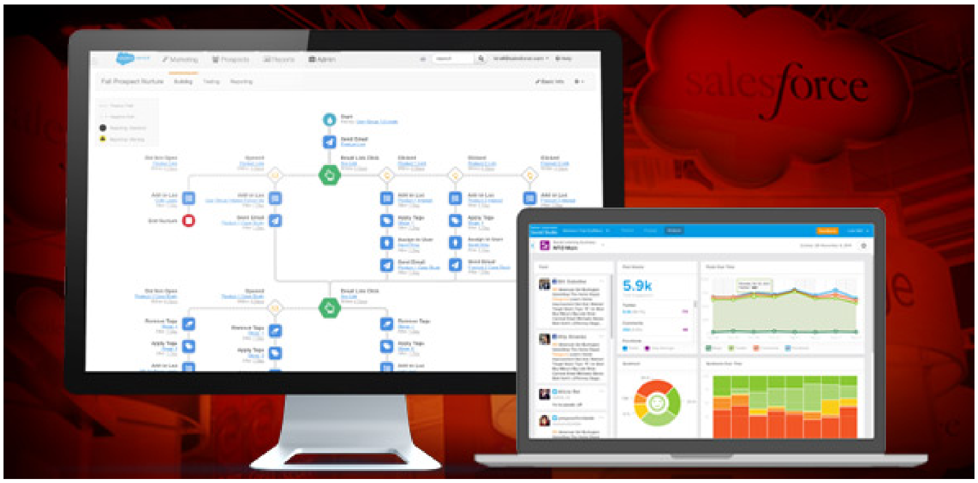

Sales Force Automation Tools Ranked in Gartner Magic Quadrants

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Market research firm Gartner Inc. has released its Magic Quadrant report for Sales Force Automation (SFA). The list includes some new market entrants as well as some tried-and-true behemoths.

First, let's look at Gartner's definition of companies in the SFA space. These are companies that provide the tools to support automation of sales activities, sales processes, and administrative responsibilities for salespeople, primarily in business-to-business (B2B) organizations. Core functionalities considered by Gartner include account management, contact management, and opportunity management.

Gartner also highlights add-on capabilities that focus on improving sales effectiveness, such as tools for sales configuration, guided selling, proposal generation, and content management. Additional capabilities for sales performance management are also considered, including tools for incentive compensation, quota management, sales coaching, and territory management. With those definitions out of the way, let's look at the list.

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The Leaders

Gartner cites Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online, and Microsoft Dynamics CRM (the on-premises version) as the clear leaders in the sales force automation space.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM remains a leader based on its product strength, capabilities, and interoperability with Microsoft Office 365, as well as overall end-user satisfaction. Gartner cites additional strengths of Dynamics CRM being its predictive analytics, competitive pricing, and platform extensibility. The company released its first iOS-supported CRM product last year, and its first Android mobile app this year. Gartner also noted Dynamics' improved capabilities for building custom reports and dashboards, addressing a gap noted in last year's Magic Quadrant report. On the cautioning side for Dynamics CRM, Gartner talks about certain complexities of Microsoft's SaaS platform, the need for better integration with non-Microsoft systems and more mobile capabilities.

Salesforce.com also retained its high position in the Leaders quadrant of this year's rankings. Gartner notes that the Salesforce Sales Cloud (pictured above) has shown improved system reliability over the past year by reducing the number and severity of brownouts and outages. Its strengths are the Salesforce1 Platform and Salesforce1 Mobile App, its vision for the Sales Cloud, and its sales process functionality and usability. Gartner cautions about the aging user interface (which is scheduled for a refresh later this year), some issues with Outlook integration, and the premium price which makes Salesforce the most expensive option in the market.

The Visionaries

Gartner points to Oracle, Sugar CRM, and SAP Cloud for Sales as three visionaries in the SFA space.

Oracle has added predictive analytics and a mobile app designer in Release 10, Gartner said, noting its strengths as analytics and business intelligence, price value, and integration with the Oracle Marketing Cloud. Gartner cautions that Oracle’s sales execution and ecosystem need to improve, and the company needs to focus on integration across multiple platforms.

