collect data and also to alleviate security concerns with the right type of guarantees such as secure payments.

- ✔ **Simplify:** Make sure that you are opting into a customizable CRM solution. You don't want to over complicate things by purchasing something you don't really need.

How to Begin Leveraging the Power of your CRM System

Getting clear on your business and relationship management objectives is the first step in making a value based decision on an appropriate CRM system. The GreenRope CRM system is a great starting point.

With advanced CRM features you can,

- Import or manually enter clients and contacts and then segment them by assigning them to groups and categories
- Connect your contacts with their social media pages (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)
- Create as many custom user-defined fields for each contact as you would like
- Leverage website signup forms to automatically allow your website visitors to join your mailing lists and groups
- Keep track of all interactions with each contact, including emails sent, events attended, and any notes you want to take
- Track and forecast your leads and opportunities with sales pipeline management features
- Automatically connect your inbox to your CRM with our IMAP integration

You can manage the right information and automate your marketing based on the data with,

- Email/Text message notifications
- The ability to design, send, and track professional email and text (SMS) messages to all your customers
- Integrate content seamlessly with your social networks
- Automate the management of your bounces and unsubscribes
- Easily target your messages to whomever you want, however you want with advanced targeting features