



Monday, March 14, 2005

Hosted SFA Functionality: Apples to Apples?



In [Hosted SFA Functionality: Apples to Apples?](#), it's noted that:

The prevailing wisdom in the CRM industry is that sales force automation applications have become commoditized, especially in the hosted space. In some respects, clearly, this is true. There are certain fundamental or basic features, contact management, for example, that are always part of any SFA module.

But the latest wave of releases by hosted CRM vendors includes new twists on the plain-vanilla functionality theme.

Here's some product functionality excerpts from the [article](#):

[Siebel CRM On-Demand:](#)

In its latest upgrade, version 6, OnDemand makes some large jumps in functionality, including new sales capabilities. Specifically, Siebel OnDemand has a new feature called the "Sales Process Coach," or SPC, that supplies prompts for sales reps throughout the sales cycle. It also provides reminders to add customer data at specific stages of the process, a task that has been known to slip the mind of more than a few reps. It includes new territory-management capabilities, as well.

"We have closed the gap in functionality with this release," Bruce Cleveland, senior vice president of Siebel OnDemand and the SMB Business Unit.

[Salesforce.com:](#)

Salesforce.com largely credited with creating the on-demand CRM market, is not a laggard in this space in any respect, though. It originally built its CRM suite around very strong sales force automation technology; a suite that

includes lead management, opportunity management, global forecasting, workflow automation, team selling, account management, product catalogs and e-mail prospecting.

More recently, Salesforce.com extended its SFA suite even further through its Sforce integration platform and Customforce customization tool set. For example, users can create whole new categories within the SFA module using custom tabs.

Then there is Salesforce.com's growing partner community, which also is driving innovation in the vendor's SFA functionality.

"Salesforce.com just keeps delivering the most functionality the fastest," Erin Kinikin, **Forrester** analyst and vice president.

NetSuite:

NetSuite also made significant jumps in SFA functionality with its latest major release, 10.0. Much of these improvements focus around new upsell and cross-sell capabilities. For example, one feature in the new Upsell Manager can "look at the customer purchase history and customer buying behaviors based on what the orders are in the system and then make correlations between the customers," says CEO Zach Nelson.

NetSuite 10.0 offers a number of tools to make data "actionable," Nelson adds. "You could, for example, assign those opportunities to a rep or blast the entire group with a marketing e-mail campaign."

Salesnet:

Salesnet, as the name suggests, has very deep sales automation functionality. Like Siebel, it also offers -- and for longer period of time, too, guided performance selling-strategy capabilities. Indeed, Salesnet's system has been based on this functionality and on an extensive, accompanying knowledge base.

Its Guided Performance Selling (GPS) strategy can be broken into specific parts: Define a blueprint for sales success; guide sales best practices; and track performance. It is a reflection, says CMO Dan Starr of the company's firm belief that the sales process is the key to improving both sales effectiveness and efficiency.

"Their sales guidance absolutely excels," says **Yankee Group** analyst Sheryl Kingstone.

In addition to the hosted, on-demand solutions mentioned in this article, there are other up-and-coming on-demand solutions that offer some unique functionality and strengths not available the aforementioned solutions; here are just a few:

RightNow CRM
Aplicor CRM
ClickCommerce
Entellium
Salesboom

To isolate the solution that will best meet your needs, it's more important than ever to understand the most critical business issues and processes that you're trying to address/improve. Once isolated, these issues and processes can be translated into needed CRM functionality requirements and used to complete the due diligence necessary to work your way down from a long list of vendor alternatives to a short list.

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