

EFFECTIVE USE OF SALES FUN- NEL IN INFOMAATTI OY

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ABSTRACT

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This bachelor's thesis was written for Infomaatti Oy with the objective to figure out how to make use of sales funnel more effective. Infomaatti Oy is small IT-company, focused on electronic documentation in various construction related industries. Goal was to find out which marketing channels are most effective to approach new prospects and how to minimize the loss of potential customers in the early phase of sales funnel.

The data were collected through various sources such as books, internet pages and blogs. Information gained from these sources were then reflected on real-life experience working in sales and marketing at Infomaatti Oy.

The study indicated that the first contact with prospects should be done through email marketing. Loss of prospects is minimized, initial contact before the call have been made which makes the sales call easier and prospect can evaluate the value proposition of the product. Improvements can be made in terms of structuring and timing of the email. To validate the effectiveness of email marketing, automated marketing process could be implied in sales and marketing process.

The findings indicate that Infomaatti should keep email marketing as first choice for contacting prospects but with modifications done to it.

Key words: sales funnel, marketing process, prospect, email marketing, first contact

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Infomaatti Oy is a company based in Jyväskylä and it was founded in January of 2013. Infomaatti Oy's founders wanted to create a solution for slow and faulty moving of information at the construction site. Digitalization is the main word to describe Infomaatti Oy and its products. There are three products starting from Mobile Infomaatti (later in the text referred as "Infomaatti"), Infomaatti for construction sites and Infomaatti for housing cooperatives. Mobile Infomaatti, which is an application for mobile devices for documentation and creating reports on the spot, is the main subject in this thesis. (Infomaatti Oy 2017).

I started working at Infomaatti Oy in July 2013 and I worked for one year straight before I got accepted to Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Since then, I have worked there during every summer and now I am a full-time employee. In the beginning the main product was Infomaatti for construction sites. Mobile Infomaatti came to be the main product later when realized that there are lot of mobile workers with increased need to do documentation on site and to carry large number of documents in a fast-to-access form.

I started as an assistant helping with all kinds of daily tasks starting from testing the application for glitches and helping to install monitors inside apartment buildings. As I got more experience my focus turned more into sales and marketing which I now do full time.


We have three programmers and CEO who works with me in sales and marketing. My job consists of finding new prospects from different industries where Infomaatti could be applied and then making the first contact. I send e-mails, make the calls, try to set up a meeting and then pitch the prospect to my CEO who takes it on from there. We have an efficient system so that my boss can focus on the clients that we already have, leaving me with acquiring new prospects.

1.2 Product


Infomaatti is paper, pencil and camera all under one application. For example, verification protocol document must be filled out before the actual construction starts. Before, you needed to write down all the information to a paper, take pictures with the camera, then edit the pictures to the paper and create a complete document out of it. With Infomaatti you can fill in the information on the spot and take pictures instantly. Infomaatti then creates a finished report automatically with all the information in its right place.

Infomaatti works in two different platforms: application and browser. Application is made for documentation, creating reports on the spot and it works on Windows operating system. All the documents and reports goes in our cloud computing service which you can access through our browser. All the documentation made is available for later editing. Reason for the application is that you can use Infomaatti in offline-mode which is an important feature especially in the construction business where working in dead zones is quite common. You can do all the same actions with the browser as with the application but an internet connection is obviously required. In figure 1 you can see the main features of Infomaatti.

There are two options for mobile documentation
Choose the project, pick the report, fill in the information, save & send



Infomaatti Application	Comparison of main features	Infomaatti browser programme
Windows 10 (touch screen)	Operating system	Works on any operating system
Online & offline	Creating reports with pictures to right project	Online (withstands connection problems)
Online & offline (fast browsing)	Document storage	Online
No	Speech to text	Yes (Android & Apple)
Yes	Screenshots from pictures directly to reports	No
Yes	Create markings to pictures & layouts	Pictures (depending on the features of your device)
In Infomaatti browser programme	Share reports with email	Yes



Use Infomaatti browser programme in your workstation
High-quality PDF-reports are safe, customizable & divisible

- Ready-made PDF-reports are stored in the cloud and can be edited afterwards
- Share reports via email
- Add & manage files in document storage
- Editing of report templates
- Template-editor for creating own reports
- Customized reports on demand
- New accounts to projects for extra users when needed
- Communication system for residents & employees




FIGURE 1. Summary of Infomaatti's main features

1.3 Goals and objective

Infomaatti desires to find out if there is a more efficient way to keep new prospects interested so that the loss of potential customers is minimized in the early phase of sales funnel. Market segmentation is already made and therefore acquiring potential customers is not an issue. The system for searching new potential customers and creating the first contact is efficient but Infomaatti Oy desires to decrease the amount of lost prospects in the early phases of sales work.

There are three research questions I would like to answer to:

1. What is the most efficient channel to approach new prospects?
2. In these channels, what is the best way to approach new prospects?
3. How can we validate the most efficient way of marketing our product to new prospects?

For the first question, I will figure out what exactly is the best channel to make the first contact to new prospects. Is it by sending a marketing spirited email beforehand so prospects can evaluate the information? Or is it by making the call without any previous action? The reaction of prospects is two-folded, some prefer the email and some do not because it is considered to be more of a nuisance. Could there be a channel we have never heard of that we could utilize in the process?

Next step is to figure out how to keep the prospect interested to prevent losing them during first contact. How to form and headline the email so that it is inviting and “forces” prospects to open it? What is the best date to reach out people via e-mail or phone call? What time of the day is the best to make the phone call?

