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How to increase Marketing Efficiency to Gain and Retain Customers

How marketing automation and CRM can help a mid-sized business consolidate data, improve customer information, streamline marketing efforts, and take full advantage of marketing campaigns

By Soffront Software, Inc.

Abstract

Marketing departments in mid-sized businesses face a myriad of challenges such as how to target customers more efficiently, and increase one-to-one communications with customers. A rocky economy has pressured businesses to become as streamlined as possible, leaving marketing departments short on staff and budget. Today's marketers in a mid-sized business must not only retain current customers, but also aggressively grow market share and add new customers.

Marketing automation and CRM solutions, such as Soffront CRM, can help mid market companies conquer these challenges. For many years larger companies have increased efficiency with marketing automation and CRM solutions; now these same solutions are available for the mid market. With the combination of experience and technology designed specifically for mid market needs, Soffront is helping mid-sized businesses increase customer touch points and grow response, even with staffing cutbacks. Mid market companies are also seeing how marketing automation and integrating with a true CRM system may be the key to retention and lifetime customer value.

This paper discusses the marketing challenges of today and examines how marketing automation and CRM software help solve these challenges. Details include the following "how to" items:
- Easily access a complete view of the customer
- Speed up the campaign planning and execution cycle to improve time-to-market
- Leverage low cost web and email media with multi touch point, multi wave, multi event campaigns
- Effectively take advantage of marketing segmentation through rich customer data
- Measure results from marketing campaigns and justifying marketing ROI
- Optimize all marketing efforts
- Implement a solution that IT staff can easily change as needed

This paper also explores a checklist of things to look for when considering marketing automation and CRM. A description of Soffront's mid market experience, technology and focus concludes the paper.

Marketing in the Twenty-first Century

Today's economic realities have put a tremendous amount of pressure on the marketing departments of mid-sized companies to do more with less staff and budget. Cutbacks put companies at risk for losing customers through a lack of contact and losing market share through a lack of new initiatives. The only possible response is to increase efficiency.

Large corporations have learned the secret of marketing automation and integrated customer relation management solutions to leverage their resources more efficiently, but studies show that only 20% of mid market companies have adopted some form of CRM as part of their corporate toolset. CRM software is a way for mid market companies to move ahead of their competition at a clearly affordable cost.

# Is Marketing Automation the Answer for Your Business?

Mid-sized businesses should consider marketing automation and CRM as a solution to the frustrating marketing challenges of the twenty-first century. If you have asked yourself any of the following questions, consider implementing a marketing automation, CRM solution such as Soffront CRM.

- o How can I easily access a complete view of my customer?
- o How can I speed up the campaign planning and execution cycle to improve time-to-market?
- o How can I leverage low cost web and email media with multi touch point, multi wave, and multi event campaigns?
- o How can I effectively take advantage of marketing segmentation through rich customer data?
- o How can I measure results from marketing campaigns and justifying marketing ROI?
- o How can I optimize all of my marketing efforts?
- o How can our busy IT department handle changes to our CRM applications?

Easily Access A Complete View of Your Customer -- Consolidate Customer information

The Soffront Marketing module of Soffront CRM will let you quickly access a complete view of each and every customer. Imagine the benefits of an application that allows you to easily consolidate customer inquiries from multiple sources and multiple touch points within the organization.

