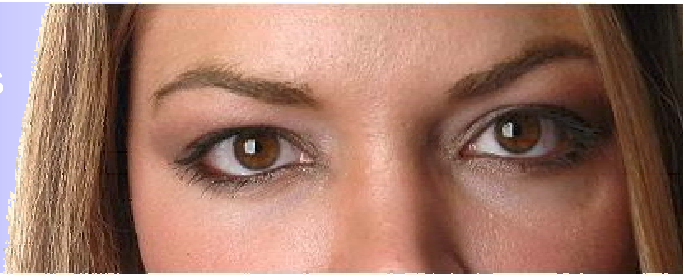
“I want to see our emarketing results measured in terms of sales growth, not open rates and page views.”



Virtual Relationship Marketing Best Practices

Building highly-personalized virtual relationships with B2B prospects and customers will generate the qualified and timely selling opportunities required to achieve growth.

Introduction

Various studies have shown that, on average, only 11% of B2B leads generated made a purchase within 3 months of their inquiry, and that another 42% made a purchase in 4 to 12 months. This means that, at any given time, there are nearly four times as many qualified but longer-term prospects than there are immediate selling opportunities.

Unfortunately, these qualified but less-immediate opportunities often fall through the cracks because seldom are efforts made to build a personal relationship with longer-term prospects. The reason? Few marketing and sales organizations have time today for the constant personal contact required… *unless it’s done virtually*.

The goal of Virtual Relationship Marketing (VRM) is to get prospects to qualify themselves and tell you when they are in the buying mode. Done correctly, VRM will create the perception of personal contact in a way that is welcomed by the prospect and establishes trusted advisor status for the sales person. “Welcomed contact”, as defined by a prospect, is being kept informed by someone who understands their problems and offers relevant information and solutions.

This paper will show you how to use automated marketing processes to build these highly-personalized virtual relationships with prospects and customers, and generate the constant flow of qualified and timely selling opportunities your sales force and channel partners need to help you achieve profitable growth.

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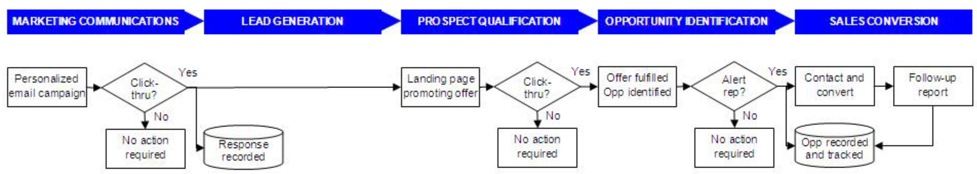
Virtual Relationship Marketing Processes and Automation

Before proceeding with your first VRM campaign, there are two critical tasks that need to be completed – mapping clear and repeatable campaign processes, and implementing web-based solutions to automate these processes.

1. Mapping your VRM campaign processes

Begin by defining the sequential stages of your core marketing-sales pipeline, which typically includes marketing communications, lead generation, prospect qualification, opportunity identification and sales conversion.



The next step is to map a clear and repeatable VRM campaign process that aligns with each stage of the pipeline as shown above. If your sales channels vary by market segment, you will need to map a process for each segment.

2. Implementing solutions to automate your processes

The best solutions will be designed and configured specifically for automating *your* VRM processes, and will seamlessly integrate the following key functions in a secure and accessible marketing and sales web portal:

- **Contact management.** Store and manage critical prospect and customer information. Capture online and offline leads. Alert sales force and channel partners of high-probability selling opportunities and enforce follow-up rules.
- **Campaign management.** Segment contact lists for targeted email, direct mail and telemarketing. Compose and deliver mass-personalized, one-to-one emails (not categorized as spam), and track responses to VRM campaigns.
- **Content management.** Easily produce custom landing pages for email, direct mail and search engine marketing campaigns. Update website content.
- **Performance metrics.** View dashboard graphics and summary tables of marketing and sales performance metrics linked to detailed marketing reports.

Virtual Relationship Marketing Campaign Workflow & Best Practices

By following the VRM campaign workflow and best practices below, every campaign you execute will achieve the highest level of performance possible.

1. Define the campaign objectives and strategic offer

Begin by defining a clear objective for every campaign. Is the objective to trigger a qualifying response from unverified leads or to identify qualified prospects with an immediate need? Will the campaign be timed to generate trade show traffic or make prospects aware of a product launch. What segment will be targeted and what type of offer will be most relevant and of interest to that segment?

