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iCentra Enlivens Sales Enablement

Portal software provider builds upon its sales enablement offering with version 6.0 and taps into what one analyst calls an "emerging market" in the process.

By [Lauren McKay](#)
Posted Jun 19, 2009

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Page 1

Minneapolis, Minn.-based iCentra seems to have its finger on the pulse. The on-demand portal software provider is addressing key pain points in organizations -- the gap between salespeople and marketers and the flawed process of knowledge management and transfer among employees. The sales enablement market is young, but gathering steam. There has been an explosion of vendors who say they have a sales enablement tool, says Scott Santucci, Forrester analyst. He notes that the term needs defining because it's becoming confusing to customers what solutions are really being offered. Yet Santucci points out that the crux of this sales enablement business is addressing an "uber problem" in businesses. The analyst, who has begun researching the sales enablement landscape for Forrester, defines the area as bridging the gap between sales and marketers. Sales enablement tools, or knowledge management for sales tools, are viable for those with broad product portfolios and/or complex products. The problem resting in some many of the aforementioned organizations is that sales people can't find the information needed to make sales. "No one can find anything. Period," Santucci says. "The ramifications of that simple problem are huge."

In the B2B selling arena, it all comes down to knowledge transfer, Santucci notes. iCentra focuses on that key issue with its sales enablement product -- custom portals for organizations that permit collaboration and content management, and what the company calls "guided selling." Craig Nelson, the chief executive officer of iCentra relays that such tools allow for enhanced productivity. Given economic pressures, arming salespeople with more intelligent tools could lead to growth by simply making the existing staff better. After all, Santucci points out that 60 to 80 percent of revenue usually comes from 20 percent of a sales force.



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iCentra 6.0 holds the following enhancements:

Wiki page builder: Within complex organizations, so much valuable information gets lost in translation. The iCentra portal encourages employees to create wikis to store information, so that they are easily searchable by colleagues through tagging. Santucci makes the point that this pragmatic approach is missing in many companies. "An individual sales person who has to compete ... on knowledge that they are bringing to the table, often can't find the stuff they need to be successful," he says.

MyIC homepage: The platform is tailorable to user needs and preferences. Much like an iGoogle or MyYahoo page, the portal allows an employee to personalize what she wants to view on her iCentra homepage, -- all still within the company's branded portal and standard architecture. Salespeople operate differently, after all. "What's important is to ... not treat all sales people as a coin-operated machine," Santucci says.

Custom tabs: In addition to bringing in enterprise information, employees can choose to integrate third-party Web sites or software through the iCentra mashup capability.

Company newsroom: This new function enables users to publish and post news item in a similar way to the other sales content.

Dynamic email: Emails can be sent within the portal, saving salespeople and marketers the time of pulling up their email clients.

"What I like about the iCentra capability is they let individual sales managers find information in a searchable and navigatable way and provide the reporting to show who's using what," says Santucci, hammering home the key points of the release. "[iCentra's approach is] very pragmatic," he says. "It's not about the technology, but a means to an end, focusing on solving a discreet problem."

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Page 1

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