Once the data is consolidated into a central, easy-to-use location, departments in all areas of the organization can not only access the information, but also enrich it by information gathered through technical support, call centers, field representatives and visits to retail locations. Web inquiries and email can also be gathered and responded to with real time email responses.
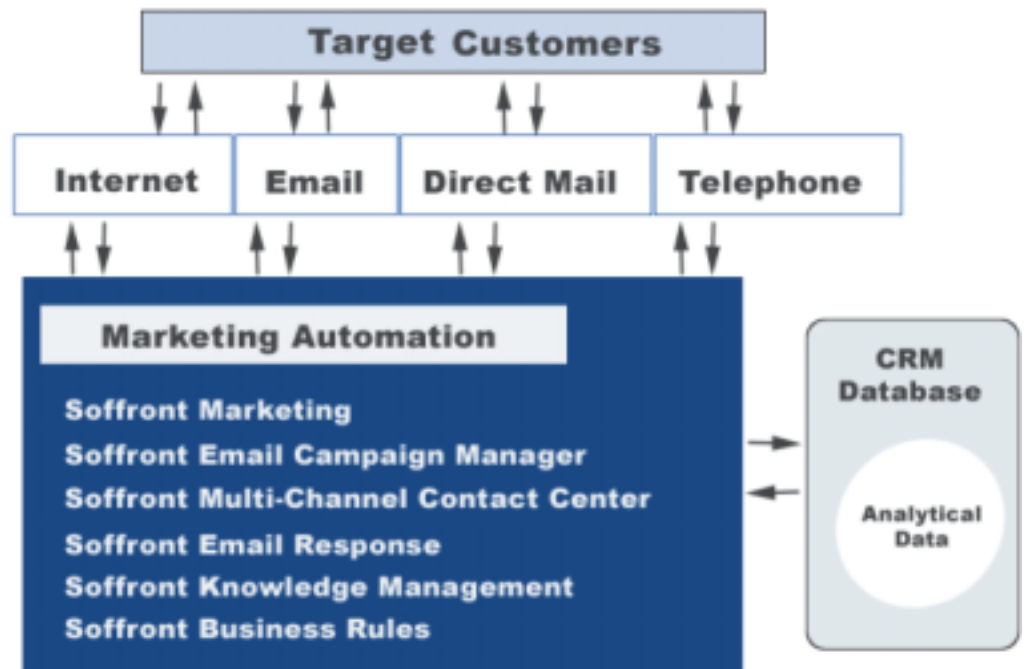
Having all of this information in a central place within Soffront CRM provides a powerful complete view of the customer relationship. Mid-sized companies can take advantage of this power to reduce costs, automate marketing functions, and create significant customer value by automating the fundamental *who, what, when, why* and *where* of marketing.

Speed Up Campaign Planning and Execution Cycle to Improve Time-To-Market

Today's marketing departments must think on their feet and leverage every resource on their payroll. The planning and execution of campaigns has grown increasingly complex, leaving little time for error or interruption. With Campaign planning and management like that in Soffront Marketing, every phase of a campaign is scheduled and executed without the need of human interaction, freeing up human resources and shortening the execution cycle.

With campaign management, each step in a campaign is pre-ordained allowing for complex multi-phase, multi-channel activity that occurs on time, every time. This power let's marketers focus on the marketing activity not triggering the activity itself. This ability improves time to market while empowering the users to increase the complexity and variety of the actives they execute.

Leverage Low Cost Web and Email Media Effectively with Multi Touch Point, Multi Wave, Multi Event Campaigns

To satisfy the needs of today's customers, organizations need to execute campaigns that reach buyers through traditional means plus Internet-based and email-based means. Some efforts may demand immediate, personalized responses irrespective of

conventional working shifts and time zones.   To satisfy these demands, companies need to maintain consistency across multiple channels such as Internet, email, telephone, fax, direct mail and others.

Soffront Marketing lets the user schedule and execute complex campaign plans in multiple channels with multiple events and responses to customer interaction.   For example, a customer may receive a series of timed emails if they have not purchased for a while. Or they may be targeted to receive a direct mail piece, timed to a likely buying event, such as a wife's birthday.

In today's market place, customers are increasingly reachable through diverse communications channels. The campaign automation feature of Soffront Marketing lets users take advantage of these multiple channels to reach customers at work, home or while traveling, thereby increasing the odds of customer retention on messages and offers.
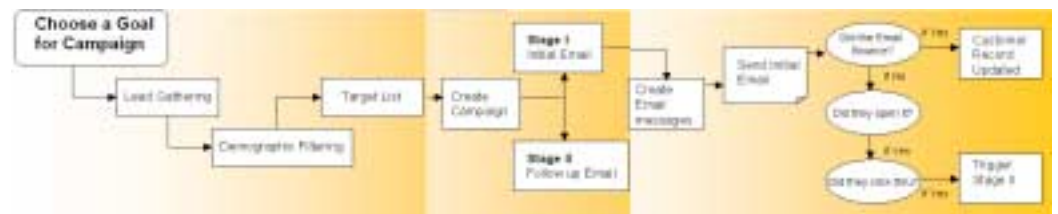
Personalized messaging can deliver email and direct mail that automatically addresses the customer's specific identity and needs. This powerful concept of "one-to-one" marketing targets customers each in a semi-unique way, creating a more intimate association between the firm and the individual customer.

