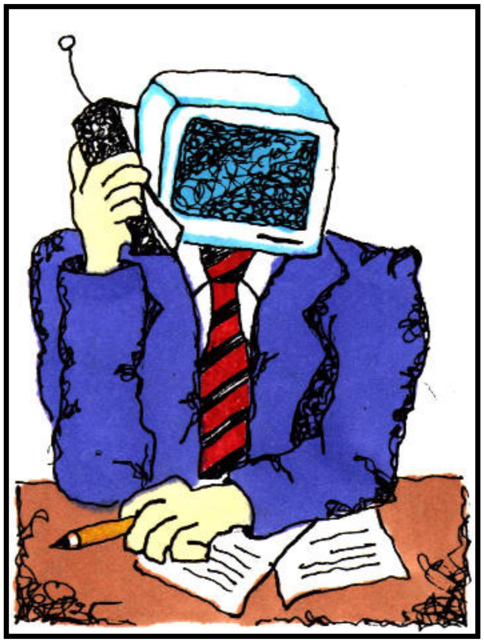
How Your Sales People Can Use Technology to Double Their Sales

by Mike Foster

Is your sales team working as effectively as they can be? In most companies, the answer is no. While you may have experienced a positive gain despite the economic slowdown, there's likely much more business your sales team could have closed if they only had the technology tools to stay productive.

As the business world becomes more competitive each day, sales people need a foolproof way to make themselves stand out from the competition. Since customers are now more discerning about who they spend their money with, you want your company to be the one they think of whenever they need your product or service. However, if your sales force isn't using the latest technology tools to their advantage, there's little chance of a phenomenal sales year.



Luckily, there is hope. Smart companies across the country are discovering the rewards contact management software can bring to an organization. Just as the name implies, contact management software helps sales people manage the contacts they make with customers. However, the software does much more than act as a database. By using the three main functions of contact management software, your sales team can build client rapport, stay organized and productive, and save precious time each day. Here's how to make it work for your organization.

1. **Build rapport with each customer.**

The age-old rule tells us that customers want to do business with people they know, like, and trust. The question is, how can your sales team effectively build a client relationship, especially if the majority of the contact is done over the phone? If you utilize contact management software, building a client relationship is easier than you may think.

In addition to entering the basics, such as name, address, and phone number, the software also allows you to store personal information about your customers, such as birthdays, anniversaries, and any other pertinent details. So the next time you speak with the customer, you can have a basis for some "small talk" before the actual sales part of the call begins. This puts clients at ease and helps them feel more comfortable with you.

For example, suppose that during your last call with a client you learned that her daughter's birthday was this upcoming weekend. With the contact management software, you can enter that information in the client's file. The next time you speak with the customer, you can begin the conversation by asking how the birthday party went. Not only will your customer be surprised that you remembered her daughter's birthday, but she'll also sense that you care and will have a good feeling about doing business with you. The more rapport you build with your clients, the more business they'll give to your company.

2. **Stay organized and productive.**

If your sales team continually misses or is late for appointments, they'll never gain their clients' respect. Likewise, if they forget to return phone calls, mail information, or perform basic follow-up, they'll lose the professional edge that wins business. Sales teams that use contact management software, however, have the advantage of always staying organized despite the hectic nature of most sales departments.

It's amazing how many sales people still rely on sticky notes and pieces of scrap paper to remind them of appointments. Equally mind-boggling is the number of sales professionals who waste time by writing out daily to-do lists or who insist they can keep their activities organized in their head. When sales people use contact management software, all their appointments are organized and they only need to enter the appointment or activity once. For example, if a sales person has an appointment with a customer at noon and enters the appointment information in the client's contact management file, that appointment will automatically show on the sales person's to-do list. Since all the data is linked, there's no need to rekey any information. Also, the software will give a reminder so the sales person doesn't forget the appointment.

Equally important, when the computers throughout the department are linked, it allows every sales person to have access to the client's information. So if a client calls with an account question for one sales person and he or she is out for the day, the sales person who answered the phone can pull up the client's information, assess the situation, and answer the question without the customer having to repeat the details of the sale history and without a long delay. In the end, this gives the client a favorable impression of the entire organization.

Finally, when your sales department utilizes contact management software, you make it possible for them to have eight uninterrupted 45-minute periods each day. How is this possible? First, you need to have the software installed on every sales person and receptionist's computer and linked across the network. The next step is to decide when sales people will make return phone calls, such as during the first fifteen minutes of every hour. When a client calls in, if the receptionist can't answer the question based on the notes already in the client's contact management file, he or she can schedule the sales person to call the client back during one of the designated call back times. This way instead of being interrupted and losing concentration every few minutes for every call that comes in, sales people can focus their energy more efficiently and eliminate telephone tag as their return calls are scheduled for them.

3. **Utilize past knowledge.**

One way many sales people waste time is by re-inventing the wheel for every sales proposal. While it's true that each client is unique and often has special circumstances, there are many instances when information or research done for one client can benefit another in a non-competing way. Some examples could include industry sales statistics, customer buying patterns, demographics, etc. When your sales team uses contact management software, all the information regarding research, vendors, etc. is stored and easily accessible simply by doing a keyword search.

For example, suppose you had to outsource a certain function for a past client last year. A new client now requires that same service to be outsourced. Instead of searching through filing cabinets for the past client's file and/or performing research to locate the outsourced vendor's contact information, all the records, including phone numbers, addresses, and details, are available with a few keystrokes. This one feature can save your sales team hours of research time each day. They can then invest that time into new customer development or devote it to prospecting and marketing functions. Either way, it means more future business for you and your organization.

If you want your sales department to outperform their current sales figures, you need the most reliable and effective technology tools to get the job done. For a busy sales center, contact management software is the best solution. When your sales team can build client rapport, stay organized, and use their time wisely, they'll be more productive and close more sales. You'll then have a sales force that's unstoppable and a record-breaking profit goal that grows each year.

About the Author:

Mike Foster is a frequent presenter of keynote speeches, seminars, and workshops. His message about how to use technology to increase profits and productivity is welcomed by small business owners and Fortune 10 executives alike. He has a 20-year background in computer technology including 12 years owning his own technology firm. For more information about Foster's programs, call 800-657-7107 or visit www.fosterinstitute.com or www.internetmisuse.com.