2007 SFA Buyer's Guide

SUMMER EDITION

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Powerfully Simple CRM™

Which Sales Force Automation software tool is right for your business?

There's no easy answer to this question.

However, the choice is much easier when you know the key features to look for in an SFA system. In this document, we'll give you tips and insights compiled by SFA deployment experts to help you purchase the SFA system that best meets your business needs.

Now is a great time to buy SFA. Vendors offer a wealth of systems for small and midsize businesses, and some are even affordable. The key to implementing a successful SFA solution lies in understanding the SFA needs of your business, and matching those needs with what vendors have to offer.

There are five major advantages that an effective SFA solution can give to your business. An effective SFA solution can help you to:

1. Take charge of your sales workload.
2. Get the leads out.
3. Grab opportunities.
4. Make better decisions.
5. Get the support you need when you need it.

In this document, we'll look at each of these advantages. But first…

SFA vs. CRM—what's the difference?

The terms SFA (Sales Force Automation) and CRM (Customer Relationship Management) are sometimes used interchangeably, but there's an important difference. Both SFA and CRM business software solutions can help your company to streamline sales and sales-force management tasks. However, CRM generally incorporates sales, marketing and customer service functions, while SFA focuses on sales. CRM looks at the entire 360-degree view of a customer, from lead to closed sale to managing customer loyalty. SFA looks specifically at managing a sales pipeline, from a lead to a closed sale. In other words, SFA is a subset of CRM. This document focuses specifically on SFA (Sales Force Automation).

The Good Stuff vs. the Great Stuff

"How can I find the best SFA system for my company?" you ask. "Not just an adequate system, but a solution that will help my team to sell more and earn more?" In general, you should look at two kinds of features in evaluating an SFA solution for your business:

1. The Good Stuff—Standard features that come with most SFA solutions.

2. The Great Stuff—Robust, cutting-edge features offered in best-in-class SFA solutions. It's to your advantage to find an SFA solution that includes these features.

Let's look at each of the five key advantages, one at a time:

1. Take charge of your sales workload

An effective SFA solution puts you in control of the daily activities that drive your sales efforts. It automates the workflow and eliminates routine tasks, allowing your salespeople to do more in less time. It empowers your sales force, helping your salespeople to make more calls, schedule more appointments, sell more products and earn more revenue. It's like having an extra sales rep on staff, without having to pay for one!

The Good Stuff

1. A task-centric User Interface—Your SFA solution should have an easy-to-use interface, with minimal tabs and buttons organized around common tasks. The UI should make it easier for salespeople to schedule, organize and complete the daily tasks that lead to sales.

2. Applications for everyday tasks—Your SFA solution should include applications that help your people to create and complete day-to-day sales activities, such as:

   • Appointments
   • Inbound/Outbound Calls
   • Notes
   • Emails
   • Proposals

3. Features for reporting and record-keeping—The first step in turbo-charging your sales team's performance is to understand what the team is doing now. After all, if you don't know where you're starting from, how will you set your business goals? Your SFA solution should include features for tracking and reporting everyday activities, such as:

   • Lead status—Where the leads are in the pipeline. Are they new? Has a call attempt been made? How many leads are still unconverted?
   • Sales calls—How many calls are being made per day/week/month by each sales person?
   • Lead activity—Which leads are being pushed or neglected by which salespeople.

The Great Stuff

1. Activity-based quotas—A world-class SFA solution includes features that let you set activity-based quotas for your salespeople (for example, a quota of 80 outbound calls a day). These features monitor progress for each quota and send out automatic updates to let you know if they have been reached.

2. Features that automate routine sales activities—A world-class SFA solution includes applications that let you automate routine sales activities, such as generating reports, organizing leads and distributing sales emails.

2. Get the leads out

Leads are the lifeblood of any sales organization. You need to keep your sales leads vibrant and moving through the pipeline. Losing track of leads is the same as burning money. An effective SFA solution helps you to keep track of your leads, and prevents them from slipping through the cracks.

The Good Stuff

1. Lead consolidation database—The SFA solution should provide a single database to consolidate leads across your organization.

2. Web site lead generator—The SFA solution should provide applications that will help you to turn your Web site into a lead generator. For example, if someone uses a Webform on your Web site, the information they enter should generate an automatic lead that will be forwarded to the appropriate sales person by your SFA solution.