With applications such as Soffront Marketing, this type of one to one marketing can be achieved at very high volumes, using an automated mechanism to answer responses and drive customers to web pages through traceable web site URLs embedded within the messages. For example, an organization could enrich knowledge about a customer's personal preferences by providing with the customer with three choices in an email, and then monitoring the information based on how the customer clicks through.
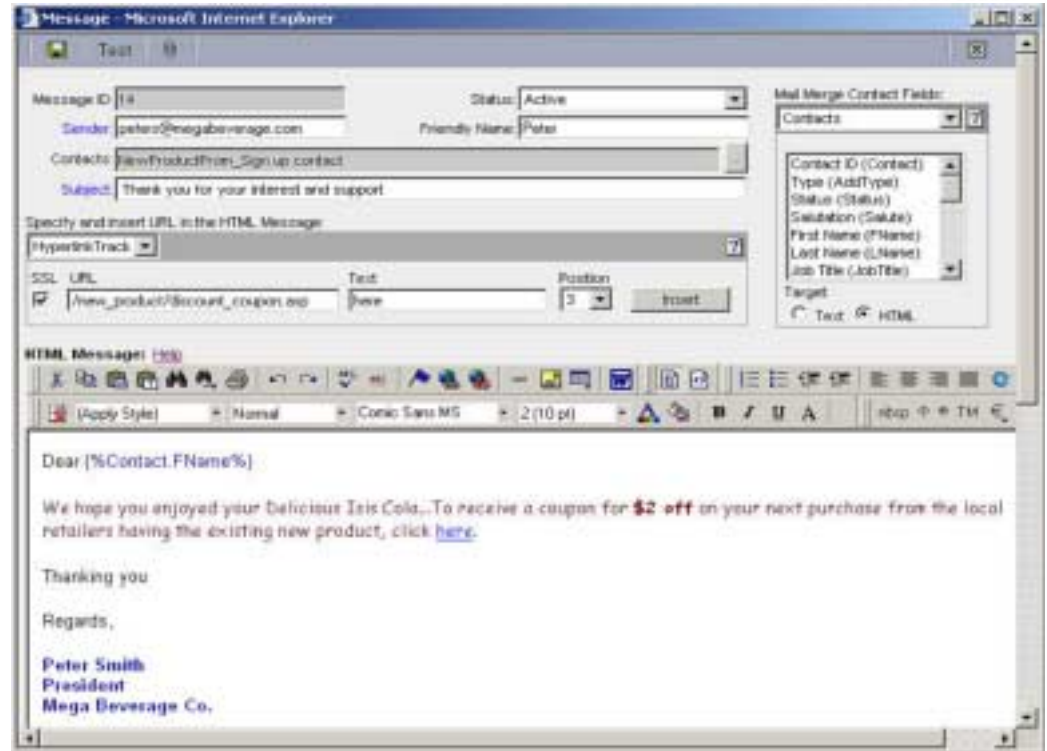
An example of a preset automated email response in Soffront CRM.

