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Headline News

CRM Magazine recognizes excellence in the CRM industry with its annual CRM Market awards. This year, the sixth annual awards, ACT! by Sage was named a Market Leader in the category of Sales Force Automation.



Using Opportunities In ACT! by Sage

When ACT! by Sage was first released in 1987, it was the first contact management software in the marketplace, and it has remained the market leader ever since. It's not surprising that ACT! by Sage has evolved to do much more than simply manage your sales contacts. Today, ACT! by Sage has the capability to function as a powerful sales management tool, while maintaining ease of use. In this article, we'll cover how you can use the opportunity management features in ACT! to manage your sales pipeline and develop accurate forecasts. Many of these features are new with ACT! 2008 (Version 10).

What Are Opportunities?

You may already be using Opportunities within ACT!, but if not, here's a quick overview. An opportunity is a potential sale. When a lead starts to solidify into a potential sale, you create an opportunity for the company and contact. You also can specify the products or services being considered. Entering products and services will create a dollar value for the opportunity, which will be important data for managing your sales pipeline.

The Power Is In The Details

To help you manage your sales pipeline, there are several settings you can attribute to each Opportunity. ACT! allows you to set up custom sales cycles and define the normal steps to complete a

sale, such as: appointment made, demonstration completed, and proposal sent. For each Opportunity, you can track the stage in the cycle, allowing both the salesperson and sales management to get a better feel of when the sale will close.



Using Opportunities can help you forecast sales more accurately, and help your sales team achieve their sales goals.

You also can set a percentage for the probability that the sale will close. This might seem like a guess at first, but if you start utilizing this field and analyze results after your sales close, you will soon get a feel for it.

Using Opportunities

A good way to get started is to use Opportunities for a specific sales campaign.

Let's say you're offering a sales promotion on a particular product or service to everyone who lives in a specific geographic region, and you

have a sales goal you want to achieve. If you conduct an e-mail or direct mail marketing campaign as part of the promotion, you can assign it a promotion code. You can use this code in the Referred By field on the Opportunity Info tab. To do so, set up the promotion code as an Opportunity Lead Source.

If you are planning to include telemarketing in your campaign, you can set up activities for specific ACT! users on your telesales team. Create an Activity Series to set up the activity for all the contacts you want to call. Make sure the team knows how to record the opportuni-

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Using Opportunities In ACT! by Sage CONTINUED

ties they generate. You can designate a code for opportunities generated by the telesales team, and use it in the Opportunities Name field.

To encourage your team to use the Opportunities functionality, you could provide an incentive, such as a bonus, for the person with the most closed sales properly recorded as Opportunities.

Sales Processes

When Sales Processes are carefully thought out and created in ACT!, you will be able to forecast projected sales for the month, quarter, or a particular campaign from the Opportunities list. Using Sales Processes in tandem with Activities Series is highly recommended—it can help make sure that each step you defined in the sales process is completed.

Forecasting

Once you have created an opportunity for all of your prospective sales, you can use the Opportunity List as a tool to effectively manage and

forecast your sales efforts. With the Opportunity List, you can find out:

- ▶ The number of opportunities in a certain stage of the sales cycle.
- ▶ The sales potential of a group of opportunities – those in a certain stage, those of a particular user, or any combination.
- ▶ Opportunity totals by specific date ranges, or by quarter or year.

With this information in hand, you will know exactly how you are tracking against your sales goals. If it looks like you might fall short, you can take additional steps to assure sales goals are met, such as assigning more people to telesales, or sending an e-mail reminder. Your team can use the Opportunity List to review which of their opportunities are most likely to close, and keep focused on them, maximizing sales for the particular campaign or quarter.

Track Progress With The Dashboard

The Interactive Dashboard, new with ACT! 2008, is a great place to monitor and track the

progress of your sales efforts. The Opportunity Pipeline by Stage dashboard gives you a graphical pie chart view of your opportunities. You can select filtering options for the graph right from the dashboard. Other Dashboard Components display My Opportunities in bar chart format, a list of the top 10 opportunities by dollar volume in your pipeline, and sales-to-date against goals.

Monitor Your Pipeline

Below we explain how to print or display the pipeline graph right from the Opportunity List. Reviewing the Opportunity Pipeline regularly will provide you with a realistic view of today's and tomorrow's sales. You'll be able to identify issues early and proactively take steps to assure sales goals are met.

Give us a call to discuss the best way to use the ACT! Opportunities feature in your organization. ☆

Tips & Tricks

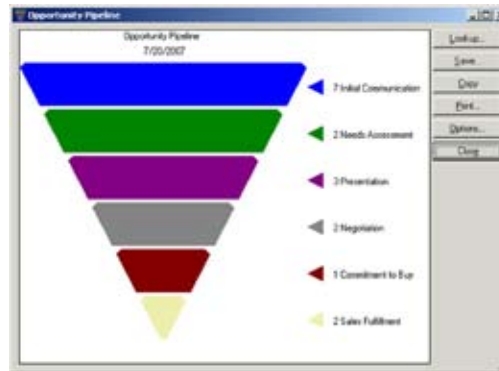
Printing The Opportunity Pipeline

You can print a graph of your opportunities right from the Opportunity List. Here's how:

From the Opportunity List click on the Pipeline icon. You will then be able to select from a number of filters to determine which opportunities will be included in your graph:

The first dialog box, *Create Graph For:* allows you to specify which records will appear in the graph. You have the following choices:

- ▶ *Current Contact* is the Contact record you currently have displayed in the ACT! by Sage Contact view.
- ▶ *Current Contact Lookup* is the entire lookup of contacts that you have previously looked up (If you have not performed a lookup, this will be the same as All Contacts).
- ▶ *Current Opportunity Lookup* is the entire lookup of opportunities that you have previously looked up.
- ▶ *All Contacts* is for all contacts in the entire database.



You will most likely want to base your pipeline on the Current Opportunity Lookup.

The next dialog box, *Display Data For Sales Managed By:* prompts you to narrow your selection based on Users. You may want to print the pipeline just for the records you own or for your team.

Next you can assign colors for individual stages of the sales cycle or keep the default colors.

In the next step, you may type any header and footer information you would like to dis-

play on the graph, such as the date or a description of the filters you selected.

Once you have made your selections, click on the Graph button to create your Sales Pipeline Graph. Once the graph is displayed, you can:

- ▶ Look up the opportunities based on certain criteria.
- ▶ Save the graph as an image.
- ▶ Copy the image to the Windows Clipboard so that you can paste it into another program.
- ▶ Print the image.
- ▶ Change the Options that you used to create the funnel with and generate a new funnel based on that criteria. ☆