With the information gathered from the first two questions I can validate the most efficient way of marketing for Infomaatti. Research made for the first two questions should give me enough guidelines to make a solid conclusion and to validate the most efficient channel to approach new prospects.

Writing this thesis presents important information on different parts and aspects of the sales funnel. Results gained from this will increase actual sales by reducing loss of potential customers in early phase of the sales funnel.

1.4 Methodology

I intend to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods on this thesis. Qualitative research helps me specifically in how to approach prospects in a right manner if it is via email or phone call. This information will be acquired by studying articles, books and studies written by other authors.

On the request of my employer, we decided not to release any hard statistics from our sales process because of trade secrets. Information about sales calls, emails sent, the number of prospects are not released thus discussion about these are kept on general conversation. Use of different statistics on marketing and sales process will be used in this thesis but no accurate information on Infomaatti's sales process will be released.

Infomaatti is using a customer relationship management program which works as a database for all our customers and contacts. All the contacts there are linked to the sales funnel presented on the page in figure 2. After a call, all the information is documented from the e-mail sent and the first phone call made. Sales funnel is thoroughly explained later in figure 3.

Send an e-mail	Not contacted	Contact if needed	Call back	Form a meeting	Meeting	Trial period
Prospect Ltd.	Prospect Ltd.	Prospect Ltd.	Prospect Ltd.	Prospect Ltd.	Prospect Ltd.	Prospect Ltd.

FIGURE 2. Infomaatti Oy's sales funnel in the CRM-programme

1.5 Thesis structure

By making Five force and SWOT-analysis helps to map out strong and weak points of Infomaatti Oy. As this has not done before from the marketing viewpoint I decided to use these analysis tools to build a basis for my study. Results will help to develop the general

approach on the sales funnel and overall process of making trade as well. It will provide information which can be applied on sales calls and e-mails sent to prospects to make the first impression even better. (Investopedia 2017).

Next step is to explain the whole sales process inside Infomaatti's sales funnel. This is done with the help of actual sales funnel created in figure 3. Explaining the sales funnel accurately and the actions done in Infomaatti's sales process helps to pin-point the areas I am going to focus on this thesis.

After this all the information gained from different sources such as quantitative and qualitative studies, literature, articles and participants observation will be used to figure out the best way of approaching prospects in the sales funnel.

From the results gained from this study, a conclusion can be made that which is the most beneficial way to approach Infomaatti's sales funnel. This will automatically affect in sales in a positive manner. Not necessarily bringing new income right off the bat but reducing unnecessary loss of potential customers in the early phases of sales funnel.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I am going to start by using models such as Porter's five force analysis to define the industry Infomaatti Oy operates in and then move on to SWOT-analysis to sort out weaknesses and strengths of the company (Investopedia 2017)

By doing SWOT-analysis improvements can be made in marketing and sales strategy by identifying Infomaatti's assets and adding them to existing business model. SWOT-analysis gives a deeper understanding on business in general which gives more tools to improve almost every aspect in the business process. However, one should keep in mind that SWOT-analysis gives useful information but it does not provide direct results. It is important to be critical and evaluate the information it grants. (Queensland Government 2016)

Porter's five force- and SWOT-analysis put together brings great insight for a relatively new company such as Infomaatti Oy. Porter's analysis goes deeper in the industry itself whereas SWOT-analysis focuses on the company. There are two weak spots in Porter's analysis which you must consider before doing it. The information it brings cannot be used for long-term strategy because of globalization and how technology develops nowadays. Another one is that it is done to a whole industry not just the company. (Beattie 2018)

The beginning part of the sales funnel is the important thing to focus on. As mentioned in research questions I would like to find out the most efficient channels and in these channels the best way to approach new customers.

2.1 Porter's Five Force Analysis

2.1.1 Competition in the industry

Industry in the digitalization of documentation is getting more competitive each year. As a branch it is rather new. People are realizing the advantage that comes with electronic documentation and they start to get rid of the old ways of doing it. There are couple main competitors for Infomaatti Oy who have the same idea behind their product which is

making reports and documentation with mobile devices. Competition is fierce, since mobile devices are almost a necessity and you can do electronic documentation with the device without any special programme created for it.

2.1.2 Potential of new entrants

Nowadays, applications can be made for smartphones and tablets quite easily which brings new entrants quite frequently. People realize the problem thus the advantage that comes with electronic documentation and they decide to act on it. Instead, buying a readymade and heavy application from another supplier they can subcontract and create a lighter version for themselves. Bigger companies with capital to invest creates their own application just for private use. Normally subcontractors who work under these larger prime contractors use the same application their employer provides hence they are bound to use it.

2.1.3 Power of suppliers

In this case, Infomaatti is its own supplier and independent when it comes to maintaining and developing the product. There is a programming department which can respond to necessary changes. Product is the application itself and not the device so Infomaatti is not bound on any device providers. For the most part prospects already have their own mobile device but if not they can purchase the device through our cooperation partners.

2.1.4 Power of customers

In this relatively new industry the customers have some power over the prices. Especially in the beginning situations are faced where you might have to compromise over some small details. But at this point, Infomaatti Oy is in a position where we do not need to compromise over the price.

2.1.5 Threat of substitute products

Smartphones are self-evident nowadays. Tablet devices are popular but not all the customers have them by default. At this moment smartphones are not that practical for making reports and documentation because of small size of the screen. Infomaatti is recommended to be used with a tablet but it also works in smartphones.

The idea of mobile documentation is that certain interphases are no longer needed. Such as writing information down on a paper, taking pictures with a camera and then later editing all the information collected to one document. Currently smartphones and tablets are the only viable option for doing all these actions once so there are no real threats on new substitutes in the near future.