2. Search and segment to create a campaign target list

Your contact database should contain field pick-lists for key market segments by region, application, industry, pipeline stage, etc. to make the creation of target lists fast and accurate. As with any direct marketing campaign, the list is one of the most critical factors to the success of a VRM campaign.

3. Compose and personalize the offer enticement email

The most important principle of VRM is personalization. The email must appear, for all intents and purposes, to be a personal message from one individual to another. It should be written in the same tone you would use when writing an email to any business peer. Mass-personalization requires that you carefully craft your message and merge contact data fields that add relevance to the recipient. (See the email Compose and Deliver screen on the following page.)

4. Optimize email for deliverability and reader credibility

The email message must also be crafted to bypass spam filters and the recipient's initial scrutiny in order to be opened, read and responded to. Some of the key best practices for optimizing deliverability and credibility include:

- **Subject lines.** Clear, concise and relevant to the message. No caps, exclamation or dollar signs, or spam triggering words like free or save.
- **From email.** The sender's email and the subject line are the first things a recipient sees, and will determine whether the email is opened or disregarded. Use only an individual sender's email, not a generic like sales@domain.com.
- **Email body.** Keep in mind that the purpose of the email is not to provide in-depth information about the offer, but simply to entice the reader to respond by clicking the tracking link if the offer is if interest, so keep the message brief. Plain text emails or HTML emails without formatting, graphics or colors are far more likely to be perceived as a one-to-one communication by both recipients and spam filters. If HTML is used, be sure to create a text version for recipients that have their email program default setting on text.
- **Tracking link.** Direct your recipient to a landing page that fulfills the offer.
- **Closing lines.** Be sure the name and contact information in the closing matches the email sender's.

5. Create the offer fulfillment landing page

If there isn't an existing page on your website that fulfills the offer, you'll need to create a landing page specifically for the campaign. If the solution you have implemented to automate the VRM campaign processes includes a content management system, this will be a quick and easy non-technical task.

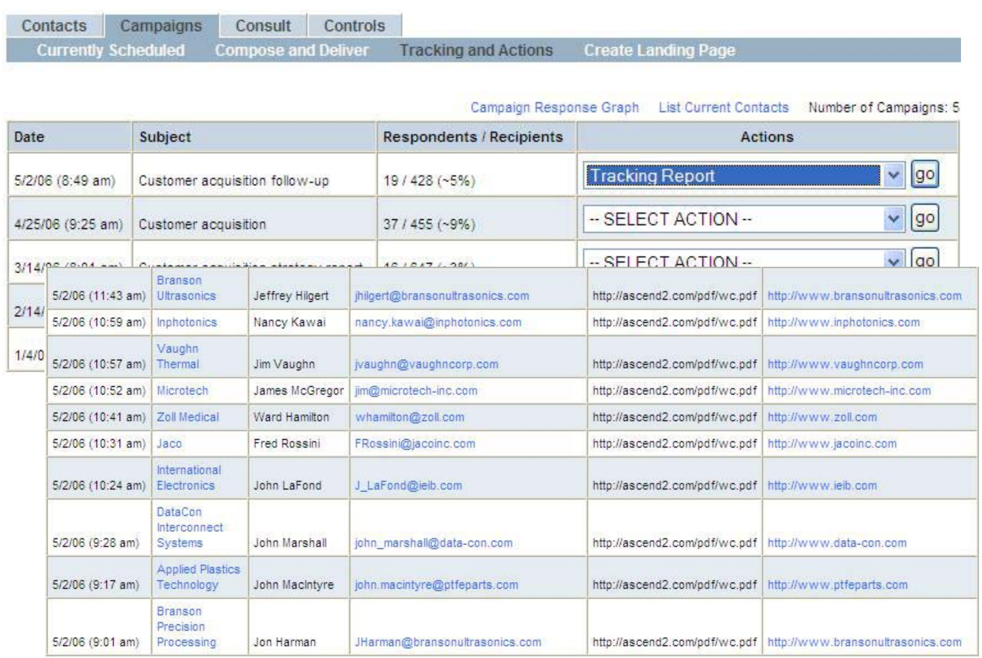
6. Schedule, test and deliver the email campaign

(See the email Compose and Deliver screen shot on the previous page.)

B2B email campaigns scheduled and delivered early in the week generate higher rates of response than later in the week. Before delivering, it is always wise to trial your email and tracking link on an in-house email test list. You can also test to see how well your email bypasses spam filters by using one of the popular spam checker tools available free on the web. Now you're ready to go.

