

Operations

Butler Group Subscription Services

Hosted CRM

TECHNOLOGY AUDIT

Sawfish Software Ltd.

Sales-Flow Release 3.2

Abstract *Sales-Flow is a Web-based, hosted, sales-force automation solution that is driven by a highly customisable workflow engine. The solution provides threads that manage each sales opportunity type processed by an organisation and other process flows as required. Because the solution is a highly configurable framework-based solution, it enables an 'exact-fit' to the organisation's needs rather than forcing them to adopt pre-defined package processes. The team that developed Sales-Flow has strong experience in highly competitive sales situations. They have enshrined their understanding of the need for timely and appropriate sales response within a 'window of opportunity', and the need for pragmatic and straightforward management, within the offering. The solution will suit Small- and Medium-sized Businesses (SMBs) which are looking for a flexible, self-contained solution to opportunity and sales management that offers the core functionality required without over-complexity, and is readily adapted to the current and future needs of their company.*

KEY FINDINGS

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fully self-contained hosted Web-based environment offers simple and fast implementation of key functionality and extensive customisation. ✓ Good performance from UK-based host and efficient implementation. i Formally tested only on mainstream Internet browsers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A tailored framework-based solution that enshrines best practise through the definition of workflow. i VB.NET implementation with SQL Server ADO.NET database technology. X Implementation requires support by Sawfish. |
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Key: ✓ Product Strength X Product Weakness i Point of Information

LOOK AHEAD

Sawfish will develop template-based solutions for vertical markets including telecoms and manufacturing and promote the solution to partners supporting best practice through the provision of sales methodologies. Sawfish are already moving into the larger SMB market. Sawfish is also running the application on handheld devices such as Nokia's communicator and is looking to extend this to other PDA's and smart phones.

► FUNCTIONALITY

Product Analysis The fast adoption of hosted, 'on-demand', Web-based, thin-client solutions is due to a combination of drivers. These include the increased mobility of workforces, the ever-greater availability of high-speed Internet access and mobile 'always-present' connections, added to the desire to reduce in-house support costs and simplify solutions management. Some applications are clearly very well suited to this model and Sales Force Automation (SFA) is particularly applicable. The reasons for this are that there is a strong need to keep the sales team synchronised and immediately informed of changes and enquiries that emanate from its prospects and customers. The use of a single, consistent environment shared by all that supports this is conceptually preferable to constant synchronisation of data on a distributed set of solutions installed locally and on mobile devices such as laptops. Having the solution hosted by an Application Service Provider (ASP) delivers the benefits of reduced management overheads, greater security, and the ability to establish a flexible payment structure for the service provided.

In the early days of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and SFA there were many implementation failures often due to poor planning and commitment, but also in part to the over-complexity of the solutions on offer, many of which had evolved from more complex, all encompassing, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suites or customer-facing call centre software. More recent entries into the marketplace have developed solutions from scratch and the latest implementations have been developed to be easily deployed as 'zero footprint' solutions available via any browser. The market is now quite crowded in all areas of CRM and SFA and new entrants need to provide functionality and benefits that target specific markets in order to gain traction.

SawFish's solution may be a relative newcomer to the area of CRM and hosted SFA but it has a deep understanding of the needs of a sales team in a fast-response environment through its own experience supporting a variety of retail, dealership, and manufacturing businesses. This is immediately apparent in its understanding of a 'window of opportunity' relating to each sales situation and the use of SMS texting to alert the sales team to events that need an immediate response.