2.1.6 Effect on sales funnel

As mentioned in the Five force analysis, competition is getting fiercer in this branch of business. Main question is that how can Infomaatti differentiate from other businesses? What gives Infomaatti the edge over other competitors?

During my sales calls I quite often bump into cases where the prospect tells that he or she has already been contacted by our competitor or at least is familiar with a similar product. Or the company has created their own solution which is difficult to compete with since they have invested their own time and money to it. This indicates that companies really have come to understand the benefits of electronic documentation. Even in construction industry, which is considered a conservative branch, people are starting to warm up to the idea.

You can already recognize the increased popularity in electronic documentation in this branch of business. As mentioned in the last chapter it is quite regular to hear that the prospect has already heard about similar products. This is a clear implication that this industry is getting more competitive in the future and therefore Infomaatti needs to be even more active in marketing and sales activities.

Since the target industries are getting familiar with this business and its benefits, Infomaatti really need to stand out from the norm. Email marketing needs to highlight the strengths Infomaatti has against their competitors and emphasize those points during sales calls. For example, working in offline-mode is something that I have not yet come across with any other competitor and it should be stressed even more since it is a very unique feature.

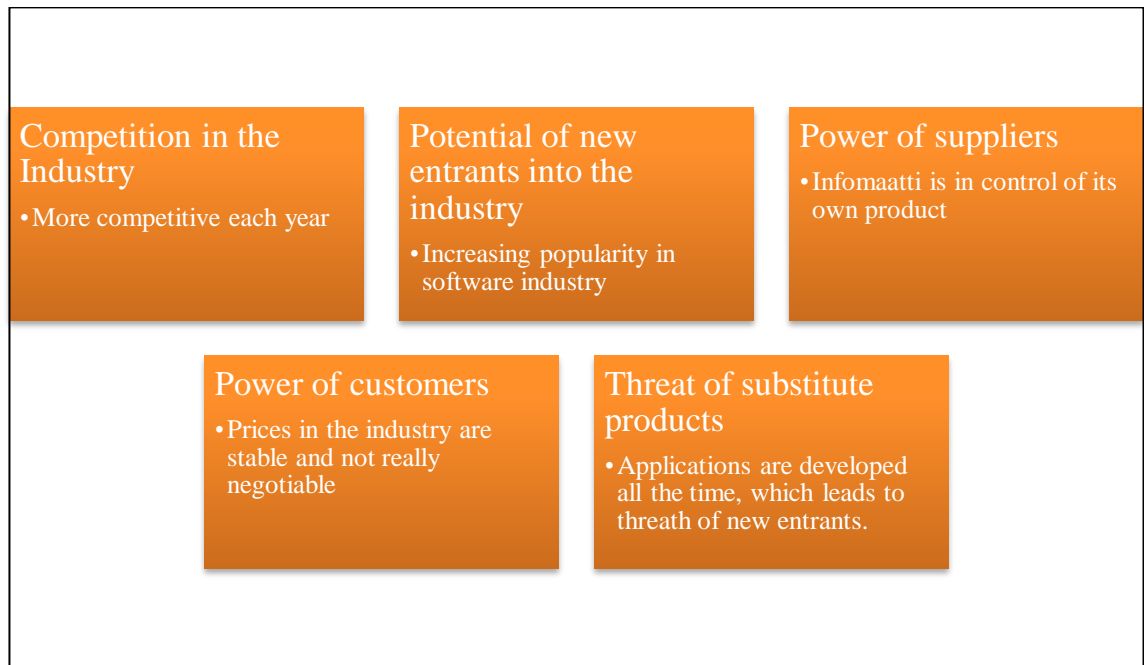


FIGURE 3. Porter's Five Force Analysis

2.2 SWOT-analysis

2.2.1 Strengths

Infomaatti has its own programming department which means that there are no ties to any other software supplier and it gives Infomaatti a quick reaction time to different issues. It also allows Infomaatti to have an efficient customer service. If bugs or technical issues are found those are quickly tackled and resolved. One of the main points in Infomaatti is that it is made user-friendly so that no extra time is wasted on using the application in the field. Construction industry is very conservative and still little bit stuck in their old ways so it is very important to stress out the easy use of Infomaatti.

In the beginning Infomaatti's customer base consisted mainly of construction supervisors. Over the years Infomaatti have expanded to other industries as well because a growing demand was recognized. There are still various other industries where Infomaatti can be applied because of their requirement for reports with pictures.

2.2.2 Weaknesses

There is a certain amount of customer loyalty when it comes to operating systems. Some people like Windows, some Apple or Android. Infomaatti application is created on Windows and there have been situations where the sale has collapsed because of the operating system Infomaatti works on. Some people already have tablets with different operating system than Windows and they consider it to be too big of an investment getting a new one but with different operating system just so that Infomaatti works on it.

Now you can make reports and fill out documents with our browser application which works on every platform but it lacks offline-mode feature because browsers naturally need internet connection. Therefore, some prospects are not satisfied since they cannot get the full experience with Androids or Apples because the actual application (with offline feature) does not work on other operating systems than Windows.

2.2.3 Opportunities

One obvious advantage would be to make the application work on other operating systems as well. To create the application on two completely new operating systems is not a small investment in time and financial aspect but it is something for the future. Offline-mode is a feature that almost every prospect and customer values a great deal but it works only on Windows operating system. You can use Infomaatti with smart phones by using browser but creating a solid application which works in offline-mode would give a huge advantage in the markets.