Marketing Segmentation through Rich Customer Data

The fundamental goal of market segmentation is to identify groups, segments or clusters of customers that — from a marketing perspective — are meaningfully different from each other.   The purpose of such segmentation is to create targeted messages that will trigger the desired response of these potential customers in a more efficient and consistent way.
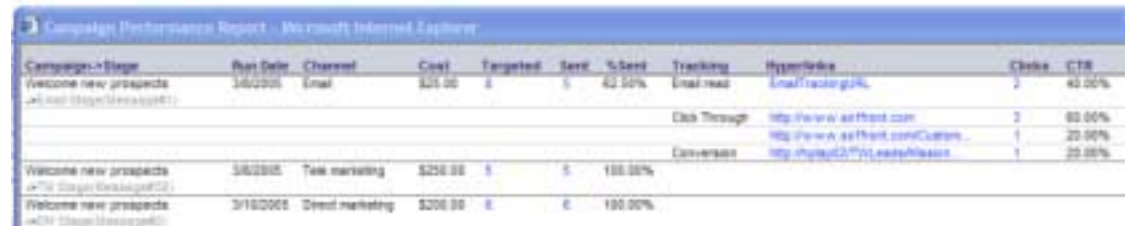
Intuitively, marketers know their own customer base, whether 5,000 or 5 million, is not a homogeneous group. Logically, this diversity can only be taken advantage of in marketing and messaging if you can maintain and retrieve enough information about the customer to recognize the patterns in their demographics, behaviors and purchasing habits.
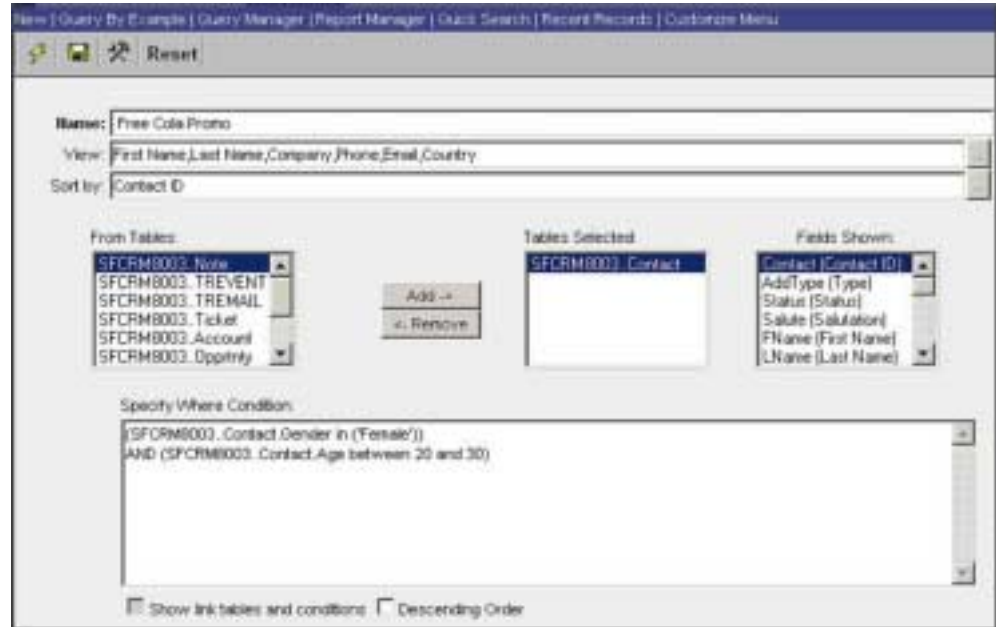
Using Soffront Marketing, organizations can get control of segmentation data based on behavioral patterns and truly leverage the information into meaningful campaigns. Far more comprehensive than purchased data lists or simple age/location demographics; rich information in your company's customer database can generate programs that translate into real business opportunities. Soffront Marketing gives you the tools to make it happen through truly personalized marketing interactions.

Optimize ALL Marketing Efforts

Many companies initially approach the subject of automation from a very specific point of need, such as a desire to automate email marketing or generate leads through web forms. What they discover is that true CRM marketing automation provides them with a new arsenal of marketing weapons that allow them to execute a true customer centric business model.

An example of a multi-staged Direct Mail, Telemarketing and Email Campaign Performance report.

Marketing technologies such as Soffront CRM are enabling increasingly complex, multi channel tracking and analysis of marketing programs, thereby improving all marketing activities — not simply online efforts. In a world where all marketing spending has to be justified, Soffront CRM is a perfect tool to tie it all together. Soffront CRM provides marketers with proven return on investment through analytics and lead management, including data from sales and customer service.

Marketing automation is all about optimizing efforts. This means more than faster and more frequent campaign drops. Marketing automation allows marketers to improve their targeting, build better-informed customer relationships and respond to customers in more effective ways. Additionally, CRM software tools make it possible for companies to cut costs at the same time that they are maximizing awareness among customers through increased and more targeted efforts.

Measure Results from Marketing Campaigns and Justify Marketing ROI

All marketing departments are under constant pressure to justify expenditures and correlate success rates to a firm's executive management. Traditionally this process leaves marketing professionals frustrated and stranded without tangible proof of a return on investment. Often such analysis on campaigns and programs is received with such a delay that it can be impossible to prove results and pinpoint what works and what doesn't. Valuable resources are spent on ineffective methods or concepts with no immediate knowledge of their effectiveness.

Marketing automation provides a means for tracking effectiveness of lead generation, customer responses, closure of new opportunities, comparisons between campaigns and much more. Reports can be generated displaying complete statistical analysis on campaign effectiveness, graphical charts, ROI and metrics perfect for presentations to executive staff. With Soffront Marketing you can track campaign success in real time, making changes, trying new ideas and genuinely optimizing the impact of your messages and target audience.

