



## SMBs enter the marketing automation arena with a rush

Christopher Hosford

Story posted: April 13, 2009 - 11:34 am EDT

Tim Clark had a problem prospecting for new customers among the small-to-midsize companies in his area. Clark, a Millbury, Mass.-based professional clothier with Tom James Co., markets his services by seeking out business executives interested in custom business clothing, and it hasn't always been easy.

His problem: Running a small business himself, Clark had to use mailing databases that weren't precise enough to sniff out the small-business executives he was looking for.

"The problem with many databases is that they focus on large businesses—big corporations where your chances are slim of getting somebody on the phone to introduce yourself," Clark said. He also needed a database that could be segmented geographically for his greater Boston territory.

To help Clark and other regional reps, Tom James Co. turned to database company ZoomInfo, which builds its lists via semantic Web searches, segmented according to client needs. Last month, ZoomInfo rolled out enhancements to its small-and-midsize business data with such additional details as company descriptions, revenue, number of employees, locations and other information on smaller organizations.

"We still use Google search, LinkedIn and other databases," Clark said, "but the ZoomInfo tool has been effective in really focusing our direct marketing efforts, so we can follow up with e-mail and phone calls."

### UNDERSERVED NO LONGER

Small and midsize businesses are playing an increasingly important role in b-to-b marketing efforts. They're also being targeted as buyers themselves of sophisticated new marketing tools that previously had been available mainly to enterprise-size companies.

"Small businesses have traditionally been underserved by marketing technology companies, but they are the way this economy is going to turn itself around and grow," said Len Bruskiwitz, senior director-partner programs with Constant Contact, an e-mail marketing company that focuses on small-business customers. With 250,000 customers, Constant Contact is a niche leader, but Bruskiwitz said there are about 23 million small businesses in the U.S.

"The upside potential is pretty big," he said.

Because small-business owners are generally not marketing experts, Constant Contact broadcasts webinars each business day on e-mail marketing best practices. The company also conducts live educational seminars around the country.

Extending its value for small businesses, Constant Contact this month introduced AppConnect, a product to facilitate the integration of the company's e-mail marketing products with the myriad of other software applications that small businesses rely on, such as Microsoft Excel or the popular ACT customer relationship management program, for easy database consolidation.

### ENGINE OF GROWTH

The importance of the SMB market has been thrown into high relief by the economic downturn.

Recognizing that small and midsize businesses have traditionally provided some 70% of new employment, President Obama last month ensured a new infusion of \$15 billion in small-business loans, along with new actions allowing small businesses to take a bigger tax break on their losses.

Today, with the rise of Web-based applications, automated marketing solutions increasingly are being made available to small companies at affordable prices.

“It’s a huge market, but Web intelligence applications have long been priced out of their reach,” said Michael Ward, president of demand-generation company Net-Results. “At the same time, though, the technology has been creeping up underneath, such as Google Analytics.”

Net-Results is avoiding going up against the major players in its space, such as Eloqua, Omniture and WebTrends, by focusing on the small-business market. Ward said his Net-Results 2.0 Web analytics product—which identifies Web site visitors, tracks individual visitor activity, deploys automatic e-mail campaigns and generates new sales leads—brings “enterprise-class” technology to the SMB market.

Net-Results 2.0 users pay as little as \$79 a month.

#### AIDING BUSINESS START-UPS

Another marketing technology company focusing on SMBs is Yield Software, which last month launched an on-demand Web marketing application for this market to drive Internet traffic from paid and organic search, as well as landing page optimization.

The company’s Yield Web Marketing Suite—\$129 a month—enables pay-per-click (PPC) campaign set-up, geo-targeting and keyword bid optimization.

“The economy is really relevant to our strategy,” said Matt Malden, CEO of Yield Software. “The economy wasn’t part of our original business strategy, but today many people will try to create something out of nothing” by starting their own businesses.

“It’s unbelievable how easy it is to start a small business today because of these kinds of services,” he said.

And for those companies interested in finding those small businesses, ZoomInfo thinks professional clothier Tim Clark’s experience can be multiplied via its newly enhanced SMB and midmarket company data.

“In the past, many marketers went elephant hunting among the *Fortune* 500 companies,” said Chip Terry, VP-general manager, enterprise products at ZoomInfo. “But today, many of those companies are in trouble, and our customers are asking for a robust SMB strategy.”

PRINTED FROM: <http://www.btoonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090413/FREE/904139987/1146/FREE&template=printart>

---

Entire contents © 2009 [Crain Communications, Inc.](#)

---