

Act! Essentials – the crucial component in a company's sales success

When the new owners of a long-established parts distributor for manufactured homes introduced Act! Essentials, the impact on sales was remarkable.



Across the United States, over 20 million Americans live in manufactured homes. These are governed by specific building codes, so any repairs and installations require specialist products.

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Lou Braun
CEO

As these parts and materials are often unavailable from standard home improvement stores, contractors and owners of manufactured home communities must buy them from dedicated suppliers, like Westland Distributing.

With depots in Arizona, California and Colorado, Westland leads the market in the southwest states. But its processes had changed little in four decades.

So, when new owners took over the company in the summer of 2017, a little technical TLC was needed to get its systems up to speed.

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Old ways holding the company back

"The company was solid and sound," says Lou Braun, the company's new CEO. "But it had been doing the same things for too long and its systems just weren't as effective as they should be. Customer contact details were just kept on a basic Excel® spreadsheet. Things like that were holding the company back."

So, when Lou and his team decided to introduce a CRM solution, they needed a system that staff who had little experience of business technology could get to grips with quickly.

"We chose Act! Essentials because it's not just cost-effective," says Lou, "it's also an easy to use platform. We knew the staff would feel comfortable with it and be able to start using the software straightaway."

While there were a few concerns about possible resistance to bringing in a new system, these proved groundless. In fact, employees embraced Act! Essentials immediately and with enthusiasm.

"The team were excited and eager to learn to use Act! because they saw how it would help drive more sales and add to their commissions," says Lou.

Unprecedented level of sales

After initial employee training, the first task was to migrate customer details from the Excel® spreadsheet over to Act! Essentials.

"We used a custom field to identify those who had not bought from us in the last 6 months," says Lou. "Then we divided these customers between different counter reps, who called them during their down time. This was something they'd never done before."

By using Act! to give their sales effort more focus, the Westland team quickly began seeing positive results. Not only did they acquire new customers and increase sales to existing ones, but they also won back 'lost' accounts.

"We did our best to get some quick wins and used these to prove what could happen if you used Act! Essentials effectively," says Lou.

"Soon our ten reps turned into power users who between them have added hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales since they began using Act!," says Lou. "That's an incredible uplift in sales that the company's never seen before."

Westland's reps on the road have also noticed the benefits of Act! Essentials as it's enabled them to plan their days more effectively and get more done.

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Phone and email working together

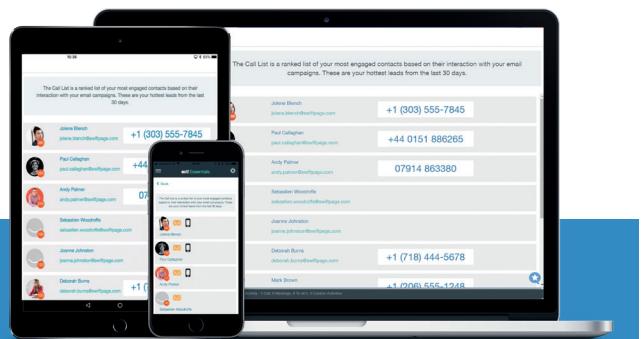
Lou's also keen on Act! Essentials's email marketing function. "We get some incredible open rates using email," says Lou, "but ours is an old-school business, so cold calling by phone is really important to us. It's when we combine the two that we really get the most value from the system."

That's helped immensely by Act! Essentials's Call List function – whenever Westland runs an email campaign, this automatically generates a phone number list of those mailed making follow up much easier.

Act! Essentials also improves things from a management perspective. "Because we can monitor the sales team better, we now have an up-to-date understanding of our sales position," says Lou.

Westland Distributing's story demonstrates the real difference the right CRM can make to sales in a business, with Act! Essentials particularly well suited to firms that haven't previously embraced technology.

It also shows that introducing a new system needn't be a difficult process or one that's resisted by staff. In fact, CRM software like Act! Essentials can be much appreciated by an older workforce who are immediately empowered to do their job better.



Results

- A few 'quick wins' enabled the sales team to appreciate how using Act! Essentials would benefit them with increased sales and commissions.
- Reps have added hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales since they introduced Act! Essentials.
- Effectively segmenting contacts into groups enables the sales team to acquire new customers, increase sales to existing ones, and win back lost accounts.
- By using Act! Essentials's emailing function and then following up with phone calls, Westland's sales team get the most value from the system.
- A visual sales pipeline allows management to see the current sales position and monitor the sales process.
- On the road, the reps are benefiting from the system's accessibility by planning their days more effectively and being more productive.

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