THE BOTTOM LINE

On September 30, 2014, Oracle announced the Oracle Sales Cloud Release 9 at the OpenWorld conference in San Francisco. The release delivers incremental enhancements in mobile capabilities and data management, with the significant addition of partner management and vertical capabilities to accelerate time to value and enable Sales Cloud customers to extend their use of the application to their partner ecosystem.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Oracle announced Release 9 of Oracle Sales Cloud on September 30. In looking at the application, Nucleus found it advances on the mobile and data management and analysis capabilities in Oracle Sales Cloud 8, which was released in April 2014 (Nucleus Research o53 – A closer look at Oracle Sales Cloud, April 2014), such as mobile forecasting enhancements, mobile customer log capabilities, and the automation of some sales manager processes. Other significant capability advances include:

- Enhanced sales rep productivity with task-based smart-phone apps that enable sales reps to update their opportunities on the go with minimum data entry.
- Support for partner relationship management enabling the partner sales staff to qualify leads and register opportunities with a partner portal from mobile devices.
- New data capabilities. Integrated customer management imports company and contact information from Dun and Bradstreet, while Oracle Sales Cloud’s data quality engine identifies duplicates in real time.
- Templates to drive standardizations of contracts to accelerate the contract development process while supporting compliance.
- Oracle Voice, Oracle Call Report, and Oracle Mobilytics for improved forecast accuracy and to drive better capture and visualization of data for decision making and sales management.

The most significant part of the announcement is the delivery of industry-specific solutions for communications, high technology, industrial manufacturing, consumer goods, and financial services. With these solutions Oracle builds on the foundation of Sales Cloud to deliver greater functionality for specific industries and reduce the need for customization.
QUANTIFYING THE VALUE

Nucleus sees the extension of the mobile and data management capabilities as further steps Oracle is taking toward embracing the Dark Cockpit design principles of simplication, focus, automation, and coaching (Nucleus Research, n167 – Enterprise software must adopt the principles of the dark cockpit, November 2013).

MORE ON MOBILITY

In 2012, Nucleus has found that mobile access increases the productivity of a salesperson by 14.6 percent (Nucleus Research m13 – The value of mobile and social for CRM, March 2012). The integration of Oracle Voice, Call Report, and Mobilytics have the potential to deliver ever greater productivity advances by streamlining the capture and visualization of data for decision making. This is another step toward simplifying CRM for both sales people and managers.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

The Oracle Sales Cloud 9 is the foundation on which Oracle has built industry-specific solutions for communications, high-technology, industrial manufacturing, consumer goods, and financial services. These capabilities are likely to improve Oracle Sales Cloud’s position in future version of the Value Matrix. Prebuilt industry capabilities lessen the need for customization, leading to lower consulting costs and a faster time to value. In addition, fewer customizations result in lower initial and ongoing costs for support and maintenance. Providing industry-specific solutions can also accelerate the automation of key processes that are often handled by manual workarounds or customizations. The industry solutions were built leveraging platform capabilities that are also available to partners and customers to easily configure, extend, and customize the prebuilt applications.

BETTER DATA

In release 9, Oracle gives companies the ability to integrate customer data management with company and contact data from Dun and Bradstreet. The data provided by Dun and Bradstreet is cleaned with the Oracle Sales Cloud’s enterprise data quality engine that identifies duplicates in real time. The combination of these two results in data that is both more complete and accurate.

INTEGRATION

In talking with Oracle Sales Cloud customers, Nucleus has found that Oracle’s investments to support integration between Sales Cloud and other Oracle applications such as CX and ERP is a value driver for many implementations. Batesville, for example, was using JD Edwards as its ERP system and chose to implement Oracle Sales Cloud, finding that its integration capabilities would allow the company to quickly and cost-effectively link the two solutions (Nucleus Research o176 – Oracle Sales Cloud, Batesville, August 2014) and drive greater visibility across the entire order to delivery process.
CONCLUSION

This announcement provides functionality advances in mobility, data management, partner management, integration, and vertical capabilities at a critical point in the adoption of Oracle Sales Cloud. Oracle is becoming a more serious competitor in the sales force automation (SFA) space, but its competitors are accelerating the pace of innovation as well. Oracle Sales Cloud R9 sweet spots are companies who have complex territories, multiple product lines, and a diverse workforce; and companies who want to leverage the power of predictive analytics to identify whitespace, optimize territory coverage, and deploy consistent structured sales campaign processes for both direct and indirect sales. Companies with few sales reps, limited product catalogs, and unsophisticated sales processes might still find the product a bit complex and time consuming to implement compared to other mid-market cloud offerings.

Release 9 provides further differentiation for Oracle with industry solutions that should make it a more attractive option for companies that want to leverage the automation and simplification vertical capabilities provide while accelerating the deployment process.