

CRM for the Big at **Heart**

Commence Corporation helps small to midsize businesses tackle the CRM challenge

PICKING A CRM vendor is tough. It's even tougher when you're part of the small to midsize market, where technology budgets are limited and horror stories of complex, drawn-out CRM projects abound. While the watchword of midmarket CRM buyers was once something akin to President Bush's "irrational exuberance," today it is "caution," as companies demand solutions that are affordable, easy to implement and easy to use and that deliver a quick return on investment.

"The CRM industry has been plagued by vendors offering overly complex solutions to solve basic business problems. This has resulted in a low adoption rate and failed customer expectations," says Larry Caretsky, president and CEO of Commence Corporation. "The concern for most businesses today is not a lack of technology, but rather how they can leverage technology to improve their internal processes and, ultimately, their bottom line."

Caretsky should know. His company has been in business for 15 years and has witnessed all the trends in CRM. And with that kind of experience, Caretsky figured out long ago that rapidly deployable, cost-effective solutions – even when they weren't in vogue – were the only way for customers to quickly and affordably reap the benefits of their investment.

Commence has taken a unique approach to meeting the key objectives of most small to midsize businesses – namely, by streamlining internal business processes, improving sales processes and

delighting customers. The company starts with the fundamental knowledge that most mid-market customers must first address the problem of data capture, data consolidation and data sharing.

Typically, vital customer information is spread throughout these organizations in contact managers, back office systems and spreadsheets. "Employees spend a signif-



icant amount of time trying to determine where or who in the organization has the information they need to address customer inquiries," says Caretsky. "Management recognizes this problem and realizes that in order to become a more efficient sales and service organization they must get the right information into the hands of the right people, at the right time."

The Commence Application Suite does just that. Customer information, captured

from multiple channels, is stored in a unified database where it is immediately available to all authorized personnel through two product features: a digital dashboard and a multiview capability. "This enables them to be constantly aware of account activity and take proactive steps to ensure customer satisfaction," says Caretsky.

At the same time, Commence helps companies improve their sales processes with a sales process template that is built into the system. Preset sales stages allow the sales team to begin classifying new sales opportunities from the beginning. The product also offers sales teams the ability to utilize a structured sales methodology for evaluating each sales opportunity. And it helps make sales reps more productive by providing a tool to automate routine tasks. "It's like having an administrative assistant working directly for you," says Caretsky. Implementation time is usually a matter of days, and the sales and marketing module sells for \$495 per user license. There's also a customer support module that sells for an additional \$200 per user license, so for \$695 per user, customers can get a complete suite of customer-facing technology.

"Today's basis for business growth is the successful management of long-term relationships with customers on a one-to-one level," says Caretsky. "When the customer becomes the center of your business, customer-centric strategies, processes and technology solutions can unlock the value of these relationships."

– HEATHER BALDWIN