Busy IT Department Quickly, Easily Implement Changes

A key ingredient to the successful implementation of any Marketing Automation solution, is acceptance by the organization's IT department. The basic nature of these departments requires that any solution require as little of their time as possible for implementation and maintenance. Any good solution should provide the tools for easy customization and be backed up by support from the CRM provider to ease implementation burdens.

Soffront Marketing provides tools so easy to learn and use that non-IT personnel can easily customize the software to fit their needs. This customization is crucial to match any solution to your company's procedures and not force fit the company's goals to a limited software feature set. The ability to make these changes without extensive IT resources gives Soffront the clear advantage for fast and effective implementation.

Non-technical employees can take advantage of easy-to-use tools to customize database tables, fields, and add new ones. Complex parent child relationships can be created and displayed without coding. Creating intricate and effective campaigns, scheduling them, customizing the user interface, creating new forms, and redesigning old ones can be accomplished within the marketing department itself without taxing IT resources.

Things to Look for When Considering Marketing Automation and CRM

Prior to the selection of any system, it's important to find a company that will work with you and fit the technology to your needs. Larger CRM companies have traditionally looked at the mid market as a simple downgrading of their enterprise-wide solutions without any particular focus on the specific nuances of mid size business needs. A scaled down version of an application designed for a large enterprise probably won't meet the needs of a mid-sized company as well as an application designed specifically for the mid market.

You should base your ultimate decision on your organization's specific requirements, but the following advice will provide a good start:

o   The most important thing to look for when exploring solutions in Marketing Automation and Customer Relationship Management is a technology partner with enough experience in the mid market to understand your problems and needs. The most frequent mistake in mid market companies is to believe that CRM is simply software and not a relationship with a technology company. Effective solutions can only be created when a technology partner takes the time to analyze your current methods, needs, staffing and goals.

o   Marketing Automation solutions should have the flexibility to work as part of a larger CRM solution provided by the vendor or be adaptable by that vendor to software solutions you may already have successfully implemented. Marketing solutions may be advantageous on their own, but true integration with other customer touch points is a valuable and powerful component in the concept of one-to-one marketing. Any customer is only as loyal as their last interaction with your company; therefore, the implementation of an effective marketing automation system as part of an overall CRM solution needs to extend into the policies and people of your organization.

o   Implementing technology and not supporting it with customer centric personnel will not provide the full rewards of marketing automation. Automated materials, such as email responses and knowledge base access, will only be as effective as their relationship to the needs of your customers. Develop materials that are based on information gathered from your customers through web-based surveys and other valid research. Providing the wrong responses to customers will at best cause them to ignore you or at worst give them the irritating feeling that you lack respect for their questions and needs.

o   Soffront offers its Marketing Automation and full CRM application suite on an owned, hosted or host to own basis. This flexible use model provides you with the power to make the business choice most fitting for your organization.

o   Soffront's solution is also modular. This means that you can implement just the features you need and expand the solution with your business. Soffront's marketing automation can even be combined with existing software solutions within your company to create a custom tool set.

Soffront Software – Mid market CRM Experience, Technology and Focus

Soffront Software Inc., a pioneer in the CRM market since 1992, offers end-to-end, fully integrated CRM solutions consisting of customer and employee help desk management, sales force automation, marketing automation, asset management, contact center, self-service knowledge management and defect tracking. One of the differentiator of the Soffront CRM Suite is its capability to auto-generate code based on a user's business specifications—a feature that is unique in the industry. With more than 500 CRM installations worldwide, Soffront's installed base includes Fortune 500 companies, mid-sized businesses, federal agencies and local/state governments. Soffront is privately held with no debt and has been profitable since 1995.

Summary

Mid market companies have discovered that they can become more efficient in gaining and retaining customers through the use of marketing automation solutions like those provided in Soffront CRM.   The increasing need for one-to-one marketing in a world of tight budgets can be greatly assisted with automation solutions that facilitate email, direct mail and telemarketing campaigns, customer self service and frequent follow up for after sales, up selling and cross selling.

When selecting a marketing automation solution for your company, look for the following:

- o A company with experience, technology and a focus on the mid-sized business,
- o A product with the right depth of functionality,
- o A solution that is designed to be flexible and highly-configurable,
- o A solution that makes advanced use of email and email response measurement capabilities,
- o A marketing automation solution that is easy to link to your other business applications, and
- o A vendor with a solid track record and commitment to businesses like yours.

For more information on how Soffront CRM can help your business become more efficient in gaining and retaining customers, please visit www.soffront.com or call 1-800-SOFFRONT.

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