7. Track campaign responses and identify sales opportunities

Response tracking will show you how well the campaign performed and give you a real-time view of who responded. Depending on the objective of the campaign, tracking responses can identify the qualified and timely selling opportunities your sales force and channel partners will value and pursue.



Date	Subject	Respondents / Recipients	Actions
5/2/06 (8:49 am)	Customer acquisition follow-up	19 / 428 (~5%)	Tracking Report go
4/25/06 (9:25 am)	Customer acquisition	37 / 455 (~9%)	-- SELECT ACTION -- go
3/14/			-- SELECT ACTION -- go
2/14/			
1/4/0			

5/2/06 (11:43 am)	Branson Ultrasonics	Jeffrey Hilgert	jhilgert@bransonultrasonics.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.bransonultrasonics.com
5/2/06 (10:59 am)	Inphotonics	Nancy Kawai	nancy.kawai@inphotonics.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.inphotonics.com
5/2/06 (10:57 am)	Vaughn Thermal	Jim Vaughn	jvaughn@vaughncorp.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.vaughncorp.com
5/2/06 (10:52 am)	Microtech	James McGregor	jim@microtech-inc.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.microtech-inc.com
5/2/06 (10:41 am)	Zoll Medical	Ward Hamilton	whamilton@zoll.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.zoll.com
5/2/06 (10:31 am)	Jaco	Fred Rossini	FRossini@jacoinc.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.jacoinc.com
5/2/06 (10:24 am)	International Electronics	John LaFond	J_LaFond@ieib.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.ieib.com
5/2/06 (9:28 am)	DataCon Interconnect Systems	John Marshall	john_marshall@data-con.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.data-con.com
5/2/06 (9:17 am)	Applied Plastics Technology	John MacIntyre	john.macintyre@ptfeparts.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.ptfeparts.com
5/2/06 (9:01 am)	Branson Precision Processing	Jon Harman	JHarman@bransonultrasonics.com	http://ascend2.com/pdf/wc.pdf	http://www.bransonultrasonics.com

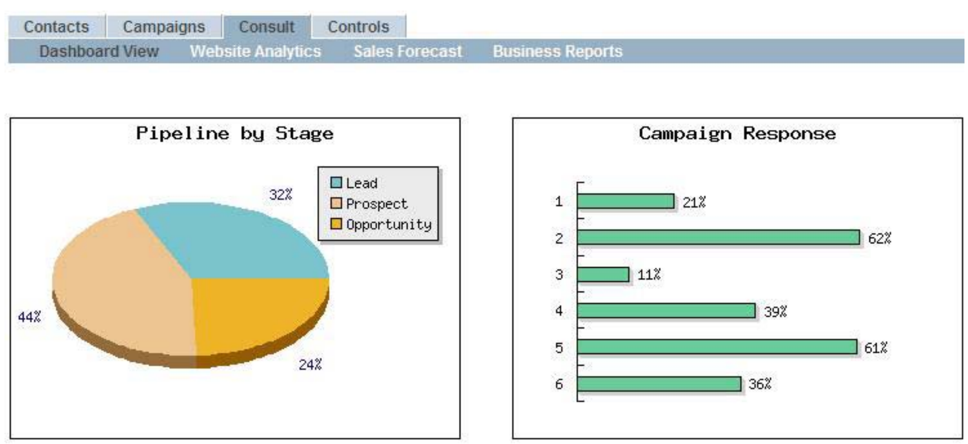
8. Distribute sales opportunity alerts and enforce follow-up

Your campaign process may provide for either the automated distribution of respondents to the assigned sales person or partner, or respondents may be manually reviewed prior to the distribution of sales alerts. In either case, automated follow-up rules and enforcement reminders are suggested. Studies have shown that the most effective and welcomed follow-up contact is by telephone or email made within hours of the original recipient's response.

9. Consult and analyze key performance metrics

Many B2B emarketers today are overwhelmed by a flood of analytical data measuring every vagary from website page view times to email open rates. There is so much data available that many emarketers can no longer see the forest for the trees.

An effective strategy for VRM analytics focuses on key performance metrics that will clearly mark a path to the most important outcome of them all – sales growth. Concise dashboard graphics and summary tables of key marketing and sales performance metrics linked to detailed marketing reports are the most useful analytical tools available.



Summary

Implementing a VRM strategy to build highly-personalized relationships with prospects and customers will generate more of the qualified and timely selling opportunities your sales force and partners need to help you achieve growth.