2.2.4 Threats

As mentioned in SWOT-analysis (Figure 4), one of the threats is that prospects can create own means for documentation quite effortlessly. Many prospects describe that they use

google drive as platform for all documents and for example use Microsoft Note as a tool for creating reports on the spot. Threshold for purchasing a software for the same purpose and paying monthly for it is high for some prospects even though Infomaatti is specifically created for this purpose and makes the process much more effective.

2.2.5 Effect on sales funnel

The use of application is made user-friendly so that no time is wasted in the field on working the application itself. This is a point Infomaatti should stress out more in their daily sales activities. Construction industry is quite conservative and most of the time the potential users do not want to waste time on learning the use of application. User-friendliness could be demonstrated with pictures of Infomaatti in marketing email sent to prospects.

In addition, Infomaatti can be applied in various industries and therefore showing the versatility of the application could be demonstrated more effectively. Infomaatti is not bound to one or two specific segments but it has expanded a lot over the years and new potential customers or even whole industries are to be found.

Infomaatti is still a small company which can be considered as a weakness but on the other hand it gives the edge over bigger competitors by quick reaction time with customers. Quick reaction is applied in all aspects of business but specifically in customer service. Reacting on emerged issues fast gives the prospect a positive image about the company.

During sales calls if the question comes up about which operating system Infomaatti is created on it is important to point out that it works with all operating systems but the offline-mode is available only on Windows. It is smart to mention that Infomaatti is developing the application constantly and creating a solid application for other operating systems is something for the future. The application is created for tablet devices but some prospects prefer smartphones over tablets. This is not a problem since Infomaatti can be used with smartphones but offline-mode is not available on them. Most of the time it does not bring any problems because other providers do not have even the option for offline-mode.

Infomaatti is cost-effective when taken in use and this should be stressed out in daily sales and marketing activities. People are catching up on electronic documentation and new ways of doing it are made quite often. Threshold on investing a completely new product is high especially when creating reports is not a daily activity.



FIGURE 4. Infomaatti Oy's SWOT-Analysis

2.3 Sales and marketing process

New potential prospects are being searched constantly by going through companies in the internet through various search engines. This includes all companies from specific industries who could utilize Infomaatti in their daily tasks. Requirements for potential prospects are that the company is registered and contact information (phone number and preferably email) can be found in order to start the sales process. Once a potential company is found, it is added to first part of sales funnel (Figure 5.) "Send an e-mail".

First contact to the prospect is made by sending an informative but summarized marketing email about Infomaatti application. Most of the time it is the chief executive officer or someone who is in position to make decisions about such things. Finding the right person to contact is a two-sided thing. On the other hand, it would be best to contact directly the

employees who would use Infomaatti. They know the benefits Infomaatti has to offer but often they are not in position to make these kinds of decisions and they usually just tell to contact their manager.

Email sent to prospects differs for each industry. Headline is formed so that it triggers interest in the recipient. It is kept short and there is a keyword to raise interest in the reader. Content is kept short but informative with links, references and pictures. For example, email sent for prospects in asbestos industry includes information about asbestos survey which is not necessary for prospects working in real estate management.

Once the e-mail is sent prospect is moved to the second part in the sales funnel (Figure 5) “Not contacted”. Calls are scheduled week forward from the day email was sent so that the prospect has time to read it and evaluate it. If the call is made too soon it might feel too oppressive. During the phone call prospects are asked if they remember the email sent to them. If they do, opinion about the content is asked and if they do not remember the email, presentation is given over the phone.

Depending on the phone call prospect is moved along our sales funnel (Figure 5) on its right place. All the prospects who require a call back are moved to phase “Call back”. Some of the prospects might have seen the email sent or are interested, but they specifically mention that they will take contact to us if our service is needed thus they are moved to “Contact if needed”. Sometimes the timing is just not right for the prospect. They are interested in the service and know the benefits of it, but they are simply too busy to focus on anything else so then prospect is moved to “Call back” or “Contact if needed” for later evaluation.

Goal is to get the prospects to phase “Meeting” or “Trial period”. Prospects normally go through “Form a meeting” phase when they want to see Infomaatti live but a date for the meeting has not been set. Also prospects who have shown great interest towards Infomaatti are in “Form a meeting” to clarify who truly are potential prospects.

Meetings are done by remote presentation. Since Infomaatti’s location is in Jyväskylä and bulk of the prospects are in different cities all over Finland it is the most efficient way. Through remote presentation the prospect gets a clear picture of how Infomaatti works

and they can make an accurate decision if they want to continue to trial period or become permanent customers.

