

It's January—Do You Know What's in Your Sales Funnel?

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Don't Let Dirty Data Clog the Funnel

Some managers, however, can't answer these questions because they don't know what's in their sales funnel. Their vision is clouded by old, inaccurate and poorly structured data—the bane of many sales and marketing managers' existence. If that's your problem, take these steps.

- **Direct Your Data**
Data finds its way to your database from multiple channels and in a host of formats. Your database may not be structured to receive the data in all its varied configurations. It's like trying to put together your child's some-assembly-required plastic car with the nuts and bolts from your new bookcase.

Nothing fits, stuff gets lost, and things don't work the way they should.

Thus, it's crucial to think about where the information is coming from before you receive it—website, social media, purchased lists, and more—and what format it's in. Then task your information technology gurus to develop a common structure that provides homes for varied data, and a roadmap that describes where to direct the data. This enables you to receive the data you need and find it again.

- Profile and Fix It

Can you trust your data? To find out the answer to this question, you need to profile it using software that gives you a picture of how complete and accurate the data is. If your report card from data profiling is not something you're proud of, clean it up. This may mean putting people on the phone to call contacts and ask the questions that need answers. Or you might try bumping your database up against other lists with higher accuracy.

- Optimize It

How do you optimize your funnel? You use customer relationship management (CRM) software to guide you through every step in the sales process. It assures sales and marketing teams conquer tasks, meet deadlines, and interweave their efforts to win more sales.

A Clear Funnel Provides a Vision for Sales Success

Using Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) to manage your sales funnel enables you to measure what's working. This not only empowers you to standardize best practices across your organization, it helps you ferret out the weak spots. For example, you can see if you're having difficulty moving prospects from downloading a white paper to a participating in a demo, and experiment with ways to improve conversion rates.

Once your database is cleaned up, and chock full of accurate information, you have a clear vision of your sales funnel and each prospect within it. This allows you to put customers' needs first and help them find the ideal products and solutions to solve their problems. Also, marketing managers are able to spend their budgets intelligently, maximizing their prospects for customer acquisition by reaching the right audience, with the right message at the right time.

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