



Implications of Salesforce Acquiring ExactTarget for the Average Sales Professional

By: John McGee, CEO [OptifiNow](#)

Over the last six months, there have been some significant shifts in the focus of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) solutions. Looking at the industry giants, Oracle and Salesforce, there is an increasing focus on creating additional functional uses of CRM products. Traditionally CRM was the central repository of all customer information. Sales professionals entered contact information and history into the repository, so that the enterprise had a centralized database of information as it related to customers. CRM companies moved to the cloud as mobile sales forces needed access to the data while on the go. Through its evolution, CRM now supports a more cohesive operational enterprise.

As CRM has grown within the infrastructure of enterprises, it has been adopted beyond sales management teams to other focuses including: accounting, procurement, human resources, customer service and support. But, with the acquisitions of Eloqua by Oracle and Exact Target by Salesforce, the focus is shifting to the marketing department.

The Salesforce acquisition of ExactTarget has been the hot topic of conversation of late in CRM, marketing and sales circles. But, there is one issue many people have failed to discuss up until now. This issue is what will this acquisition mean for the actual sales professional who is responsible for converting the marketing investment into a closed deal, and the answer is unfortunately less than expected.

While the acquisition of ExactTarget by Salesforce will enhance the marketing campaign features of Salesforce, the reality is there are still significant gaps in the sales side of the equation. Salesforce has become a time consumptive and cumbersome tool for the individual sales person to use. Lack of tools specifically for digital selling within Salesforce has resulted in sales professionals spending priceless time entering data into a system when they could be communicating with potential customers. While Salesforce offers many unique and beneficial tools for marketing and sales management, a successful sales organization needs modern tools to effectively function in today's digital world that are not found in Salesforce.

Digital marketing has become a fast growing sector with numerous companies providing the services marketers need to automate and customize outreach to potential customers via a multitude of platforms including SMS messaging, e-mail campaigns and social media. Technology enabling digital selling, however, has not been as widely adopted and correspondingly companies' ROI in digital marketing is being significantly reduced. While companies are able to make significant headway using marketing automation tools to introduce their brand to consumers in a variety of environments at the ideal time, the reality is they cannot fully capitalize on these benefits. And, they will be unable to until the sales professional in front of the customer has the digital selling tools required to ensure that the customer is getting the most current, relevant, brand and regulatory compliant messages at the ideal time

While marketing to potential customers is an essential business function, unless sales professionals armed with digital selling tools support it, the marketing efforts will go to waste. Digital selling tools can empower sales teams to be more effective, efficient and drive more sales. And, using digital selling tools in

conjunction with digital marketing increases the ROI of both sales and marketing. Despite the lack of digital selling features in Salesforce and Exact Target, both products can still prove useful to the sales professional when used with a supplemental solution.

Currently, there are software solutions available that seamlessly integrate with both Salesforce and Exact Target. This type of digital selling solution is capable of harvesting demographic information from both Salesforce and ExactTarget databases. This vital information about the individual customer and the types of products available to sell in that customer's geographical area enables the sales professional to generate fully customized communication materials with little more effort than a few clicks of the mouse. Additionally, sales professionals are able to put this invaluable information to use with the option of sending these auto-generated and deeply personalized messages via e-mail, printed documents, digital documents, SMS or social channels to ensure the potential customer views them at the right time.

Digital selling solutions offer companies several capabilities not found in Salesforce or ExactTarget. They can increase the effectiveness of a company's sales force by allowing the company to define and automate benchmark sales tools and processes for the entire sales organization. These solutions also allow companies to create a library of legal and brand compliant marketing materials that sales people can send to their individual customers, in a true one-to-one communication. This feature alone reduces times spent by sales people searching for marketing documents in e-mail chains, and eliminates the potential for expired or incorrect information to be sent to leads.

While Salesforce acquiring ExactTarget is another step forward in the evolution of digital marketing and will likely lead to more innovation in the marketing automation space, companies still need to look outside Salesforce for solutions to bring their sales professionals into the digital selling age.

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About the Author: As the President of [OptifiNow](#), John leads the company's vision, strategy and growth. John founded OptifiNow to solve a common problem of enterprise customers – the shared struggle of managing national and global sales teams with brand and legal compliant messaging. OptifiNow was built from the ground up by simplifying the complex needs of customers. The result is a software platform that delivers a complete suite of customer engagement solutions for its clients.