

Integrated E-Marketing for Servicing Small Accounts

Chemical Company Case Study

Business Challenge

This company had 20 customers that demand an incredible amount of sales and marketing resources and drive a large portion of the overall revenues. As a result, the small and medium- sized customers are serviced with the time, money, and people remaining after service is completed for the large customers.

In North America, there were 300 small customers spread across the United States and Canada. The business challenge was to efficiently service these smaller customers while maximizing the available sales resources. The sales team felt that it was important to increase the amount of touch or exposure to this customer base while decreasing the amount of time spent physically in front of the customer.

The Solution

The sales team was reorganized with two inside account managers focused on the small customers. To maximize the amount of touch directed to these customers, a variety of marketing communications tactics were employed.

- A customer survey was launched using Zoomerang, a web based survey tool. The survey established a baseline for frequency of communications and the types of communication methods preferred.
- A quarterly electronic newsletter was launched which drives customers back to the customer extranet site for additional information on products and services. This newsletter plays a critical role in the sales communication process given that two account managers do not have the bandwidth to speak directly to every customer when there is an update.
- A monthly customer conference series was launched using Live Meeting, a web conferencing tool. These conferences feature the company's product experts.
 - Email marketing is used to generate awareness of the event, solicit registrations, and ultimately to follow up after the event with links to the conference materials.
 - The registration process is web based and collects basic survey information from each registrant as it pertains to the discussion topic. This survey information provides valuable insight to the customers' interests and assists with tailoring the presentation materials.
 - During the conference, live questions are taken from the audience to ensure that the material meets the customers' needs.
 - After the event, the inside account managers follow up with each of the conference attendees to gather feedback as well as to further discuss the topic.
 - The conference materials are shared with all customers in attendance as well as with those who were unable to attend the event.

Customer Response

"The web conference was great! I look forward to participating in more of these. And, I can't say anything more than that. It is just absolutely what I have been looking for." -- Joe

Customer Response

"I particularly appreciated the fact that the presenter made it simple to understand with the use of very little industry jargon. It was a great way of getting the industry trend information out to customers like me." -- Bob

Value Delivered

Augmenting the existing sales process with electronic marketing tools has enabled this small team of people to service a large customer base. It has tremendously increased the amount of information and the timeliness of the information delivered to the customers. During the first month of operation, this marketing program generated \$200,000 in new annual revenue!

The North American sales manager for this chemical company offers the following perspective on tangible benefits achieved:

1. The need for accurate customer information and business segmentation has led to the creation of a centralized contact database. Price change notifications for 300 plus customers that previously involved five sales offices throughout the country now originate on a point and click basis in our call center. Price notification time has been reduced from five days to a matter of hours.
 - o Value delivered: Flawless execution of a uniform pricing message nationwide.
2. Web conferences are now being used to communicate monthly with customers on the latest industry trends and product releases. Interest in this communication medium has skyrocketed from 10 attendees six months ago to almost 100 attendees throughout the United States and Canada.
 - o Value delivered: Increased touch. (Priceless!) Reduced travel and productivity gain of our marketing employees should exceed \$150,000 in the first twelve months of this campaign.
3. Competitors retrenched from the market place and moved to distributor models. We, on the other hand, maintained our customer intimacy approach, albeit through a different channel. We have successfully migrated all 300 customers to an inside call center model staffed by two account managers.
 - o Value delivered: Removed field sales expenses on the order of \$100,000 associated with servicing accounts.
4. A more simplified, standard product line coupled with improved response time has minimized our reliance on marketing.
 - o Value delivered: Product line reduced by 50% and one man-year reduction in marketing department resources freed to work on larger accounts.

Customer Response

"I liked it! This was the first one [web seminar] that I attended and will definitely attend more. I already have the next session on my calendar. The instructions were very easy to follow, and I did not have any issues with the web access to the session. I liked the way you can submit questions to the presenter. As a supplier, we chose to attend because we want to ensure that what we are supplying meets your needs." -- Rebecca