

## Salesnet 25th Anniversary Issue

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### Introduction

Bucking the trend in most of the CRM industry, Salesnet has gone deep into selling rather than spreading itself thinly across other pillars of CRM. The company was one of the earliest on demand CRM vendors to understand the need for organizations to incorporate their sales processes into their instances of sales force automation (SFA) instead of manually layering it over the tool. This single minded pursuit of the sales process has garnered Salesnet some diehard fans with professional sales people who do the hard work of selling complex products through long sales cycles to committees of buyers.

Six years into the Salesnet experience the company has brought to market its 25<sup>th</sup> product release which both maintains its traditional focus on the sales process and breaks new ground as the company includes support for the pre-sales process as well.

### Importance of sales automation

There are two ways to look at selling and SFA. Conventional SFA has been traditionally focused on the sales transaction, rather than the actual process of selling. Using the conventional approach, most SFA products capture deal related information such as customer demographics, estimated close date, and other relevant data, but those SFA systems leave it to the sales representative to knit together a strategy and a process for winning the business and closing the deal.

Even with automation, many sales representatives fail to maximize their opportunities because their personal work processes are fractured. Embedding process in an SFA product helps managers propagate best

practices and thus bring up the middle tier of sales performers in ways they would not be able to without automation.

Through an embedded process engine, Salesnet has enabled its customers to apply a consistent set of process criteria to what is often a chaotic course of action, especially in larger and more complex deals. Including process management has helped many organizations to reduce costs and better qualify prospects and in the process increase close rates and improve decision making about which deals should be pursued and those that should not.

The market for Salesnet's approach to selling appears to be expanding because the style of selling that was popular in the booming economy of the 1990's does not work as well today. Transaction oriented selling works best in markets that are expanding rapidly, where vendors are seeking their first deals with customers and trying to capture market share. Today's environment is very different. In their recent book *Return on Customer*, business experts Peppers and Rogers have dubbed this an era of expanding relationships rather than expanding market share. They point out that gains in margins and revenue will come from making additional sales into existing customer bases. Success in this market requires attention to customers and process in addition to the transaction.

### Marketing realities

Into this market reality, Salesnet has launched its 25<sup>th</sup> product release. Salesnet has faced a truth that most of its competitors have not acknowledged yet, namely, that there is only so much one can do to improve selling by concentrating on the sales force exclusively. Once a company has sales

automation, including a reasonable database for leads, accounts, contacts, and opportunities, and a reporting function that can consolidate information into meaningful reports, it has more or less done all it can to improve actual selling through automation.

What's left, or, more accurately, what's next, is ensuring that the upstream processes that feed into the SFA module are optimized and that the products of those upstream processes — i.e. leads — are the best that they can be. Better and more qualified leads result in faster sales processes, less time and resource waste on poorly qualified deals that will never close, and better margins and profits. This is why Salesnet's new release is so important. Salesnet has logically extended the definition of selling to include parts of the marketing process. Instead of treating sales and marketing as two separate universes, Salesnet moves to more closely incorporate the two.

## New Capabilities

The new capabilities Salesnet has added to its service can be roughly broken down into two categories — bringing forth the marketing process and usability. The service has been reorganized and enhanced to improve the quality of the leads that enter the sales process and certain usability enhancements will make day-to-day operation of the service easier as well as making the service more appealing to resellers who, naturally, wish to project their own identities to their customers.

### Leads

A new Leads tab exposes lead management to more fully support the end-to-end marketing and sales process. For most versions of the service — Express, Standard, Extended, and Global — the leads tab will house one or more of the following functions (users should consult Salesnet for exact deployment details):

- Leads Import Wizard for importing .csv files into sales net

- External capture form for taking information from Web sites and generating lead records which will trigger notification of the lead owner/manager
- New Salesnet API methods, WSAPI 4.0 (available in March 2006), for importing leads into Salesnet from other applications

A Lead Dashboard (Extended and Global) and Reporting (Express, Standard, Extended and Global) provides better analysis of lead activities including pre-built lead reports which are available within the module and all lead fields will be available to produce custom reports. In addition, for Extended and Global editions, the Dashboard section will include pre-built lead elements as well as lead fields to create elements that permit a company to track progress of leads. This core capability anchors enhancements in campaigns and contributing parts of the upstream process of qualifying prospects.

### Campaign Management (Extended and Global):

Companies will now be able to track the progress of marketing campaigns in Salesnet. The Campaigns module will be accessed through the "Campaigns" tab and a Campaign Marketing Administrator function will create the fields by which the marketing campaign will be measured in Salesnet. Campaign Marketing Administrator, or designated users, can associate and view a marketing campaign to a Salesnet Lead, Contact, or Deal record.