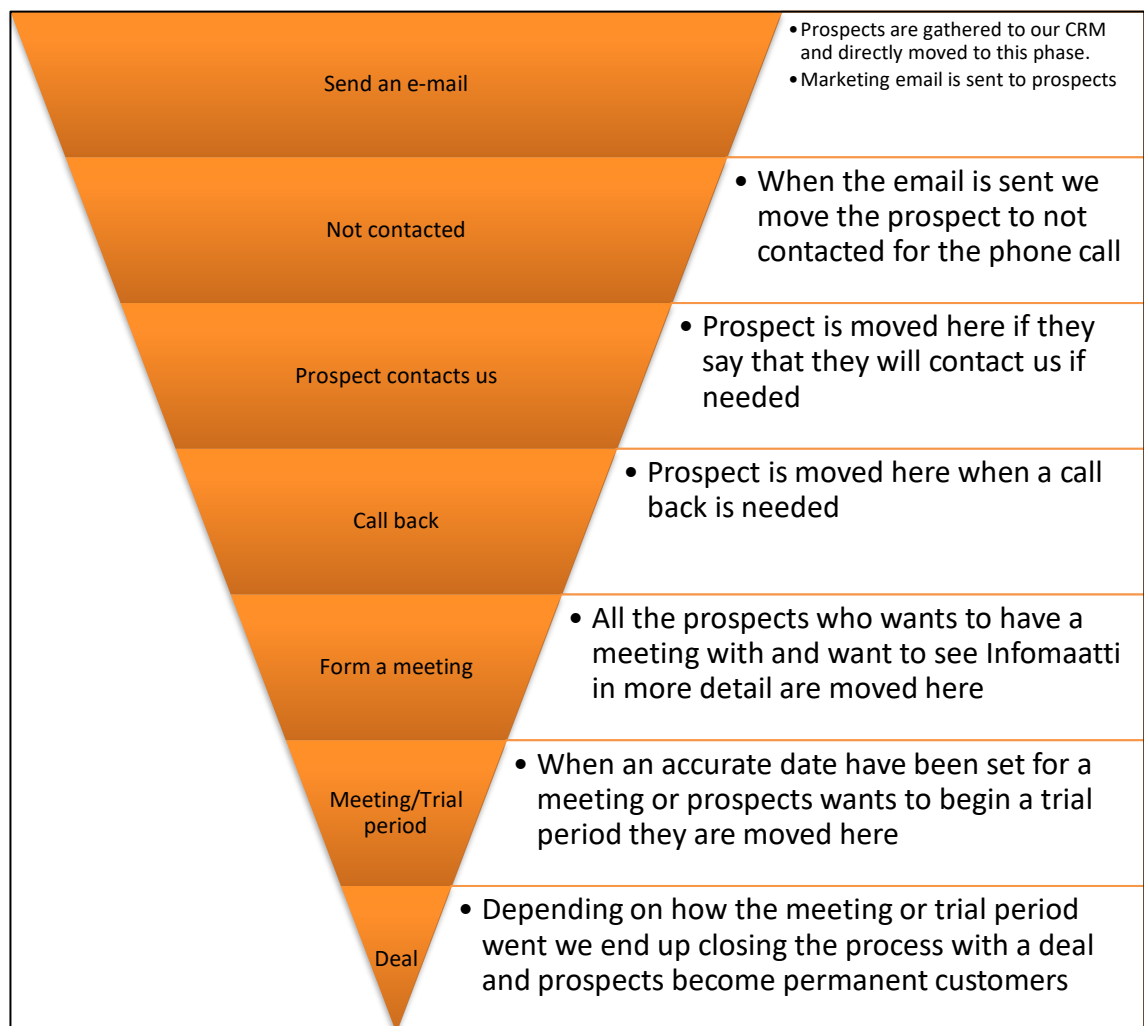


FIGURE 5. Infomaatti Oy's Sales Funnel

3 FIRST CONTACT

It is an ongoing battle between if you should call the prospect straight away or send an email first. There really is no other way to contact prospects for the first time. But the question is which of these two is the most efficient? As I explained in chapter 2.3 in Infomaatti's sales and marketing process an email is always sent before making the call if the email address can be found.

3.1 Contact with email

The benefits of sending an email before making first call call is that the prospect has more time to process the information and do not have to react to it on the spot. Also, if you have sent the email it can be used as an excuse to make the first call and the relationship between you and the prospect has already taken its first step. Email gives the prospect good insight on Infomaatti's value proposition. This is important because most likely prospects will not take random sales call seriously unless they have a definite use for it. (Frost 2016.)

It is not that often that email gets a direct response but when asked the question if the prospect has seen the email sent to them, response is usually yes. It is great because the initial contact has been made and the ground work is already done. And if the prospect opened the email or at least noticed it, it means that they have interest towards the subject. It is easy to continue the conversation from this point on.

Downside to this is that if the prospect read through the email sent and was not impressed or happy with the content they saw it is difficult to turn their head around. They might reply that they are not interested or there is no need for a product like this and there is no time to do the actual sales work because they want to end the call.

3.2 Cold calling

If you already have a brand which has recognition all over the industry you do not need to send an email before making the call because prospects know what they are going to be offered (Frost 2016). In Infomaatti's case it is proven to be more beneficial to send

email before making the call. Electronic documentation as a business branch is still relatively new and establishing a strong brand image is important. Even though people are catching up with this particular industry there are lots of prospects who are not aware of it and therefore sending email before gives them time to evaluate this information better.

3.3 Research

Method for the first contact is important but you cannot do it properly if research on prospect is not done beforehand. Try to find out what exactly is the company or the prospect doing because this way you can modify your approach so that it brings the most value to your contact. (Frost 2016.)

Research in Infomaatti's sales and marketing process is self-evident and it is done always before first contact. Research must be done on the prospect before contacting them to find what exactly they do, where they locate, what is their economic situation (are they up and running), their contact information etc. To round it up, all kind information gives the edge in the sales process. Just a tiny bit of information about their location could give the positive advantage for the sales call. For example, during the sales call you could mention something about the city they live in to give a more comfortable feel, so that it is not just about business.

Research is crucial on companies or sole traders that do not have their own home page or there is no direct information available on them. Most of the time not having your own home page indicates that operation is not that big and you should really consider if contacting them is a waste of time. If accurate information is found about their job description and it fits perfectly what Infomaatti is looking for, the company or sole trader is worth contacting.

4 EMAIL MARKETING

Infomaatti Oy has a wide customer base. Infomaatti can be used in real estate management, in asbestos industry, construction supervision, energy industry, for home inspections and in building industry general. Email is used as channel for first contact and if the email did not reach the recipient, phone call is the next step. In this chapter I am going to discuss the pros and cons of e-mail marketing and then move on to other channels.