SugarCRM continues to demonstrate that it is a viable alternative in a highly competitive market, Gartner noted. Strengths range from the user interface and price value to customer responsiveness and professional services. Gartner lists cautions as a lack of large enterprise wins and proof points from global ERP partnerships, as well as low reference ratings related to upgrades.

The Challengers

On the challengers front for sales force automation, Gartner singles out SAP CRM and

MORE IN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

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2. Amazon Prime Day To Be Yearly
3. Google Announces 'Buy' Button
4. Facebook, Twitter Become Key for News
5. Open Source Eddystone vs. iBeacon

NetSuite.

NetSuite focuses primarily on financial accounting and ERP (enterprise resource planning). Gartner points to NetSuite's strengths as its lead-to-order process, vendor viability, and customer data visibility. Cautions include a focus on sales-only implementations, large-scale sales deployments, and its CRM (customer relationship management) ISV (independent software vendor) ecosystem.

SAP CRM is increasingly focusing its go-to-market efforts on SAP Cloud for Sales. Strengths include its broad footprint, integration with SAP applications, and SAP implementation leverage. Gartner's cautions include the need for a more strategic focus, enterprise application complexity and its move to end support for legacy SAP Mobile Sales Manager.

Niche Players

In terms of niche players, Gartner offers a slew of names. You've heard of some and may not have heard of others. They include: Zoho, CRMnext, Bullhorn, Sage, Aptean, Base, Infor and Tour de Force.

Aptean has stabilized, Gartner says, since it acquired Pivotal CRM from CDC Software. The improved 6.5 release features a cloud delivery option through Amazon Web Services. Its strengths are configuration and extensibility, customer loyalty, and Microsoft centricity. Gartner's cautions are cloud validation and the need to reinvent the brand so it can land on more customer shortlists.

Base lands on the Magic Quadrant for the first time this year, with 6,000 customers, and backed by $23 million in venture capital. Base offers SaaS-only SFA, targeting small and midsize businesses (SMBs). Base has an innovative take on SFA functions and strong mobile capabilities, according to Gartner. Cautions include implementation maturity, implementation delivery and support, and a lack of complex functional capabilities larger customers would need.

Bullhorn is also a new Magic Quadrant entrant. Gartner points to its API-driven application infrastructure that lets clients customize the solution and integrate it with other SaaS (software-as-a-service) systems. Strengths include usability and functionality, as well aa its sales process analytics. Gartner's cautions are clear: Bullhorn has not built a large presence outside the staffing industry, functionality depth is lacking when it comes to forecasting and territory management, and it does not have a strong partner network.

CRMnext has boosted its positioning on the Magic Quadrant thanks to improved client satisfaction scores. Gartner noted its strengths as having a strong presence in Southeast Asia and India, proven scale, and an attractive price point. Gartner, though, questions whether the firm can deliver on its aggressive 2015 roadmap, noting its limited geographic reach and lack of a robust ISV ecosystem.

Infor acquired Saleslogix from Swiftpage in September and has doubled R&D staff and spending. The company has committed to moving Saleslogix onto its ION messaging bus this year. Infor also has a better focus on application ease of use than some of its larger competitors, Gartner noted. Other positives include its global scope and sales execution. Cautions relate to the need for more new business, a lack of cloud momentum, and low scores for some SFA capabilities that are important to B2B companies.

Sage CRM gets ranked as a niche player because of its limited market visibility, but gets high marks for its strong SFA functionality for SMBs, its intuitive user interface, and its affordable pricing. Other advantages cited by Gartner include a strong global presence and ERP integration. However, Gartner cautions about the Sage-Salesforce partnership. Although it's beneficial to both companies from a sales perspective, it will have an adverse impact on Sage CRM sales opportunities. Gartner also cautions about the lack of functionality.

Tour de Force focuses on wholesale distributors and provides an on-premise software product with no dedicated mobile application. Gartner lists its strengths as follows: high levels of customer satisfaction with SFA capabilities, ERP integration, and solid support. Cautions include slow revenue growth, a limited partner ecosystem and a lack of mobility and SaaS.

Finally, **Zoho** is a SaaS-only SFA offering designed for SMBs with eight to 20 sales users, as well as companies with limited budgets. Gartner tags its strengths as low subscription costs, strong functionality, and a global install base. Cautions include its freemium business model, implementation delivery and support and limited sales process complexity.

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