



Prospecting Portals: How Businesses are Streamlining Sales and Marketing Efforts

*Excerpted from “Prospecting Portals: How Businesses are Streamlining Sales and Marketing Efforts”
by Tom Gaither*

The ever-changing nature of business information causes headaches for sales professionals who need up-to-date information to identify and sell to new prospects. While customer relationship management (CRM) and sales force automation (SFA) applications have streamlined the sales process, these applications are often designed to manage existing customers and prospects who have already expressed an interest in a company’s product or service. They usually are not designed to manage the much larger prospect universe, which includes every organization that falls within a company’s target market.

The best solution is a prospecting portal, where the data is continuously updated and where the sales professional can access targeted opportunities and easily import them into the SFA application once they are qualified.

While some companies have opted to build their own portals, many others are opting to outsource the process. This is the best way to ensure that the portal has all of the necessary elements and stays up to date, considering the fact that most IT organizations are shrinking and a portal can be a big maintenance chore. In addition, the IT department may look at the portal as a project rather than an ongoing process — a major distinction, since it’s important that the data within the portal is updated on a monthly basis, as well as when territories and market segments change. Companies who build their own portals often find that they work well initially, but as time passes they become outdated and less in tune to the needs of the sales force. Whether a company opts to outsource the creation of the portal or build it themselves, there are ten key elements that a prospecting portal must include to attain the proper return on investment.

Ten Key Elements in a Prospecting Portal

1. Territories

It is important for the portal to build in sales territories so that there is no confusion as to who is selling to which audience. Each sales professional should be able to access only the companies that fall within their territory — and no others. That information should be configured in the system, keeping the sales professional focused on selling rather than on entering zip codes or counties.

2. Market Segmentation

An effective portal must identify appropriate sales targets so the sales force can focus on those opportunities that have the best chance to turn into a sale.

3. Flexibility

The sales and marketing process is extremely fluid, and the portal must be flexible enough to accommodate this reality. With business



Decide with Confidence

Prospecting Portals Continued

information changing so rapidly, prospecting data must be refreshed every month so that the sales force has the most up-to-date information at its fingertips.

4. Security

Be sure your portal uses the latest encryption technology, and that data is hosted at a secure facility.

5. Branding

The portal should include language that is commonly used by both the marketing department and sales forces so that all parties know exactly what 's being communicated at all times. This will result in better communication between all parties, giving the sales force more time to focus on closing deals.

6. Reporting and Formatting

Sales professionals want access to the information they need to pursue their leads, no more and no less. The portal should focus on efficiently delivering only what is relevant. It should also provide a mechanism to export the information to SFA or contact management systems, once the lead is qualified.

7. Anytime, Anywhere Access

With sales forces spread across large geographical areas and often on the road, it 's imperative to provide 24/7 access via the Web.

8. Relevant Data Selections

In a typical business list, there are thousands of possible selections, yet only a few are relevant to most businesses. The secret to success is to determine the right ones. The portal must not include access to all of these selections but be configured to show only the relevant data selections.

9. Customer Information

The portal should be built to quickly identify — or eliminate — existing customers. This prevents sales professionals from making prospecting calls to existing customers and to include existing customer information only when it makes sense.

10. Third-party Data

A prospecting portal should integrate third-party data. Overlaying this data on top of existing prospect data will give companies better estimates of how much prospects are likely to spend.

The successful prospecting portal enables a company's marketing organization to identify the best potential market targets, and provide sales professionals with just the right information at the right time to identify and close new business prospects. Improved teamwork, higher quality information and faster cycle times all combine to enable more effective customer acquisition.

D&B Solutions

Risk Management Solutions
Sales & Marketing Solutions
Supply Management Solutions
E-Business Solutions

www.b2bsalesandmarketing.com

©2003 Dun&Bradstreet, Inc. HE





Decide with Confidence

Tips & Techniques

My manager wants cross tab data depicted in a graphical format. Can I do this with Market Spectrum Web's Analytic Module?

Yes; Market Spectrum Web's Analytic Module offers six different graph types. Simply click on one of the graph icons at the bottom of your screen, and your cross tab information will immediately be converted into the graph format you chose.

These graphs are "live," meaning you can make changes and drill down or up on the information with a mouse click. Also, if you'd like to change the layout of a chart or you just want to see other data, you can easily change the information you are viewing. For example, if the chart is currently showing sales volume versus industry but you want to see employee size versus industry, simply switch sales volume with employee size. Your changes will be reflected when you switch back to a cross tab view.

For product information...
call 800.558.7425.

To submit a question...
email us at editor@dnb.com

Ask the Experts

Q My data shows site counts and number of employees by geography. I would like to see the average number of employees by site. How can I get this information?

A Market Spectrum Web's Analytic Module makes this task a simple one. With a few clicks, you can combine rows or columns and obtain a new data point based on a custom calculation.

- Hold your cursor over the data you'd like to perform the calculation on
- A menu will appear; hold your cursor over 'Action'
- Another menu will appear; click on 'Insert Calculation'
- In the calculation dialog box, select the operation you'd like to perform from the drop down menu
- Select or enter the values according to the operation you've selected.
- Enter the name of your choice in the calculation name box. **Note:** This name will become the name of your new column and will appear italicized so you can quickly identify custom calculated columns of data.
- Click 'OK'

D&B Solutions

Sales & Marketing Solutions
Risk Management Solutions
Supply Management Solutions
E-Commerce Solutions

www.b2bsalesandmarketing.com

