Sales force automation is technology

Technology

As computer hardware and software improvements have changed rapidly over the sat 20 years businesses started to recognize that some amount of sales function can be made more efficient with sales force automation (Engle & Barnes, 2000). In today's workforce salespeople adopt or are being encouraged to adopt and use a wide variety of technologies to increase their efficiency and selling productivity.

Sales Force Automation is a relatively new technology that uses customer software or web- based systems to help handle the responsibilities of the sales force such as ordering, control of inventory and customer relations. Using sales force automation can be a read asset to a company if it is managed correctly and executives get employees comfortable with the idea. This would be done by ensuring that each employee is properly trained and the sales force automation system in place meets the needs of the employees.

The theory behind sales force automation is that companies will make more money and employees will work more efficiently if the sales force has better information and more of it at their fingertips in a user friendly, accessible format. It is also used as a tool to implement a new marketing strategy known as customer relationship management (CRM) (Sprier & Venerates, 2002). Sales force automation has made it possible for businesses to still provide exceptional customer service, yet operate with a smaller work force. The customers can quickly access product information through the firm's website (Lairs & Speech, 2004).

If a customer has a question about a product they purchased, it is no longer necessary to contact the salesperson directly; they can simply go onto the company's website and access all the information they need about the product to get their question answered. They can also browse through different products before they are ready to make a purchase. This not only allows the customer to get their answers on their own time, but also frees up the salesperson's time so they can continue selling and obtaining new business.

Hewlett Packard's website allows customers to be able to shop different products such as desktops, laptops and printers all from their website. Potential customers can compare the different specifications of each product along with prices. The design of Hewlett Packard's website makes it so that they do not deed to hire different salespeople for the different types of products to explain the advantages of the products to the customers one by one Monsoons & Broadway, 2005). Sales force automation improves the overall efficiency of a salesperson to allow more time for them to focus on customer relations strategies.

If salespeople are relieved from dealing with administrative details they can be more productive to focus on business needs and goals. By implementing a handheld wireless active inventory system to take the inventory of their retail stores automatically, The Tailored Company, was able to increase the productivity of its sales representatives by 25% Monsoons & Broadway, 2005). The sales representatives now had more time to help the company increase sales and make sure customer needs were being met.

Sales Force Automation offers a comprehensive analytics program that allows businesses to track ROI (return on investment) marketing campaigns, traffic levels, lead conversion rations, content effectiveness, and more (Data, 2006). All the information that is obtained is in real time or current and the only time you would see old data is when you want to. Users are allowed to customize reports based on business needs. This allows owners to see where the sales representatives strengthens and weaknesses are, they are then better informed to make business decisions on how to improve employee performance.

Mediumistic JIFF Lease & Finance Company developed a sales force automation system because they wanted to improve productivity, broad user adoption and have better, faster decision making. Since the system has been in place there has been a noticed improved productivity solution and because the system runs on real time employees are able to make deter and faster management decisions (Microsoft, 2010). Sales Force Automation has positively improved the image of the salesperson to the customer (Lairs & Speech, 2004).

With appropriate software installed on their laptops, smartness and tablets a salesperson is able to have better time management, remain in close contact with customers and keep up to date on appointments and meets if there should be a last minute change. Another advantage to sales force automation is that salespeople are able to use business application and obtain real time data to repaper Powering presentations and proposals. Not only does the salesperson look more professional they have access to any answers, if the customers should have any questions.

By being prepared and professional for a presentation the salesperson is gaining the confidence and trust of the customer which helps to build a long solid relationship. With the use of sales force automation a salesperson is now able to dedicate their efforts in planning for developing strategies to score better in targeted market segments with customer analysis and consultative or team selling Monsoons & Broadway, 2000). Since the sales force automation system now handles the sales and customer support, the salesperson is now free to focus on increasing sales and bringing in new customers.

The transition to using sales force automation does have some negative effects on the salespeople of a company. While results immediately after training show that salespeople had positive perceptions of the technology, after 6 months the technology becomes widely rejected (Sprier & Visitants, 2002). Salespeople can feel like they are being replaced by a computer system and their roles are not as important as they once were. This has resulted in companies experiencing higher personnel turnover in the telecommunication and real estate industries (Sprier & Venerates, 2002).

Another problem that a business can have is the fact that technology is changing very rapidly and if the program isn't updated consistently it will become out of date and useless. Once the information becomes outdated no one will be interested in using the system. Sales Force Automation is becoming more known and widely used. Even with certain disadvantages it is important for a business to have this system in order to keep track of data and information to improve a company's performance.