

## Keeping ahead with sales intelligence

Sharon Bennett, marketing executive at VECTA - part of the EDP group of companies, looks at the benefits of using sales intelligence with customer relationship management (CRM) and the advantages it can give companies over their competitors.

In the current climate the implementation of sales intelligence and CRM into the everyday sales process is something many businesses are now accepting as essential. Faced with high levels of competition and the world of social media, blogging and search engines, if we aren't actively employing some sort of intelligently designed solution to inform our management decisions and guide our sales teams, then we are likely to be falling behind. The key to making the right choice is an understanding of the type of data used by each of the solutions and the business objectives you expect to achieve from using the solution you are considering.

Sales intelligence in short, is the automated collection and analysis of detailed transactional data transformed to provide a powerful insight into your customers purchasing habits, product sales increases, decreases or buying gaps and product profitability. It is a similar concept to business intelligence, which provides company wide business information. Sales intelligence however is sales or purchasing team specific, user friendly and produces clear actionable information.

A standalone CRM system uses what would be described as 'soft' and 'top level' data linked to basic customer, product and purchase date information - used to communicate and market to customers and prospects based on their profile and needs. The standalone CRM product will not access

detailed purchasing patterns and cannot provide the analytical functionality of a sales intelligence tool.

An independent CRM system will provide an understanding of the clients' seasonal activity, habits and some business preferences, sufficient for dealing with new business prospecting. For existing customer marketing and sales management, much of the detailed analysis and data would historically need to be manually extracted from a back office system and used alongside a CRM, which anecdotally proved to be too time consuming so would not get done.

The introduction of an integrated sales intelligence and CRM solution such as VECTA enables an effortless, linked approach to CRM and provides the sales, marketing and management teams with an easy to use yet detailed illustration and insight into every aspect of the customer's account progress and history, enabling them to approach every call, visit or communication with accurate and relevant information. It enables management decisions to be made based on facts, targeted controlled marketing effort and provides actionable direction for the whole team.

So why should a company implement a sales intelligence and CRM solution? That's very simple. Recent research revealed that an existing customer is 45 percent more profitable to a company than a brand new one. Further, if sales managers fail to utilise a form of monitoring to keep up with key customers contacts or personnel changes they could see a customer drift of up to 30 percent, meaning 30 percent of revenue would need to be replaced by new business.

Keep ahead of your competitors by introducing an integrated sales intelligence and CRM solution into the day-to-day operations of your business and provide your sales people with the insight to know how and when to act quickly on an emerging opportunity that could save or grow an account.



## Siemens extends industry software portfolio

The Siemens manufacturing operations management portfolio has been further expanded with the acquisition of UK based, production planning and scheduling software company, Preactor.

Preactor has been developing software solutions for efficient automated production planning processes for over 20 years, and its advanced planning and scheduling (APS) software optimises production and logistics, boosts productivity and drives down costs. Once the deal is complete, the company will be assigned to the Siemens industry automation division, however the purchase price will not be disclosed.

The Preactor Group is also represented in North America, India, France, Spain and China and its APS planning software has been installed by over 4,500 small, medium and large multinational companies in 75 countries.

"By acquiring the Preactor Group, we are further extending our position as an industry software supplier in the field of production and logistics," said Anton S. Huber, CEO of the Siemens industry automation division. "The solutions supplied by Preactor ideally complement our manufacturing executive system product portfolio. We will be extending our industry software offering to include APS as a key component in the field of manufacturing operations management. We are gaining a team of specialists with a proven track record as a preferred supplier and service provider for APS solutions."