E-mail is traditional and secure channel to make the first approach but quite often it is considered as a nuisance or even annoying for the recipient. Even without opening the e-mail the recipient thinks that it is just another advertisement sent with no proper meaning, in other words spam. Headlining the e-mail is very important to avoid this kind of reaction. But how to stand out from the tens, even hundreds of e-mails sent to our prospects and gain their attention? (Baggot. 2007.)

4.1 Problems with email marketing

E-mail can be considered invasive which is its strength and weakness. Attention is required from the recipient regarding the e-mail but an obvious weakness is that the recipient gets e-mails to his or her inbox nonstop which is frustrating. Main problem is that e-mail sent with right intentions and purpose can be mixed with spam. Threshold to move email to junk mail is just one press of a button away. (Baggot 2007.)

People use email daily and they learn to avoid certain emails sent to them whereas know which emails are worth opening. If you receive a marketing spirited email recipient expects it to be made well with quality content. Readers who appreciate proper email marketing will just as easily let you know for inferior marketing. The bar is set high. (Jenkins 2009, 2-6) As an email marketer, you must separate from the herd and bring quality content for the readers.

4.2 Benefits of email marketing

Email marketing is a free channel to market your product and raise brand awareness. You can edit the content of the mail so that it fits perfectly for the target group. One of the biggest benefits in email marketing is ROI (Return on Investment). (Jenkins 2009, 2-6) For direct email marketing, which I have done for Infomaatti Oy, the amount of money invested is zero and the return out of it is positive. Especially for small and starting businesses email is the perfect marketing tool since it is free.

Using email, you can start creating your brand by communicating with the customers. By creating a proper strategy behind your email marketing brings you the most benefit. If your email marketing is arbitrary and not constant, you will lose the advantages it might bring (Jenkins 2009, 2-6). Email marketing should be continuous but not in irritating manner.

Whilst working in Infomaatti Oy, I have made hundreds of phone calls. They follow the same structure by me asking the prospect if he or she has seen or read the email I sent them. Rarely the encounters end up with the prospect hanging up because they feel irritated of my call. Most of the time they have indeed read the email or at least noticed the headline. Just based on phone calls I have made; email marketing is worth doing. It is efficient and free and I do not see a reason why it should not be done in the future.

4.3 Marketing through social media

Having Facebook or Instagram nowadays is more of a requirement than optional. It is great for reaching masses of people with just couple of clicks. You can keep yourself relevant with ease by linking quality content for all to see. Infomaatti Oy has its own Facebook page which is updated approximately once or twice a month with content relevant to our followers.

Infomaatti has a small but strong follower base on Facebook and joining Instagram is most certainly well-grounded in the future. Before joining Instagram, decisions must be made on what kind of content Infomaatti would release there. Instagram is considered

more relaxed and in a way more personal channel of marketing because the content is based on pictures. For example, pictures of daily office life or just days in general would let the followers closer to what Infomaatti does.

Content marketing is done by writing a blog in Infomaatti's home page which is most of the time put on Facebook as paid advertisement. Content written in the blog is most of the time current and topics are aimed to Infomaatti's customers.

Sometimes emailing or even calling is not necessary. According to Sean Burke CEO of KiteDesk the first contact should be made through your network by getting a reference or recommendation from someone. Next step after this is to clarify the right way to contact the prospect, if it is by calling or emailing. The problem here is that if your network is not large enough to reach out masses of prospects it is simply not effective. Solution for this obstacle is that you can find out if the prospect has any activity on social media, for example in twitter or LinkedIn. You can start interacting with them through these channels. (Frost 2016.)

Use of LinkedIn could be a potential channel for Infomaatti since it is a channel strictly focused on business. Twitter accounts are used for other purposes as well and people might not want to mix it with business. Contacting people via LinkedIn is something Infomaatti could add on its methods for contacting prospects. This will not reach huge number of prospects at one sitting but chances getting a direct meeting is probable.

If a reference is got from someone or somebody recommended Infomaatti to a new contact, sending an email is not necessary. It does not give any added value since the first contact, or impression is already made through more personal connection. Direct call to the contact is most effective and time saving. If the email would be sent, it might be considered as unnecessary advertisement and it could be considered annoying.

4.4 The ACT Methodology

Shama Hyder talks about "The ACT Methodology" in her publication The Zen of Social Media Marketing. As seen in figure 6 each letter in ACT has its own meaning. First you need to attract readers with the content you post. Main idea is to draw more people to visit

your website, which is your most important marketing channel online. (Hyder 2016, 4) Therefore, Infomaatti utilizes content from their home page when advertising on social media. Blogs which are written in home page are posted on Facebook as well so that readers are almost forced to visit Infomaatti's home page.

Next up is convert or conversion. The idea is to get consumers and then turn them into customers. Reader switches to a consumer when the person consumes the content you put out meaning that they actively absorb the information or when they become test users. For consumer to turn customer might take a lot of time or it may never happen but this means that you need to think this process as a long-term investment by putting out content for the readers. (Hyder 2016, 4) Infomaatti collects statistics on this matter. When advertisement or marketing content is put out, information on how many direct contacts are received because of the content is being gathered.

Finally, is transform. Experience the customer gets from you, the product and the company is the most important thing. First time readers look for social proof because it is something that gives the stamp of approval for your product. If you read about positive experiences of other users it is one of the best attraction tools you can have. Even today, word of mouth is the most reassuring way of marketing and you need to work on it to be positive. (Hyder 2016, 4.)

