

TECHNO FILES

WHAT'S NEWS AND WHAT'S NEXT IN THE INDUSTRY

THE WIZ

By Carla Breer Howard

“Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain,” bellows the Wizard of Oz, across the cavernous room that is his sanctum sanctorum in the Emerald City. But truth be told, the Wiz had a pretty good thing going there, technology-wise, especially 68 years ago; he could keep his eye on the whole shootin’ match from behind the drawn curtains.



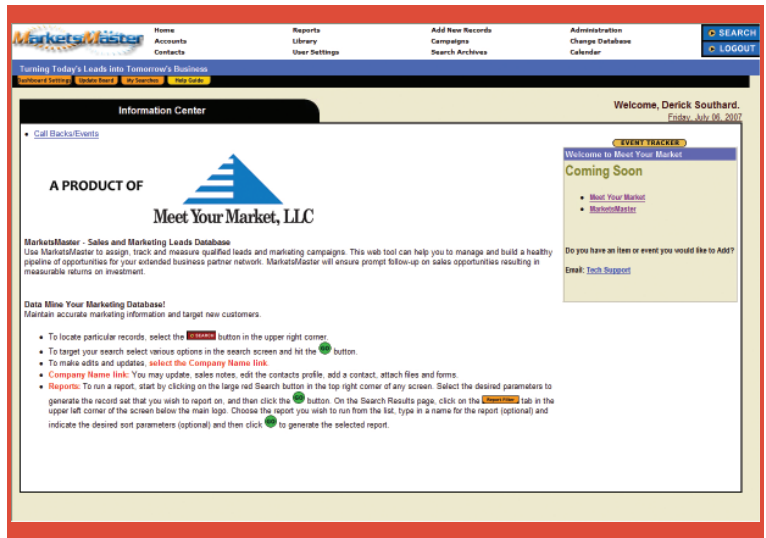
Jennie McNeill Campbell, CMP, CMM, PMP is the Founder and CEO of Meet Your Market, LLC.

And now, so can you, thanks to an affordable, Web-based marketing solution called MarketsMaster that directly interconnects—and allows you to monitor in real time—all your company’s marketing and sales activities. Further, it enables you to provide high-touch customer relationship management. In other words, my wouldbe Wizards, there are no more excuses for anyone dropping the ball through the whole process.

“I’ve always believed that information is power and critical in a customer-service business,” says Jennie M. Campbell, CMP, CMM, PMP, who is also CEO/president of her company, Meet Your Market, as well as co-developer of MarketsMaster. “The more information you have, the more empowered you are. Meeting planning is a relationship-based industry. You need to know if you’ve had a customer for 15 to 20 weeks or 15 to 20 years; that’s critical.”

Campbell took that fervent belief to heart and over the last seven years she has overseen the development and marketing of a single customer relationship management system designed so that you, The Wiz, can sit on high, keeping an eye on all the critical components of your own department’s or firm’s sales and marketing activities. It lets you review 24/7, from Oz or anywhere, the progress of literally every step, from the initial creative marketing idea to landing a sale, to project planning, project implementation, delivery of the project, management of the customer and customer retention. Whew!

Campbell had close to 20 years in the meetings industry when a large client of hers, a technology company, asked her to come to work for them. She responded that the only way she would do it is if they would train her in technology. She spent 18 months in training, although she affirms that she’s not a programmer. “I worked for two and a half years doing infrastructure and then they moved to Boston (from Texas),” she relates. “But I kept thinking, if I had these tools when I had my own company, well, the sky’s the limit!”



Her ability to harness such power for her own use increased in 2000, when Campbell connected with a group of engineers who could create the system she had in mind. It was initially designed to show ROI to her clients, to check sales efficiently and manage the large events and trade shows she was doing at the time. But it has grown considerably. “Over the seven years that I’ve had it, we’ve added new and better features to it.”

THE BIG PICTURE

This next part is pretty intense, so don’t wimp out on me: MarketsMaster is an ASP system, hosted off-site by an application service provider in Orlando, Fla. “It’s Time Warner’s Data Center, with backups in Calgary, ON,” Campbell says. “It has a high level of scalability and security. The Data Center is used by Walt Disney World, among others.”

Let’s start with the sales and reporting components. At any time, you can go to the account section to see a summary page of all the accounts alphabetically, showing their location, their contact information, their lead status, the date when the lead was entered, the group it’s assigned to and the campaign that generated the lead.

Click on a single account, and you’ll additionally see more contacts at that business, any attachments, custom forms or Web capture. It also tells you the lead status (ranging from Hot to Closed), the initial status (Hot to Closed), the lead value (\$100,000), the sales stage (Recommended), the forecast date, the close date, the probability of a sale, the lead source, and the sales opportunity the lead represents.

