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ITMatters

In this regular column Charles Zealey of ITSolve covers all aspects of business and personal computing. If you have a question about IT matters, email it to Charles on itmatters@itsolve.co.uk

How are the relations?

In today's tough business environment it is more important than ever to keep in touch with your customers. Making sure that you follow up every opportunity, as well as reaching out to every single potential new customers is one way to protect yourself from the worst of the recession.

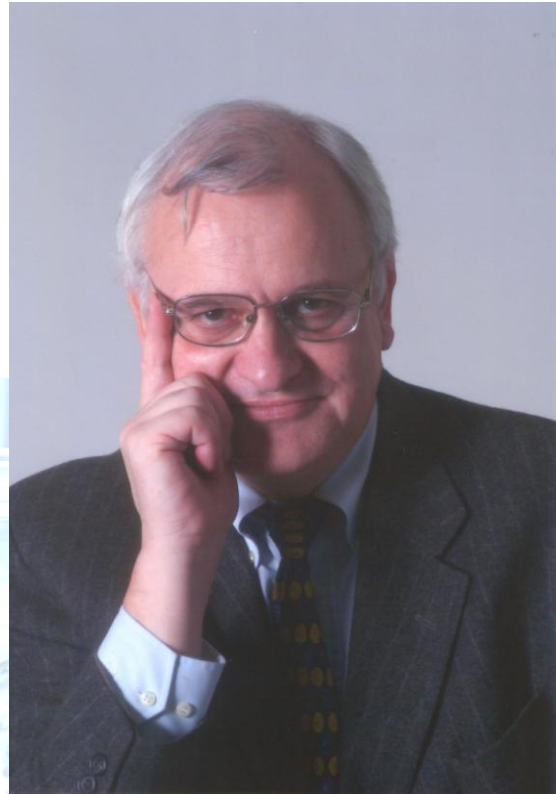
While much of this work is down to personal commitment and focus, some simple tools can help. In the past, many sales people made use of a well thumbed pocket book, and indeed many still do. In the age of email and digital communication an electronic system is likely to bring real benefits. This is especially true of sales teams where there is a need for information to be shared, sometimes across geographic areas. The buzzword is CRM – or Customer Relationship Management.

A good CRM system will enable you to maintain records of your customers and prospects, and individual contacts. It will let you plan implement, record and measure all your sales campaigns.

Leads means sales, or should

The result of any good campaign is leads, and CRM means these are tracked, with all interactions with the customer being recorded, including records of emails, written notes, or other documents. As the sale progresses, the exact status can be monitored through to completion.

CRM will bring benefits across the whole business. Your sales professionals will have a structured system to enable them to keep on top of their customer contacts, while the information stored in the system will provide knowledge of the market place that can



be used to improve and tune the offering. A single view of customer interactions enables the delivery of improved customer service, and management reports can provide vital information on the performance of individual departments.

Is CRM working for you?

As with many things the actual CRM System is only a part of the picture. It is important to understand how it will be used from day to day. Will the necessary changes in working methods be accepted and adopted? The cost of designing the flow of work through the system and training those who will use the system must not be underestimated.

If you are looking for a good way to improve your customer interaction, and your conversion of leads into sales, CRM could well be the way to go.

Charles Zealey is a consultant working with business professionals helping them to improve their organisation's productivity and effectiveness with the use of Information Technology. Typically a return on investment can be achieved with 6-12 months. To access help sheets go to www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets/. For a free half-hour consultation on business IT issues phone 01635 869863 or email lisa@itsolve.co.uk.

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