Infomaatti has had lots of positive feedback from their current customers. There are great references from companies but those could be more visible for visitors in the home page. Probably one of the most popular questions asked during sales calls concerns Infomaatti's customer base. This is proof that prospects want to know if other similar companies use the product and if it brings more value to them.



FIGURE 6. The ACT Methodology (Hyder 2016)

4.5 Statistics

Email marketing is the ideal tool for precise marketing to reach out market segments that are fit for your company. As a way of marketing it is continuously developing creating ways and means to be more effective. Basically, in email marketing, there are no redundant interphases in the process which saves you time and money. The best part about email marketing is that it is completely free and return on investment is high. (Johnston 2017.)

In figure 7, there are some interesting statistics collected on email marketing which shows why email marketing is in fact very effective and why it should be practiced. Generally, employees or people who are working actively spend time on their inbox around 13 hours per week. You must keep in mind that people check their inbox with thought rather than just scroll it through like Facebook timeline or Instagram. This already gives a timely advantage in a sense that 13 hours of the week is effective time for marketing.

Email marketing is not a new phenomenon. So, it is no surprise that over 80% of B2B companies take advantage of it which is why even more time and thought should be put to email marketing in Infomaatti Oy. As I mentioned in the earlier chapter about high ROI you can see in figure 7 that the calculated ROI in email marketing is 3800%. It is free, you reach your target audience effectively and your marketing is personalized.

Why the email should look like you? First, nobody wants to read an email which looks like every other mail sent on mass market purposes. It should be memorable and as seen in figure 7 personalized emails have 14% better click-through rate which means that readers actually go through your content with thought. They click links which lead to your home page therefore leading on to conversions.

Marketing in social media is important to reach out your already existing audience by putting out quality content for example in Facebook but to reach out completely new prospects email is 40 times more effective than Facebook. (Johnston 2017) By putting out content in social media regularly for your readers is important and should not be taken for granted but for creating new connections it should not be the only way.

Conversion is an important concept in terms of marketing. It means that readers turn into consumers and consumers turn into customers. Email is the most effective channel to get conversions because readers get information strictly directed to them about your product. You can edit your content so that it matches with the target group thus giving readers all the information they require, nothing more or nothing less.



FIGURE 7. Email statistics (Johnston 2017)

4.6 Automated email marketing

Statistics and data on email marketing is important information on its profitability. For example, opening and click-through rates can give you valuable information if your email marketing is effective. Infomaatti follows the marketing process starting from the email sent to prospects and if there is a contact because of it but data gathering could be done in larger scale.

Email marketing now is done manually. We have created our own templates for different target groups to match their interests. Headlining is targeted so that it triggers the recipient the right way. It is effective and email marketing is well personalized but it lacks efficiency.

With automated email marketing you can make your marketing process much more efficient. You can send tailored emails to each customer or prospect personally and gather information about who are most interested about your product. It brings results and it makes your messaging relevant and timely. By automatizing your email marketing it releases resources for other use. Here are some of the benefits of automated email marketing (Markkinoinnin Automaatio 2018.):

- Your email marketing becomes much more efficient.
- Your advertisement is adjusted so that it fits your customers interests.
- Automatized communication, sales and customer service which gives you the tools to contact people with right timing and theme.
- More useful information about your customers.
- Increase in sales.

Automated marketing is directly tied to increase in sales. It follows prospects through your whole sales process by targeting right kind of information in different phases of the process. For this reason, sales department can prioritize their use of time and focus on getting better results by contacting prospects in a timely manner. (Markkinoinnin Automaatio 2018.)

This is something Infomaatti should evaluate. By doing email marketing manually is effective percentagewise and it brings results, but however the option of email marketing being automatized would save lots of time and that time could be used for other parts in the sales process.

5 FORMING OF MARKETING EMAIL

Infomaatti has the channels to approach new prospects but inside these channels what exactly is the best way to approach them. How email should be headlined or formed so that prospects find it interesting visually and content-wise? Which days and what time is good for contacting prospects by phone call or with email?

5.1 Structure of email

Infomaatti uses email as their channel for the first contact. It is crucial to minimize the loss of potential customers in the early phases of sales funnel. Ideal situation is that the prospect moves straight from “Not contacted” to at least “Call back” (Figure 5.) after the first call. There are all kinds of reactions to email sent to prospects. Some reply to it either with interest or not, some people have noticed the email (or just the headline) but not really dug into it, some have read it and got good information out of it and some just deleted it right away. Favourable situation would be that the contact person at least opens the email and inspects the content.

In Infomaatti’s marketing process email sent to the prospect is kept short but informative. Structure of email sent is same for different industries but the content of it differs. Headline is formed so that it matches with the target group so that it triggers interest.

5.1.1 Headlining the email

Do not force the headline and be formal with it. Headlining is crucial in email marketing because it is strictly connected to if the email is opened or not. Therefore, it is important to form the headline so that it goes well with the content and recipients of the email. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 31.)

Study was made in America which indicated that by personalizing the email by using recipients first name in the headline decreased the amount of emails opened in half. It directly gives the feeling of mass marketing by taking out all personality out of it. Effective headline should summarize the content of the actual email. Good headline contains maximum of five words. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 31.)

Headlines are formed so that it triggers immediate interest on the reader. There should be no names and it is kept short with 4-5 words as advised in the earlier chapter. Headlining of the emails have been successful in Infomaatti Oy's email marketing. My sales pitch starts with a question if the prospect have seen the email I sent and most of the time the answer is yes.

5.1.2 Right timing

The right time is difficult to define because people read their inbox in different hour and different places but still if you send the email in a certain time it can make a difference. You should try to reach the recipient when he or she is free of other email traffic. There are some rough guidelines on how people in different positions go through their email. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 37-38.)

