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By Pam Baker
December 22, 2004 6:26PM

After a slow start in the hosted CRM space, industry is playing an aggressive catch-up game with Siebel. Its biggest challenge may be that what you thought about Siebel -- including expense and difficult impl -- no longer applies.

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Most industry changes start as a trickle, but hosted CRM came in like a tidal wave. When it did, industry giant [Siebel](#) was left standing in the backwash -- at least for a while. By the time the company realized the tide [Salesforce.com](#) had already bottled up much of the market.

"Siebel has some great hosted features like analytics, but they just haven't had traction yet to bother Salesforce," Erin Kinikin, vice president, [Forrester Research](#) NewsFactor.

On the Upshot

But Siebel was quick to make up for lost time, and gobbled up Salesforce's competitor, [UpShot](#).

"Siebel acquired and leveraged UpShot, and then gave the concoction a pre-boost by adding an [IBM](#) strategic partnership to the formula," Laurie McQuinn, president of small and medium business solutions, AMR Partners, told NewsFactor.

It did not hurt that Siebel also had more experience than anyone in the CRM field -- and plenty of cash to launch a powerful new product.

"Our biggest strength in hosted CRM lies in the fact we have been in the CRM field for more than 10 years and have learned from more than 4,000 customers. Cleveland, Siebel Systems general manager and executive vice president, OnDemand, told NewsFactor.

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Brand-Name Foibles

Historically speaking, Siebel products have had a reputation for being expensive once it was almost a bragging point -- akin to owning a Cadillac versus a Vauxhall. Now the expensive image is scaring away customers.

"Siebel has some product gaps, like marketing, service and support for which their main challenge is finding a channel to sell Siebel CRM OnDemand, and convincing customers that a product with the Siebel name isn't expensive and complex.

Price Mirage

But the image is a mirage; Siebel OnDemand prices are definitely competitive.

"Siebel has a pretty aggressive pricing strategy. And you get everything in one package instead of having to buy multiple editions, which is the general practice of competitors," says McCabe.

Siebel CRM OnDemand starts at US\$70 per user per month, which includes marketing, service and analytic functionality. There is no hardware or software purchase, install, maintain or upgrade, and no ongoing maintenance, upgrade costs. Siebel CRM OnDemand Industry Editions are available at \$100 per user per month.

Siebel Contact OnDemand, a hosted contact center solution that provides rules-based routing, CTI screen pops, and as many world-class contact center features as service, is available as a stand-alone system at \$100 per user per month, plus charges.

The Siebel CRM OnDemand and Siebel Contact OnDemand bundle costs \$150 per user per month.

Vive la Difference

"Siebel leverages the best practices of UpShot. They have a very strong product warehousing advantage, and very in-depth analytics," Sheryl Kingstone of [Yankee Group](#), told NewsFactor.

Specifically, Siebel claims a number of bragging points: the only hosted CRM that includes embedded, interactive analytics; the first and only industry-specific software for industries like financial services, life sciences, high technology automotive; the only fully hosted contact center capabilities; and a scalable hosting infrastructure via its partnership with IBM.

"Siebel offers the ability to implement on-premise or hosted CRM solutions or hybrid CRM solutions that combine the two," says Cleveland.

Siebel's deployment flexibility and product strength, particularly in terms of in-depth analytics, industry-specific offerings, and contact center capabilities are strong considerations for buyers to mull over.

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