

Case Study Series: What's Working in Marketing & Selling Professional Services

Webinar Campaign Helps Global Tech Company Expand Accounts and Generate \$12 Million in Sales Opportunities

By Stephanie Tilton

OVERVIEW

How do you quickly inform customers about new standards requirements that could impact their computing capacity – before the competition gets to them? That was the issue facing F5 Networks, the global leader in Application Delivery Networking, as companies prepared to transition from 1024-bit RSA public key encryption to 2048-bit RSA keys by 2011. To make customers of its BIG-IP products – integrated application delivery services – aware of how to easily address the new requirements, F5 launched a webinar campaign that ended up yielding almost \$12 million in potential sales opportunities.

SITUATION

Seizing a Market Opportunity

F5's field and product management organization saw customers struggling to cope with the computing requirements associated with the new RSA standard. Most were facing the choice of buying new equipment or settling for slow websites. Moreover, field and product management knew major competitors were raising the issue in the marketplace. According to Kirby Wadsworth, Vice President of Global Marketing for F5, it was critical that F5 get the word out to its customers. The company also knew that it could potentially up-sell customers of its other solutions on the value of its BIG-IP products ability to address this new key-length challenge.

The technology leader prides itself on advising customers of issues that might affect their IT departments. Its first step was to approach large financial institutions and web-based organizations that would feel tremendous impact based on this new standard. After explaining a simple resolution that involved BIG-IP settings, these grateful customers urged F5 to share the solution with more customers.

APPROACH

Understanding that time was of the essence, F5 decided that hosting three webinars in a single day was the best and quickest way to update customers in different time zones. Those customers who were unable to attend could view the on-demand webinar at a later date.

While F5's technical marketing group created the presentation, the marketing programs team developed emails to promote the webinars. Using functionality within its automated campaign management software, the team also developed landing pages enabling people to access related technical and product information after the webinar.

To complement emails it planned to send to its install base, F5 encouraged its partners to invite their customers to the event. It also developed a PPC campaign. The company worked with a consultant to identify key terms used by prospects and customers to describe BIG-IP solutions. By narrowing down relevant terms, and assessing the volume of terms across both organic and paid search, F5 chose the most fitting keywords to use in its paid search ads.

Keep Inside Sales on Track

Approximately 100 customers tuned in to the three webinars that were delivered during the second week of October 2010. Once webinar attendees clicked through to the landing page after the event, they were scored based on opportunity values determined by both sales and marketing. Those that met F5's criteria for a qualified lead were handed off to inside sales reps, who then contacted the customer within 24 to 48 hours.

Christine Pomeroy, Director of Marketing Communications for F5, shared how inside sales was incented to stay on track. "Once we explained the urgency of this issue to inside sales management, they worked with their teams to make this a priority focus. To reinforce this, they put up a daily board showing who was turning around leads the fastest and who was lagging."

Leave No Lead Behind

Tight integration between the company's salesforce.com CRM and automated campaign management system provided the marketing operations team with tremendous visibility. According to Kristin Petersen, Manager of Marketing Operations for F5, "We could track the first, second, and third attempts to reach the contact, as well as the ultimate disposition. This empowered me to deliver status updates to inside sales managers every 48 hours." It also allowed Petersen's group to take action with leads that weren't ready to make an immediate purchase. These contacts were entered into nurturing tracks. As new attendees viewed the on-demand webinar, they were entered into the same lead-qualification and contact process.

Broaden the Reach

At the same time, F5's inside sales team and Good Leads, an external telemarketing partner, reached out to over 6,000 additional contacts. "Our focus was to make all affected customers aware of the issue and how they could address it with BIG-IP products," explained Pomeroy.

Petersen worked closely with the inside sales team to identify the most fitting customers to contact and let them cherry pick up to 20 to call. While the idea was that the telemarketing partner would handle the rest, many inside sales reps opted to call as many as 50 accounts. "They realized the urgency of the situation and wanted to personally deliver the solution to their customers," said Petersen.

RESULTS

As of December 2010, the campaign had generated more than 3,000 inquiries and roughly \$5 million in potential sales opportunities. By early February 2011, that number had climbed to nearly \$12 million.

"This campaign gave us account expansion opportunities, and provided a very efficient way for our major account teams to reach new contacts within existing accounts," explained Pomeroy.

In addition to reaching more prospective buyers, the campaign helped educate customers on new ways to use BIG-IP products. "We helped our customers understand they could achieve more with our products than they realized. And because we helped them resolve a pressing concern, we established ourselves in their minds differently," continued Wadsworth.

Transform the Approach to Campaigns

Already, the success of the campaign has impacted F5's future plans. For the first quarter of 2011, the company is applying the methodology on four push campaigns intended to build pipeline and sales opportunities. Instead of reacting to issues of concern to customers, F5 is proactively building campaigns based on its understanding of what's top of mind for customers. "Based on the performance of the RSA campaign, I had no trouble getting buyoff from sales management. They understand that with this approach, we can turn inside sales into a true revenue-generating machine," concluded Pomeroy.

Best Practices Shared by F5

- **Implement a system to track** incoming inquiries, automate scoring, and measure conversion rates
- **Measure and report on the results** of your initiatives so you can continually refine the process and system
- **Make sure marketing is aligned with sales** by running programs that sales wants, starting conversations sales can follow up on, and focusing on prospects that are likely to purchase
- **Continually reiterate to sales the importance of entering information about lead contact efforts and ultimate disposition** so you can more tightly target your efforts and improve the quality of leads
- **Focus on programs that will yield predictable results**, but don't be afraid to try new approaches
- **Value every addition to your database** by investing the time and resources to keep it current and clean

RESOURCES

On-demand webinar:

<http://www.f5.com/news-press-events/web-media/webcasts/impact-in-ssl-processing.html>

Webinar landing page:

<http://t.resources.f5.com/webApp/F5LandingPage?lpid=R%2BYuLgTSU0nh0DVaJmZwPajSslutHh68>

Initial email sent to 1,740 contacts

BIG-IP Product Family and resources: <http://www.f5.com/products/big-ip/>