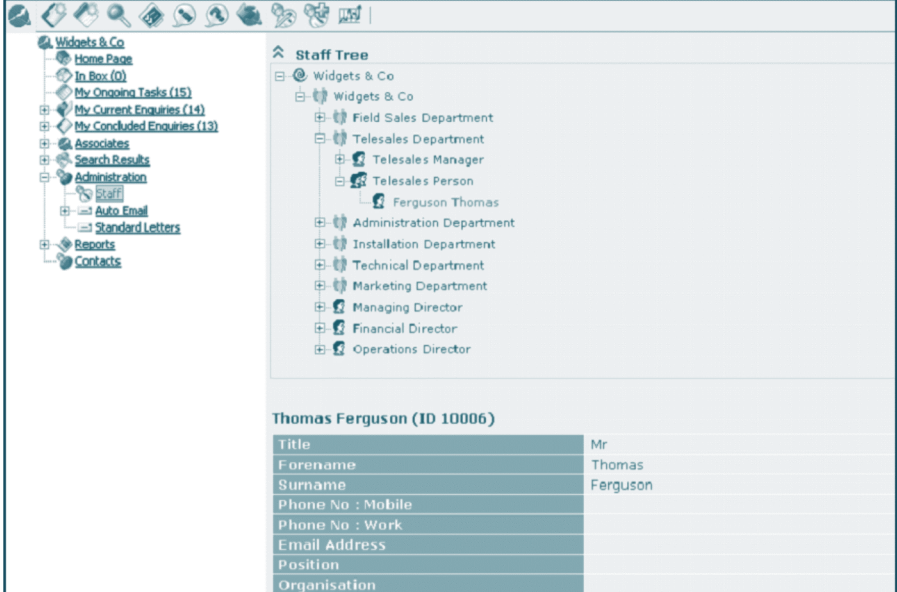
At the core of this pragmatic offering is a workflow engine that drives sales transactions from the point of the initial opportunity, through to the establishment of the purchaser as a client who is then a further opportunity for cross- and up-sales activity. The process model can be extended to cover areas other than sales opportunities and can drive areas of best practice within an organisation. An example of extended processes is the guiding of representatives to offer Debt Consolidation advice within the customer support teams delivering Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs). The ability to implement a highly customised solution as a 'tailored fit' to the client's needs using a framework of components and rules makes implementation fast and flexible, and one that can be approached in stages.

Product Operation Sales-Flow is written in Visual Basic and developed under the .NET architecture. As a VB.NET and ASP.NET implementation Sales-Flow is able to take advantage of the integration and Web services capabilities inherent in the .NET architecture and standards, and offers an interface that is both user friendly and adaptable to multiple devices. The Sales-Flow interface is intuitive, simple to understand, and familiar in feel to standard Microsoft applications.

Setting up Sales-Flow

Sales-Flow is set up prior to use by defining the organisation, the roles of its users and the workflows associated with various threads of sales activity. Rules and templates required for the issue and receipt of communications with the customer base are then easily added and managed by the key users.

- **Organisation Set-up.** The start-point for using Sales-Flow is to define the organisation structure, setting roles and authority levels for the members of a hierarchy of divisions and departments within your sales and marketing organisation. Managers are able to view subordinates' allocated tasks and review performance as well as reassign tasks as required.



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Position	
Organisation	

Figure 1: Organisational Hierarchy

- **Defining Workflows.** Sales-Flow has been designed with the aim of ensuring that the handling of opportunities is efficient, timely, and appropriate, whilst optimising the use of resources and rapidly closing down unproductive leads. Workflows are defined for each type of opportunity to enable this. An opportunity may be a new project, new lead, service call, or any other triggered activity; whether logged on a Web form, responding by e-mail, or picking up the phone, the communication touch-point will either automatically or manually update the system and direct the lead to the system's users.