3. Standardization of "qualification"—The SFA solution should let you standardize "qualification," so that each sales rep can easily complete qualification data. This ensures that your reps are gathering all the essential information they need.

The Great Stuff

1. Marketing automation tools—In world-class SFA solutions, Lead Management is tightly integrated with Marketing Automation. A leading-edge SFA solution provides your marketing team with the right tools—such as email reminders, outbound call schedules and sales scripts—to support your sales team.

2. Advanced lead routing applications for maximum control over how leads flow through your organization. These applications should include:

- An effective routing engine that automatically routes leads to the right sales professional based on geography, customer type or product expertise.
- Thresholds that allow you to set limits on how many leads a salesperson can receive per day. This prevents salespeople from being overworked or getting backed up in their work.

3. User Interface enhancements that let sales reps search databases, organize tasks and edit information, such as:

- A List Management feature that lets you access, navigate and organize lead, account, contact and opportunity lists more easily.
- In-Line Editing that lets you edit all information without ever leaving the screen. This removes the hassle of having to open, edit and close each record one at a time.

4. Integrated Marketing Campaign Management tools that:

- Let you coordinate sales/marketing activities, such as lead generation campaigns.
- Include built-in Key Performance Indicators to show real-time progress of sales/marketing campaigns.

3. Grab opportunities

Sales teams, no matter their size, often have in-depth and custom processes. A sales organization with 5-10 representatives might have anywhere from two to five different sales processes. Your SFA solution should match your various "go-to-market" strategies, so that your salespeople will be equipped to sell to each unique opportunity using the correct sales steps.

The Good Stuff

1. Applications that support multiple sales workflows.

2. Sales process checklists and scheduled activity reminders that prompt salespeople to ask ques-

tions and gather information for Needs Analysis and Discovery.

3. A Sales Knowledge Base for Objection Handling that includes effective responses to customer objections and competitive information.

4. Applications that allow you to create and send custom PDFs (for example, for proposals) with less effort.

5. Applications that help you to manage your Product Catalog.

The Great Stuff

1. Pipeline Management - Advanced applications that allow salespeople to coordinate sets of tasks and to-dos in their opportunities as they progress through the sales process.

4. Make better decisions

The key to better decision making lies in collecting and sharing accurate data. A successful SFA solution liberates business intelligence, making it easier for you and your managers to act on that intelligence.

For example, by keeping close tabs on the progress of leads and the probability of sales, your managers can predict whether or not their sales teams will meet their quotas for the month or quarter. If there is a problem—if teams are not on track to meet their quotas—your SFA solution should provide you with accurate and detailed reports and forecasting, to enable your managers to identify the problem and change sales tactics to correct it.

Reporting

A successful SFA solution provides applications that generate quality reports, not quantities of reports. These reports should help your sales organization to answer crucial questions, such as:

- How good are we at bringing in qualified leads?
- How many leads are needed to have adequate sales opportunities in the pipeline? How good are we at winning those opportunities?

- How good are we at keeping our customers happy?

Your SFA solution should aid you in automating and distributing reports related to:

- Call Activity - Who is making the calls and to whom?
- Appointments - Who is getting the appointments and with whom?
- Sales Records - Who is getting the deals and with whom?

Forecasting

A successful SFA solution includes applications that will:

- Measure the progress of individual sales pipelines to provide your sales managers and executives with forecasting information on the probability that a deal will go through.
- Capture more details about what each deal, such as product mix or pricing, was offered.

5. Get the support you need when you need it

In terms of post-sales support, you should look for an SFA solution that provides:

- The right training for each user.
- Real-time support for all users.
- Dedicated account management.

- Pre-packaged connectors for easy integration.
- Default configuration that gets you 80% there.
- Well-designed screens that support everyday tasks.
- Service level agreements that show a 2-way commitment.

Of course, the best way to measure the quality of post-sales support for an SFA solution is to talk to other SMBs that use that solution to find out how happy they are with their choice.

Hidden Fees & Costs

In choosing an SFA solution, you need to watch out for hidden fees and costs. Unfortunately, some SFA solution providers don't tell you about the hidden fees and costs of their solution until after you sign on. Always insist that the provider outline all fees and costs of their solution before you sign on the dotted line. The best SFA solution providers are the ones that tell you about all fees and costs up front, before you make your decision.

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