If you are trying to reach an employee, office hours are the best. Try to avoid sending emails during the weekend, Friday afternoons or Monday mornings because your email just gets lost in the traffic of other messages and phone calls. So, from Tuesday to Thursday is the best time to contact them. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 37-38.)

Executives and entrepreneurs check their email constantly and with high pace. They have email connected to their smartphones and they check messages during meetings or short breaks since they are practically married to their business. Since days go by in the phone or in meetings they skim through their email thus not paying attention to other than important emails. During weekends and evening time they have more time to calm down to go through their emails with thought. Therefore, it is better to approach them with a well-constructed email in a bit unorthodox time thus giving you a chance for better response. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 37-38.)

Timing of sending the email has not been factored in before and it is something that should be taken into consideration when sending emails. It is obvious that the recipients get tens or even hundreds of emails per week and our email is one among the others. Therefore, it is important to use every possible tool to improve visibility of the email sent to prospects.

There are hundreds of prospects with different statuses but most of the people we contact work in higher position because normally they are the ones making the final decision on acquiring our product. As said in the chapter before that executives and entrepreneurs check their email with high pace during daytime so the email would be more advantageous to send in the evening or just before weekend.

5.1.3 Email providers

There are lots email service providers starting from Outlook, being probably the most popular to Webmail-services which include Hotmail, Gmail and Yahoo (Yahoo being not that popular in Finland). Every service uses different platforms which makes the email sent look different for the recipient. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 45-47.)

Outlook is used everywhere but it brings difficulties for email marketers because the platform Outlook use is quite diverse. Depending on what version of Outlook is used it presents email sent in different form. In addition, version of Microsoft Word installed in your computer can affect the appearance. It is important to pilot your emails in different versions of Outlook. It is not recommended to use the readymade layouts because the structure could be different with other email providers. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 45-47.)

Web-based email providers have gotten more popular in private use over recent years. Most of the time companies use the same service which is usually Outlook but sole traders have private emails in Hotmail or Gmail (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 45-47). In Infomaatti's case there should probably be bigger emphasis on testing the email appearance also in these other platforms as big part of the prospects consists of sole traders.

Everybody use smartphones to read their emails when they are on the move. This does not only concern the structure of the email but also the pictures and links inside of it and how they work with mobile devices (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 45-47). Infomaatti's home page is optimized for mobile devices so the links in the email are not a problem but how the email shows on smart phones should be tested. The amount of different mobile devices and how fast they are being developed from technical stand point is a challenge for email marketers. (Tursas & Huttunen 2012, 45-47.) Infomaatti should be constantly checking the functionality with different monitors.

Problem with different email providers occurred when new marketing emails were created. Tests were done on how does the email look when sent to one another and it was completely different than the version created in word document. The structure and font was different and also small structural details differed from the original one.

To tackle this problem a comprehensive test should be done on all platforms from different email providers to different devices. Infomaatti uses email as their main marketing tool and therefore it is crucial that the email is visually as good as its content. As Infomaatti uses Outlook, the most popular email platform, the appearance of the email is correct for main part of the recipients, but the non-Outlook-users still should be taken into consideration. How does the email look on smartphones? How does it look on Apple devices, which does not have Microsoft services such as Microsoft Word as a default? In figure 7, you can see that over 50% of emails are read on mobile devices so it should be confirmed that the email looks visually as good on smartphones than on any other device.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Goal of this thesis was to figure out how to make use of sales funnel more effective in Infomaatti Oy. Questions to be answered were; Which channels are the most effective to approach new prospects? Once the right channels were found, the right way of approaching the prospects inside these channels came next. Email marketing has been the main approach for Infomaatti Oy towards new prospects. It has proven to be effective but Infomaatti Oy wanted to find out if there is some other channel or way which could bring better results.

First contact or first impression with new prospects is important. Is it better to start the process by sending a marketing spirited email or just be direct and give them a call? Research showed that contacting or marketing via email is still the most effective way. It gives the prospects time to evaluate information instead of just making a cold call and put them on the spot. Also, during this process the first contact have already been made through email so that if/when you make the call, the prospect already knows you. Some people consider email marketing invasive or just pure nuisance but it does not overshadow the power of it.

People talk about the power of social media, but statistics still indicate that email marketing is much more effective channel to approach new prospects. Approaching new prospects in social media should not be forgotten but it should not be used as main channel to approach them. By email you reach your target audience with the right kind of message. The best part about email marketing is that it is completely free and ROI is immediately risen.

Second question was; Inside these channels what is the best way to approach new prospects? Email marketing is the right way to approach new prospects but how to do it without losing them in the early phase of sales funnel? Right way of headlining the email is important. You need to trigger the interest with keywords so that it will not get deleted right away. The right structure is also important so that the email is kept short but informative with pictures and links included. People have different habits of reading their email, depending on what line of work they are in or in what position they work in the

company. Research showed that timing on sending the email is crucial in terms of the recipient reading the email.

All the information gained from the research done indicates that email is the most efficient channel to approach prospects when done in a right way by making sure that you put out high-quality content. But how can we be sure that it works? To validate this, we would need hard statistics on how many of emails sent are opened or what is the click-through rate. Automatization of marketing process is the solution for this. By doing this, Info-maatti could gather useful data on the whole marketing process, which can be transformed into time savings, and further, the saved time can be used for other sales activities.

This research indicates that email marketing is the best option for contacting the prospects. It has proven to be the most efficient way of acquiring new prospects in a way that the loss of prospects is minimized in the early phase of sales funnel. Expenses are close to zero and return on investment stays always on profit.

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