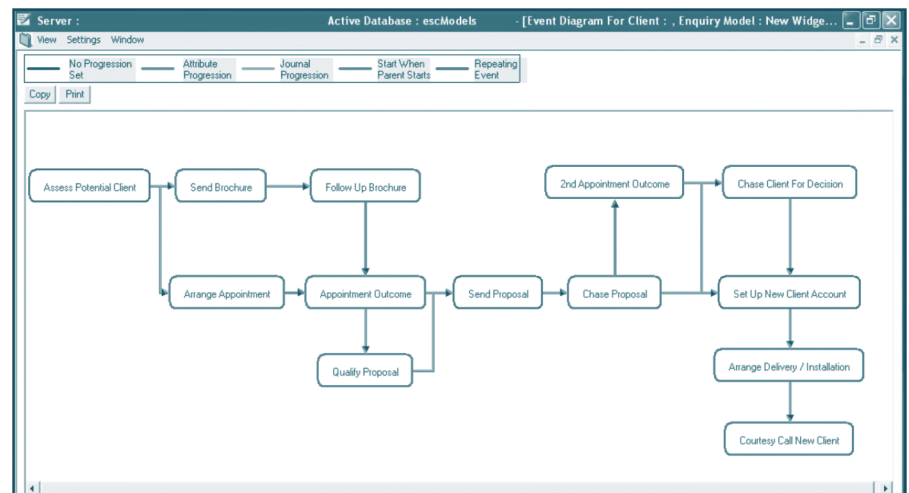


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Workflow

Each workflow comprises a number of events, with each event having at least one auditable task. Events can repeat, such as checking for a customer response until the outcome dictates the move to the next event. Tasks may have multiple dependent sub-tasks that must complete before passing on to the next event, with that event determined by their outcomes. For example, before a proposal can be prepared by the sales team, the Accounts department may be tasked with approving invoice/credit terms and the Parts department may have to confirm stock availability. If a price discount is required that is beyond normal parameters, approval may be sought from a manager; all of which can be managed to an optimum timeframe by Sales-Flow. Each task has a time limit for its completion – its ‘due-date’ – and associated with each task is a ‘window of opportunity’. For example, a task must start within two days and complete within the following four days. Managers or colleagues can be alerted if the window of opportunity has passed so that they can take remedial action or allocate the task to somebody else. This form of workflow is highly pragmatic and reflects a good understanding of the real-world situation faced by sales-teams under pressure as it lets actions be taken that reflect the passing of time.

Workflows are defined and modified by the Sawfish team, which means that refinements to the client’s model can be quickly actioned and applied to all users, thus keeping the best practise advantage alive, however long the customer has been using the solution.

Using Sales-Flow

The user accesses Sales-Flow through a secure, browser-based interface that will initially launch their home-page that displays notes from colleagues and alerts for incoming e-mails from customers. The main operating area of the system contains a ‘contents list’ and a data area split into two views of the data appropriate to them. The Sales-Flow toolbar has a series of action buttons that act as shortcuts to undertake main processing activities.

Butler Group believes that there are a number of interesting aspects to this interface. Firstly the fact that new opportunities that emanate from any opportunity source, be they Web-based, e-mail, or front-desk initiated, either appear in the users in-box through an automated allocation or are made available to all appropriate users on a ‘first come gets the lead’ basis. Interestingly the user cannot drill down and review the details of such general enquiries until after they have accepted ownership. This prevents the salesman’s classic desire to ‘cherry-pick’ leads. Another is the ability for reviewers to immediately ‘write-off’ leads that are clearly fictitious, with these leads not being included in the reporting metrics, and thus avoiding skewed statistics. A third is the use of the ‘notes’ section, which acts a bit like instant messaging to notify individual staff or teams of events that may be of general or specific interest. This has proven a very popular way to reach people and personalise the use of the product.

