

Cumberland Packaging grows its tail by 50% thanks to Abaca's CRM module

If you'd like to know how to increase some of your core sales by 50% without spending any more money, then this is the article for you. Conversely, if you're in the enviable position of having more than enough revenues...you may wish to read this page anyway and chuckle at how do-able it could be for others to be in a similar situation.

Whilst reviewing Abaca's new CRM module (which is yet another a free upgrade for their clients under the auspices of their maintenance agreement), their Sales Director Graham Dickinson recommended that I visit Cumberland Packaging because they make such fulsome use of the additional functionality.

John Watson, the enterprising and wily Managing Director of Cumberland Packaging, runs a seriously customer-focused, competent and tight ship. Although his Southend-on-Sea based sheet plant is nearly three times the size of a typical competitor, heavily invested and hence unsurprisingly highly successful financially, he still abhors the very idea of wasting even £1 and has a very high threshold before he's impressed. So when he started to wax lyrical about Abaca's CRM system, I was keen to share his learnings with our readers.

He started with a lesson based on the work of Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto:

“Like most businesses, everyone's primary focus has traditionally been on the 20% of our customers who generate 80% of our sales as well as winning the next big new account. However, because we've been trading and supplying smoothly for decades; we rarely lose customers. As a result, we have a really long tail of relatively small but sensibly profitable clients that our external sales team didn't always have the time to give lots of attention to. Often we missed the boat and never even found out about it.”



Abaca's CRM software (which is fully integrated with the rest of our business system) has enabled us to capture this tail in a systematic manner based on the relevant activities and grow it by 50%. We decide to ring people on an agreed schedule and nothing is forgotten or overlooked. This process is driven by just one internal sales person who works part time – so the workload is pretty sensible.

Much of our growth has come from the workflow chasing quotes. Are we competitive? Do you need a quote? Do we need to send you a sample or a Sales Representative visit?

Thanks to excellent teamwork between internal and external sales, when an opportunity or difficulty requires help from the external sales team, they're prompted to dive in and resolve the situation.

The discipline of the CRM system creates its own activity. For example the Sales Representatives are asked to follow up if: a customer is unhappy; there is competitive activity or there is an opportunity. So the tail's requirements are addressed in a focused way.

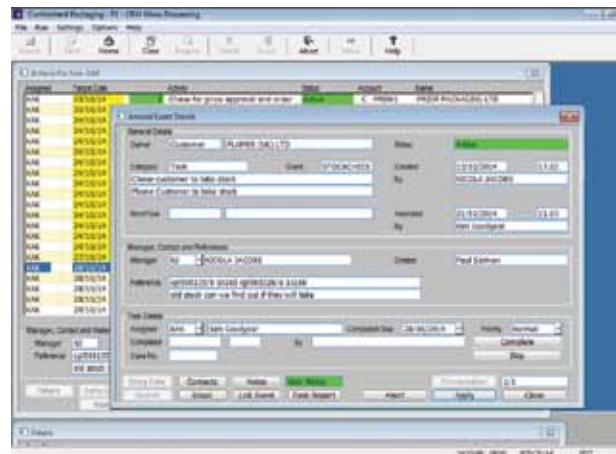
We're capturing everyone; I feel safe in the knowledge that everyone's being looked after and considered.

In fact, there is real flexibility in the workflows that Abaca can facilitate in their CRM system...we also use it for other disciplines in our business. For example, we've set up a workflow for tool and stereo management:

- *We've noticed that you haven't ordered in a year, would you like to buy some boxes, commission a redesign or dispose of the origination?*
- *The system allows us to design a standard letter that's triggered when appropriate and internal sales follow it up without fail.*
- *We can track exactly where we are and who is responsible for the next step.”*

With a typical box plant trading with 4-700 customers, making 4-5,000 live products and having quoted for tens of thousands of specs, this is level of detailed system support that allows for the ready management of huge complexity.

Let's leave the last word to John: *“It's free for Abaca customers and will help you to very quickly grow sales with your existing clients. We'd be nuts not to use it.”*



Your Editor's advice to Abaca clients is to quickly contact Graham (graham@abaca.co.uk) to get in the doubtless lengthening queue for some training (which is modestly-priced and is the only cost involved) and avail yourself of the CRM capability that's already available in your recently-upgraded business system.