You can look at a summary page that shows all the accounts just by the stage they’re at in the sales process, like “None” and “Prospecting.” You can look solely at the ongoing sales comments report, a sort of in-house blog. You can look at the status overall of the company’s prospects presented in five different graphic forms—let’s say a pie that shows the percentage of hot, warm, suspect and closed accounts—and discover very quickly that

you've got to get everybody out on the streets going door to door.

You can look at a summary page entitled "Win/Lost Opportunity Report" with heads like "Closed Won" atop one list, or hopefully, a much shorter one entitled "Closed Lost." You can review the Opportunity Forecast Update on all accounts. "You can drill down to the one individual that touched (and possibly turned away) the client. You can just pull up the hot and warm leads so you can pick the low-hanging fruit if you're in a hurry, and of course, by zip codes should you really, really need to walk the neighborhood, after all.

Any changes you make run automatically through the whole system, as applicable, and you can customize all the headings.

Add a card reader and new leads immediately get imported into the system, populating exactly as it should, and then, pure genius, it e-mails the appropriate sales person with the message: "You have one new lead."

Likewise, Excel migrates easily into MarketsMaster. Oh, and there are data mining capabilities (which would take a whole additional page to describe in this magazine).

There are summary pages that show you exactly what kind of return you got—in terms of total number of leads, cost per lead, deals done, total value, etc.—on dollars invested sponsoring that float in the Fourth of July parade. This system can be customized to track vendors, so you can see the value in the relationship. There's a private calendar where you can post that upcoming dinner date with the new head of the legal department, but also a group calendar where you can post an upcoming meeting or conference call with e-mailing to all participants and print capabilities. It can be viewed by day, week or month.

MORE GOOD NEWS

There's no hardware or software for you to install. No IT experts are needed. The pricing is set out as follows: You pay a one-time fee to have a form developed. "You can change out the questions," says Campbell, "and as long as we don't have to do new coding, there's no additional cost. You can add new forms in the second quarter.

"We continually do research and data updates. Once you roll out a software product, it becomes obsolete," she notes, "so 40 percent of our revenue goes back into research and development. With our fee, you get all the product patches and upgrades to our software that we roll out companywide." For example, there's an event-tracker feature for the home page that's coming soon.

THE PACKAGE

Speaking of fees, it's on a per-user basis, so you only pay for what you need. It's a monthly fee, period. "There are no hidden fees once you sign the contract," she says. "You're getting the user license, the product packages, the upgrades and the premier customer care support."

You can currently use the system as is; however, if they need to do some coding customization, that's a one-time fee, depending on the coding required. But you'll get an estimate in advance. "Even in my own company, my needs constantly change because my needs are my customers' needs. We started with 15 reports and now we have over 60 and they're all in the system," she explains. "If I feel that it's something that all the customers can use, I'll add it in."

There's also training. "As we know in technology," she says, "if the product is not used, how good is the product? We educate the end-user. It saves time; they're producing what revenues they're tied to. Once you do it, they sell it to the rest of the organization."

On the customer-support side, MarketsMaster has a dedicated technical support center here in the U.S., which represents about 10 regions of the country.

RIGHT BRAIN-LEFT BRAIN

"I've taken the right brain and the left brain and mixed them together," says Campbell. "My office is a combination of right brain and left brain. Every creative process has to have both. CEOs don't mind investing in visionary, but they're more likely to invest if you have a way to manage and track it to make sure it produces at the end."


Dubbing herself as the onetime "Binder Queen," Campbell has taken the notebooks she relied on for years and made them virtual. "The contracts, the proposals that are out there, the value of the client, the meetings and phone calls that are set up, e-mails, they're all there on the Web, but they could be printed if somebody wants a hard copy."

In this unified system, users are able to give their clients regular and ongoing reports during the development and then ROI reports at the end. "If you spend \$2.5 million, I would think you would want that tracked pretty closely during the process, to be able to make a shift before it gets off-track, instead of waiting until the end," she says.

In 2005, the system truly proved its worth for Campbell's own marketing and event management company, which was located in the New Orleans suburb of Metairie, La. "My offices were lost in Hurricane Katrina, a lot of our computers and our files were damaged. We couldn't get back into our office because of black mold.

"We were out of our office for six months. Yet we could not get our files out; we could function because our people were spread out all over and we had this system. Opting for our service-provider with its backup, was probably one of the best decisions I ever made; it kept my company going."

But, as Campbell observes, "You never know what opportunities come out of adversity. After losing my home and my office, I said to myself, 'There's got to be a better way.' And it was staring me in the face. People were asking, 'Jennie, how did you keep your business going? Can you show it to me?'"

You might want to have her show it to you, too. 



www.MarketsMaster.com 1-800-966-3191; 504-837-5353