

First View: Landslide Technologies

A new look at solving three key sales effectiveness challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, we have left the task of reviewing CRM products to, SellMoreNow, ISM, the Gartner Group, etc., focusing our efforts on doing “project reviews”: obtaining firsthand user perspectives on how these applications were performing in the real world. In the past year, due in main part to Salesforce.com and SugarCRM opening up their platforms for other solutions to be developed around, we have seen literally hundreds of new sales and marketing effectiveness applications emerge. As a result of requests from research clients to help them wade through this deluge of product offerings to identify the ones that might increase their sales effectiveness, we are starting this new *First View* series.

The intent of these articles is to provide clients with insights into new applications that we feel offer innovative approaches to solving the sales and marketing challenges that companies face today, above and beyond what they can currently do with their core CRM application. Since these are emerging technologies, the comments presented here represent our personal perspectives on the impact these systems *could* have on sales performance. As always though, *the proof is in the pudding*, so we will be tracking the adoption of these systems over time to ensure that user reality matches our expectations.

LANDSLIDE TECHNOLOGIES PROFILE

Our introduction to Pittsburgh-based Landslide Technologies was almost a very short conversation. A research client was telling us about the company and shared that they described themselves as a “sales workstyle management” firm, which confused more than clarified who they were for us. But based on the recommendation of the CSO we talked to, we agreed to take a look at them.

As we dove deeper into the value proposition for the company, it was clear that here is a firm that really understands “Sales”. Their CRM application, Landslide, has the fingerprints of salespeople all over it. The user interface is very intuitive in regards to how a rep thinks and works. More importantly, the system picks up where traditional CRM leaves off, and among other things, it addresses three critical issues that can noticeably improve sales effectiveness.

Sales Process Optimization, Not Organization

A claim many CRM systems have made is that companies can map their sales process into the opportunity management system (OMS). In some cases this amounts to nothing more than simply being able to list the major steps in the sell cycle; Interest Development, Needs Analysis, Education, Proof of Concept, etc. in the OMS, and let sales reps click along as they move from one selling stage to another. To us this is merely sales process organization – knowing who is where in the funnel. Landslide takes this to a whole new level of support.

With Landslide, you not only define the stages in the sales process but all the selling activity and buying activity that needs to take place at each step to advance the deal. In addition, you can also link relevant sales support materials to the specific tasks within the sell cycle, so reps not only know exactly what to do but have the sales knowledge elements to do it. Now you are looking at CRM optimizing the sales process by giving reps access to all the best practices to help them successfully move the prospect through their buying process, versus just organizing.

Prospect Communication/Engagement Management

Any solution really designed *for* a salesperson should include the ability to better communicate with prospects AND measure their interest levels objectively. This is what salespeople spend their lives doing yet many CRM systems stop at just providing the capability to send or track emails through the application.

Landslide allows reps to set up individual sales portals (called io Channels) for each of their prospects. Now clients have a single repository to go for all the information they need about your company. And since you manage the contents of that repository, if you update something, like pricing, that change is automatically reflected in the information prospects are turning to in their evaluation process.

This functionality also provides salespeople two key things they thrive on: instant notification of prospect activity when they access the materials and an objective measure of prospect interest in the deal. This takes away the mystery out of whether prospects opened proposals or brochures and often also allows salespeople to identify ‘invisible buyers’ in the prospect’s company.

The io Channel is also very useful for lead incubation support. If a prospect is interested, but not inclined to act, you can continue to notify them that you have added new things to their personal portal; case studies, relevant articles, product announcements, etc. When the prospect is ready to start an evaluation, and begins to re-access the materials, the sales rep is instantly notified and can proactively reach out to their contacts and start actively selling again.

Novel CRM Data Management

The final key feature of Landslide is our personal favorite. For years, when we have reported on the key challenges CRM project teams face, and at the top of the list is populating and maintaining relevant data in the systems. Many reps have consistently balked at agreeing to become data entry clerks and updating CRM records in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Landslide addresses this issue in a unique way. When a rep is leaving a sales call, and headed to another appointment, they reach for the most commonly used sales tool of all – their cell phone. They dial an 800 number, which using VOIP services – read as cheap air time – transfers the call to a Landslide VIP services rep. A real person answers the phone as asks how they can help. I can have my VIP rep input my call notes into Landslide, set up a reminder for me to do something in two weeks, create an action items for my sales support person, update my forecast, etc. all while I am traveling to the next call. And the cost of this service is included in the SaaS fee.

CONCLUSION

Any one of these capabilities can make your salespeople more productive, but together they really start to address the sales effectiveness challenges we have been reporting on for years. Again, we intend to track the marketplace acceptance of this solution, but based on the myriad of conversations we have had with CSOs and their sales teams, we believe that these, and the other series of unique functions Landslide provides, will make it attractive to CRM project teams looking to implement a CRM system or enhance the application already installed. Any questions on the perspectives presented here should be directed to Jim Dickie, (303) 530 6930 or Barry Trailer (415) 924 3500.