Once the connection has been made, real-time and historical reports can be generated to view statistics such as response rates, total leads, converted deals, total won deals, and total won value.

### Campaign Dashboard (Extended and Global) and Reporting (Express, Standard, Extended and Global)

Pre-built campaign reports and all campaign fields will be available to generate reports under the Lead, Contact, and Deal Reporting sections. In addition, for Extended and Global editions, dashboards will include pre-

built campaign dashboards as well as all campaign fields to create dashboards that permit a company to track effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

### **Communicate Tool (Express, Standard, Extended and Global)**

The Communicate tool enables users to send emails, create labels, and form letters via Salesnet. Users can mail merge by inserting Salesnet fields into templates that are uploaded into the application.

### **HTML Emails**

Salesnet 25 provides the capability for users to create and send HTML emails through the Communicate Tool. Template Administrator (s), a new administrator privilege, or designated user(s), will have the ability to create HTML emails using a WYSIWYG email editor. No HTML programming skills are required. When creating an email or email template, users or administrators may insert Salesnet fields to personalize messages.

Unlimited Email Distribution — With Salesnet 25, users will be able to send an unlimited number of emails via Communicate Tool using a company's mail server. All emails sent from the Communicate Tool can be tracked via reports or by viewing the "CommEvents" tab of an individual record as the emails will be associated with a Lead, Contact, or Deal.

### **New Location for Templates**

The Communicate Tool will be the new location for templates moving that function from the Document Library. To manage the types of emails to be sent, the Template Administrator(s) can create subfolders under the main folders.

### **Document Library (Express, Standard, Extended, and Global)**

Document Library allows administrators and designated users the ability to upload documents to Salesnet and share these documents with groups or all users. Salesnet has improved the ability for companies to organize documentation in the Document Library section. A Document Library Administrator,

a new administrator privilege, can create an unlimited number of folders and sub-folders to organize presentations, marketing materials, contracts, and other relevant documents. Documents can be easily moved to different folders and sub-folders. In addition, folders can be renamed. A new feature called "View Recent Documents" enables users to view the 30 most recently accessed. Lastly, users can conduct keyword searches for documents based on document summaries entered.

### **Lead, Account, Contact and Deal Listing Pages Customizations**

With Salesnet 25, Application Administrators and end users can customize Lead, Account, Contact, and Deal listing layouts to display custom defined fields and Accounts, Contact, and Deals fields on one layout. Also administrators or designated users can place a maximum of 12 column field headings on one listing page.

Salesnet 25 also includes numerous usability improvements that the company says long time customers have asked for. In total, the company says it has added more than 200 specific improvements.

## **Analysis**

Salesnet is delivering to market some important new functionality for its flagship SFA offering that will benefit companies that take an approach to nurturing leads over time. Although marketing methodology is left largely to the discretion of users, Salesnet provides many useful capabilities such as formal lead tracking, custom document development, email distribution, and lead capture and import for making frequent contact with customers and prospects to build interest and capture the moment when needs become prominent. Such cultivation of prospects will result in better leads and faster sales cycles.

With additional marketing capabilities users will be better able to generate and cultivate qualified leads for complex sales processes.

The idea of lead cultivation, or maintaining a relationship through targeted marketing programs, is highly effective but prior to the introduction of marketing automation it was something that many small and medium companies either did not perform or they expected sales representatives to do on their own. Lead nurturing is a good idea but not something that high priced sales representatives have been incentivized for. As a result, lead nurturing has usually been an idea that received a lot of lip service.

Salesnet 25 should change this. With the introduction of new administrator functions the hooks are in place for organizations to take more proactive and systematic approaches to customer outreach. With that, organizations should be better able to economically cultivate existing customers as well as develop new opportunities. More importantly, sales representatives will be less prone to sift through leads looking for those that have the best chance of closing within 90 days. With better leads, sales represen-

tatives will be able to spend more time engaged in active sales cycles and less time chasing opportunities that simply are not ready. Sales metrics will improve as a result.

The company has also partnered with a growing list of third party on demand ecosystem partners that support additional marketing and support functions. For organizations that wish to take full advantage of the on demand platform by incorporating best of breed solutions to support their customer outreach, Salesnet has delivered a very serviceable platform solution.

### About Salesnet

Salesnet was founded in 2000 to deliver easy to use on demand SFA solutions. As part of a new wave of on demand CRM products, the company has been an innovator in delivering SFA that goes beyond simply capturing sales milestones and supports the entire process of selling.

### About Beagle Research Group

Beagle Research Group is a consulting and market research organization focused on emerging technologies and companies that will have an important impact on the way business is conducted in the years ahead. Our work is based on professional standards of quantitative and qualitative research which informs all of our publications.

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