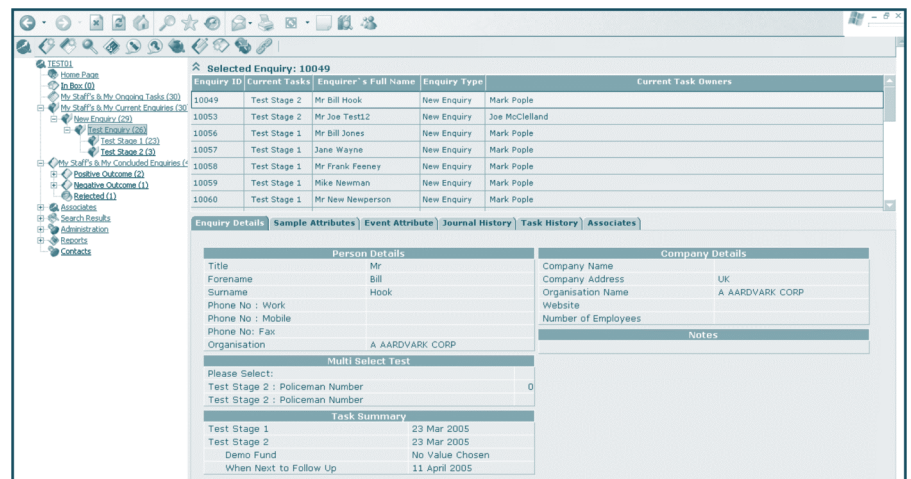


Figure 3: User Interface

- **Viewing Workflows and Data in Progress.** The content list or “tree view” is available at all times, providing access to the data that one can process. All data is organised into main folders and sub-folders that represent individual steps or phases in the client-specific process. Folder headings have a number against them to show how many records they contain – i.e. how many opportunities are at that point in the process. In fact pipeline visibility is a strongpoint of this solution.

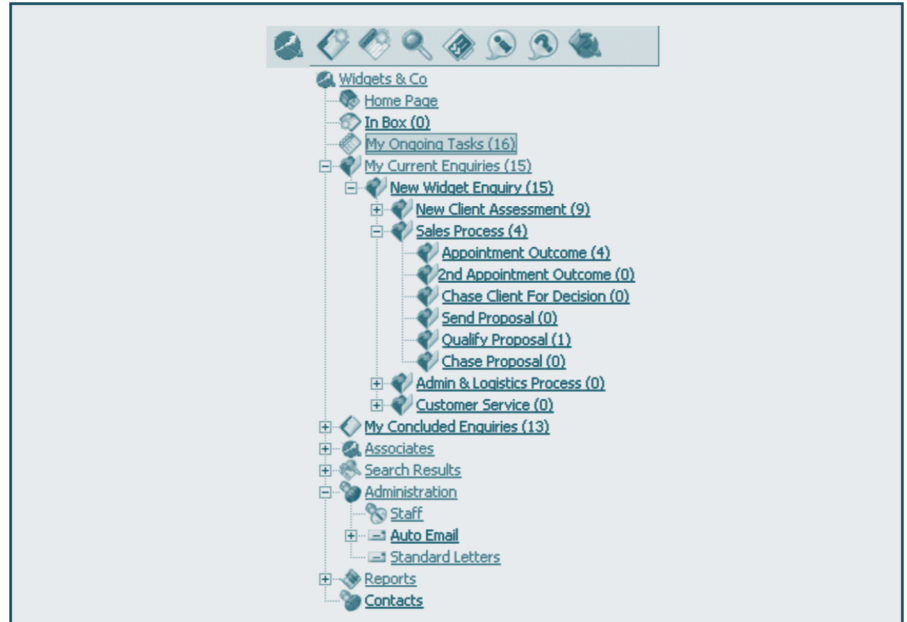


Figure 4: The Pipeline “Tree View”

- **Automating Standard Tasks.** Another of Sales-Flow's strengths is the degree to which standard tasks can be automated. E-mails and letters can quickly be compiled based on user- or management-definable template designs. If appropriate, these templates can be linked to specific roles, departments, and events so that the option to use them is only presented when relevant. Furthermore, Sales-Flow can generate e-mails based on an appropriate template as determined by the workflow – e.g. automatically send a follow-up e-mail three days after a brochure has been sent. These are developed within the product rather than by using Microsoft Office products that might prove slow when hosted. Even if this reduces user familiarity it does make them self-sufficient and requires only the browser interface. All sent and received e-mails are via Sales-Flow's own POP3 account, avoiding the need to synchronise with an e-mail application. Messages can be sent automatically when specific events occur such as acknowledgement of receipt of an enquiry. Both sent and received e-mails will contain a unique reference so that they can be linked to the correct enquiry. There is also an ability to notify mobile workers through automated SMS messages.
- **Customising and Collecting Information.** Sales-Flow offers a number of features to support straightforward information collection and display. To speed up data entry, wherever possible, customer-specific drop-down lists are used, allowing users to simply select from a relevant list rather than type an entry in full, and fields can be calculated based on customer-specific business rules. Similarly, multi-choice lists, radio buttons, tick boxes, regular text, and multi-line fields can all be quickly customised for the customer to aid form completion. Rather than imposing mandatory fields as some systems do, the customer can determine those fields that are essential rather than apply a generic approach that can irritate the user community.

