

Sales Intelligence: The GPS of Prospecting



Improve Performance.
Drive Revenue.

About The Naro Group

The Naro Group specializes in helping technology companies capitalize on their investment in sales process and sales training. Contact Jim Naro, President, by email at: jnaro@TheNaroGroup.com.

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By Jim Naro, President of The Naro Group (Originally published in Mass High Tech)

Today, sales people are expected to fill at least half their pipeline on their own. It's a daunting task, especially for those who are overwhelmed by the challenges of building territory and account plans, identifying prospects and finding opportunities with high pipeline and conversion potential.

Sales people have access to an abundance of external data sources including the Internet, social networks and third-party paid data from companies such as Hoovers and Lead411 that provide sales intelligence that makes the above tasks easier. But this information is scattered and timely to collect and put to good use.

To make it easier, services like InsideView and OneSource aggregate this data and provide easy-to-use tools so sales people can readily incorporate external information into day-to-day prospecting activities. These tools also allow sales people to feed any pertinent data on prospects directly into CRM solutions like salesforce.com.

There seems to be only a handful of companies willing to invest in these services, but it's a wise decision because they can easily provide a company with a competitive advantage. After all, sales people are opportunists and they are paid to sell, not research and manipulate data. With the help of one of these services, sales people can spend less time searching the Internet and digging through multiple databases and more time selling.

Here are a few examples of the value these services can bring to a sales person's prospecting efforts.

What companies fit my target market?

With data from an aggregated service, sales people can build a list of target companies by selecting criteria such as size of company, geography, industry and so on. Categories of prospective targets, such as large enterprises, small-to-medium size businesses, and named accounts, can easily be created.

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Who do I want to contact?

If sales people don't take the time to uncover who the influencers, potential champions, or decision makers are, they waste time talking to prospects who may have the right title but little influence. Sales intelligence services not only aggregate corporate information regarding roles and responsibilities, but they also connect this information with other key data, such as background experience and connections from services such as LinkedIn.

Is the company ready to engage?

If there is something going on that could disrupt – or enhance – a sales situation, it's important to be aware of this. There are event triggers in sales intelligence services that can make sales people aware of changes in workforce (hiring or separation), mergers and acquisitions, new government regulations, legal entanglements, analyst reports, or new or shifting roles in executive management. All of this information can be intelligently incorporated into a sales plan.

What message would best resonate?

Senior executives are very clear on what they want to hear from sales people: "I don't want to hear about your company or your product. I want you to demonstrate that you know something about my business." A sales person's communication with executives can be dramatically enhanced with sales intelligence data. This information, including event alerts, can help sales people align their messages and offerings with specific real-time business challenges that are top-of-mind for prospects.

How can I get introduced?

The most effective way to get introduced to someone is to find common ground and make a human connection. Sales intelligence services combine social networking data with other useful information, which helps sales people get a much broader view of their prospects from both a professional and personal point of view. This data can be mapped to the sales person's own life and a common ground for a connection will emerge.

A good sales intelligence tool will aggregate all of the information a sales person needs to answer these questions – and more. If an organization is looking to give their sales people more structure and a greater focus on productive prospecting activities, these services are definitely worth exploring.