



OLONO BRINGS AI TO SALES FORCE AUTOMATION

ANALYST

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Olono complements sales force automation (SFA) by integrating external data sources to augment existing records and give sales people real-time prompts and recommendations.

Bringing in external data is critical to effective SFA because of the well-known problem of missing or incomplete records.

Olono's strength is in bringing in all this data—beyond just LinkedIn, for example, and then using rules and AI to recommend actions. Nucleus has found bringing in recommendations based on LinkedIn data can drive 12 to 15 percent greater productivity for sales people (Nucleus Research *r152 - Evaluating LinkedIn vendor strategies*, August 2017), and Olono presents potentially greater gains for sales and sales managers.

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OLONO SALES SIDEKICK

Olono is an edge CRM application that integrates disparate data sources, feeds that data back into the CRM record, and analyzes that data to make recommendations for next best action. The product is positioned as a “sales sidekick” for large businesses that already use enterprise CRM products, to address the common problem of incomplete account data. The biggest problem with AI in CRM is not a lack of capabilities in AI products, but rather issues with insufficient data or poor data quality. Olono addresses that problem with an integration engine and prebuilt integrations to:

- Personal electronic communications such as Gmail, Outlook, Skype, or calendars.

- Enterprise content such as Microsoft Office documents or PDF files accessible through content systems such as Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, or Evernote.
- Social media such as Facebook, Google Plus, LinkedIn, or Twitter.
- Verbal communications like GoToMeeting, RingCentral, and predefined numbers called from a sales person's cell phone.

The product is designed for large sales organizations with a complex sales cycle of multiple weeks or months. List pricing for an Olono subscriptions is a \$500 per month platform cost and an additional \$50 per month per user.

Olono is currently integrated with Salesforce and the company plans other future integrations with enterprise CRM applications. The application pulls in the previous 15 months of customer data from the CRM system and other integration points during the deployment, which means that users can start using predictive and prescriptive AI functions right after go-live.

WHY IT MATTERS

Although some of what Olono does is simply rules-based, its combination of data sources, rules, and AI drive greater automation and sales intelligence:

- **Integration.** Olono pulls real-time customer data and sentiment analysis through either direct API calls or through a sophisticated browser extension, links that data to Salesforce records, and automatically suggests when a record should be augmented. When Olono recognizes a missing data point, it will prompt the user to fill in the blank and automatically adjust the master record in the CRM system. When Olono sees that another document is relevant to the current sales task, it will recommend the document and provide a link to it in the content management system.
- **Machine learning.** To make the next step, Olono uses machine learning and data mining to analyze the pipeline, suggest sales actions, and analyze the success of those recommendations automatically. The result is that, by providing the suggestions itself, it can learn whether its recommendations were effective or not and refine its strategy when confronted with a similar situation in the future.
- **Natural language processing.** Olono provides users with a "Thoughts" tools, similar to a virtual sticky note, that sits in a CRM entry. Users can enter in additional information that is relevant to the customer relationship such as a customer's hobbies. Through natural language processing and text mining,

Olono is able to retrieve this information when a relevant event is occurring, like a company golf tournament.

HOW IT PROVIDES VALUE

In our initial look at Olono, Nucleus found potential value for both sales people and sales managers.

MANAGERS

Just as sales people see a more complete view of the customer, managers see a more complete view of the sales pipeline with a centralized dashboard that integrates all the external data sitting outside SFA. A Kanban-style dashboard breaks the sales cycle into various sections to track more precisely where the sales team is succeeding or faltering. The AI elements of Olono then work to analyze customer data to identify the problem and make recommendations for action. Rather than a simple recommendation on a deal, the granularity of data and recommendations provided better enables managers to see exactly what sales stage needs improvements in execution.

SALES PEOPLE

Everyone knows the challenges sales people face with data entry: Nucleus has found that to optimize selling, sales people should spend only eight percent of their time on data entry (Nucleus Research *n167 - Enterprise software must adopt the principles of Dark Cockpit*, November 2013). Olono not only accelerates this data entry process by automating much of it through integration, it further leverages that data to recommend next best actions for the sales person. Simply providing recommendations on LinkedIn data drives a 12 to 15 percent increase in productivity for sales people; the broader set of data Olono leverages is likely to deliver at least these, if not greater, gains.

LOOKING FORWARD

Olono has recently completed closed beta testing and is continuing to develop more integrations and more advanced features as it begins its first implementations. It is currently an “integration partner” with Salesforce, and the company plans to expand to other enterprise CRM vendors. Other potential areas for investment that could further differentiate Olono include:

- Overinvestment alerts. Given the data Olono has, it could recognize that the time and money input for a given prospective sale is larger than average, it could

generate an alert. Rather than a rules-based approach that just looks at static thresholds, Olono could be analyzing the data on an ongoing basis based on similar related deals to deliver overinvestment alerts in context of the sales cycle.

- Pipeline volatility insights. On an ongoing basis, Olono's analysis of pipeline activity could be used to alert managers where there are high degrees of volatility associated with specific product, team, or other factor, and assess the actual probability of a deal closing based on actual sales patterns and data, reducing pipeline volatility.

Olono's combination of broad data integration, rules-based prompting and automation, and AI differentiate itself today, although many CRM and edge CRM vendors are following similar investment paths. Although the list price of \$50 per user may seem steep, given the relative potential of its approach to impact both sales performers and sales management, only a small increase in close rates would warrant an investment. As Olono moves out of the beta stage into real deployments, showing the relative success of its approach on real sales results compared with other currently available options (and there are many) will be important to grow its customer base and stay above the noise in the CRM AI cacophony.