- **Reporting and Analytics.** Sales-Flow maintains database records of all journal entries relating to tasks and events against each sales opportunity. A range of standard reports is provided showing leads in the period compared to previous periods, the ratio of concluded sales to enquiries, etc. Additional customer-specific reports can be specified for display “on-demand” within the application with the option to send the report as a HTML e-mail, PDF, Word, or Excel attachment. Additionally, each day the latest data is copied to a ‘data warehouse’ for potential analysis off-line by any standard reporting, Business Intelligence (BI) or analytical tool, which allows for ‘slicing and dicing’ without affecting the operational data. Dynamic reporting of the ‘Dashboard’ form is not expansive, but is again highly focused and appropriate with ‘traffic-light’ style warnings of critical issues such as the fact that enquiries are not being responded to in adequate time, or that there is a build-up of tasks in a particular role or individuals task list. A key strength of this solution is that Key Performance Information can be substantiated from facts from the pipeline, which means that management are able to replace costly, broad-brushed training initiatives with objective and focused coaching.
- **Customer Relationship Management.** Sales-Flow offers features for the initiation of follow-up marketing activity to support cross-selling, up-selling and customer care. Workflows can be established to deal with the post-sale activities needed to fulfil on the order and for related selling opportunities. For example, the equipment sales team make a capital sale, Sales-Flow can automatically e-mail the customer, thanking them for their business and introducing the support and supplies teams; and following the initial sale the supplies team’s workflow is initiated, to task manage them through supply sales opportunities.

Product Emphasis

Sales-Flow originated as an opportunity handling and sales management system to convert enquiries into sales and was extended to automatically manage the critical events in a relationship with a customer whether driven by the sales, marketing or customer service departments. Hence the greater emphasis on the use of workflow to control and co-ordinate multi-faceted processes involving potentially many staff or disciplines.

At its heart though is also the key driver of providing a rapid, sub-two-minute response to a sales enquiry regardless of the channel of acquisition, and this strategy makes the solution particularly suitable for companies in highly-competitive situations where new or existing customers are fickle.

The product targets those who don’t want to be ‘shoe-horned’ into an over-complex CRM solution with features that are not likely to be embraced by a busy sales force who have often had bad experiences of centrally-managed sales solutions. The implementation is a highly-customised approach, either based on well-tried templates or developed to embrace the best practices of the organisation, and results in a ‘made to measure’ fit to their needs.

Butler Group recognises that there is often a rejection of over-complex CRM solutions that lose the focus of the sales teams through an over-emphasis on the acquisition and analysis of information rather than the teams responding efficiently to their opportunities. Sales-flow is aimed at delivering an efficient and not cumbersome solution.

► DEPLOYMENT

Implementation of Sales-Flow is relatively straightforward, and is undertaken by Sawfish staff that work with the client to determine the workflows required for each process and opportunity type aligned to the organisation structure and communications templates.

The vendor states that implementation seldom takes more than three days work to put core functionality in place and that the implementation is adapted and extended over the following two or three months. The fast initial implementation is exceptional and to some extent is explained by the fact that Sales-Flow concentrates mainly on the key SFA components of CRM. To date the solution has been used by Small to Medium Businesses (SMBs) although it is increasingly under trial by larger companies.

Butler Group sees a significant market for such a pragmatic, customisable solution. Clearly larger, more complex implementations are going to take longer than an initial three days and there will be a need to formalise the definition of requirements and to offer packaged, pre-prepared solution templates.

The users require access to the Internet through a Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE5 or later) browser interface (although as rival browsers such as Opera and Firefox gain market position, they too will be supported) and optionally access to a mobile having SMS capabilities.

Sales-Flow is hosted within a secure, London-based, data centre owned by Level (3) Communications Inc., with Globix providing fast and reliable Internet connectivity, Dell, Sun Microsystems, and Cisco Systems are used to power the network. The servers have a Gigabit Ethernet connection to the Internet and are stored behind a state-of-the-art firewall, Intruder Detection Systems and UPN connected to an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) with 24-hour generator back-up. Nasstar Ltd., one of the Company's technical partners, technically manages the system. Performance is enhanced because Sales-Flow uses Internet Information Services (IIS) 6.0 compression software that comes with Windows Server 2003 in its implementation, giving significantly improved bandwidth and faster-loading Web pages. Being hosted in the UK also offers advantages over some of the market leaders who host from the US and have at times experienced response issues, in that availability and response are optimised for UK time with reduced network latency and hence improved end-to-end response times.

Because the product is 'self-contained' there is never a versioning issue when Sales-Flow is upgraded, as responsibility for a smooth transition is taken by SawFish and is transparent to the users.

► PRODUCT STRATEGY

Sawfish has entered a crowded market very late in the day but this has allowed the company to learn from others mistakes and adopt an approach that will appeal to many SMBs who need to get control of their sales management and customer follow up but are nervous of the effort and risks involved in implementing a solution.

There are, of course, all manner of competitors; the most obvious being Salesforce.com, SalesLogix, RightNow and NetSuite that all offer highly-flexible solutions to CRM. There will also be potential rivals amongst the long-established vendors that offer less-flexible solutions that emanate from a Contact Management background, including Goldmine and Microsoft.

Butler Group believes that, where appropriate, partial solutions based on a tailored and sales-focused implementation are offered to clients, particularly when these embrace the sales methods and internal best practices of the organisation, as the results are often better than the implementation of a generalised CRM solution. Sales-Flow thus has plenty of market opportunities.

SawFish wishes to partner with those supporting appropriate sales methodologies, and by enshrining these best practices create template-based solutions for appropriate markets. The company will also continue to exploit its success in both financial and manufacturing markets.

The cost of deploying Sales-Flow is one of the lowest we have seen at around £50 down to £30 per-user, per-month, depending on committed number of users. Additional charges for set-up, training, and annual maintenance might make a typical smaller implementation come in at closer to £75 per-user, per-month. Clients are offered contracts based on number of users, and flexible leasing arrangements and variable term or perpetual licences.

► COMPANY PROFILE

Sawfish was formed in February 2004 as a result of a buy-out of assets from York-based Esales Consultants Ltd. In the 2005 calendar year the Company forecasts a turnover of approximately £2.7m. The team behind Sawfish has a history of developing sales support solutions for the retail trade where the speed and accuracy of sales responses is critical for success in highly-competitive sales situations.

Clients are wide-ranging, from manufacturing to finance. The Debt Advisor is a typical client experience. Debt Advisor is dedicated to offering advice on debt issues and IVAs. The customer comments that “Our leads tracking system has become massively refined and much more efficient, preventing expensive leads being lost or ignored” through use of Sales-Flow. Other clients include Nomads, who supports a network of support centres for the individual executive on the move, and Enable Communications (a division of One-Tel) that has a solution tailored to its specific work practises. Companies such as Centrica, which has recently taken a 20-seat trial of the solution for its B2B Telecoms Sales are, also showing interest.

► SUMMARY

Sales-Flow V3.2 offers a highly-customisable CRM solution that concentrates on SFA and opportunity management. Sales-Flow incorporates a workflow engine that can be used to enshrine the best practices of an organisation to deal effectively with initial sales opportunities and the activities that follow and can extend beyond CRM. The customisable nature of the solution enables organisations to map their own processes to implement a high degree of fit to their own working methods rather than needing to adapt to those offered by packaged CRM and SFA solutions. A major strength of the product lies in its focus on timely and efficient management of opportunities and the ability to tie together activities from across the organisation to offer processes that enhance productivity and increase business performance.

Sales-Flow lies in a highly competitive market but will suit SMBs of all sizes that are happy to take an efficient, hosted, partial solution to CRM rather than a fully-integrated, feature-rich implementation that they might find difficult to implement, manage, and adapt to their own working practices.

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