



The Value of Technology for the Missouri State Lottery



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As the Missouri State Lottery Sales Operations Manager, I have experienced tremendous benefit from incorporating technology into our sales force's regime. We have a history of being progressive in seeking out new ideas to improve our lottery. Over the years we built systems internally as well as used outside providers. Our story illustrates how and why we moved from an in-house approach to using an outside provider and what any company with a field sales team should consider before developing their own system.

In 2001, the Missouri Lottery made the decision to develop its own proprietary ticket ordering system for our Inside Sales Department. At this point there were not any systems available that achieved what we had in mind, specifically for the lottery industry.

The Inside Sales Suite (ISS) calculates instant ticket inventory, rate of sale, and tickets needed until the next delivery. This proved to be a valuable tool because it provided

inventory levels and rates of use by the retailer. It also allowed the inside sales team to make informed recommendations as to what should be ordered to avoid stock-outs at the retail location. This transferred the responsibility of tracking and inventory management from the retailer to the lottery.

Building on this success, we created a version that could be utilized by our field sales staff. Putting it in the hands of the sales staff meant that they were now equipped with actionable information to help maintain appropriate inventory levels when visiting the retail location. The information flow, however, was only one way; from the lottery to the reps. There was no efficient way for the field sales team to send intelligence gathered in the field back to headquarters for analysis.

Simultaneously, we incorporated other technologies into the field -- sales reps went from using pagers to cell phones. We utilized PC's to facilitate the creation of Daily Call Summaries (DCS). While DCS' allowed us to see and track what happened at each sales

call, they were 'view-only' documents so field reps, again, were unable to enter information directly into the customer's record. These logs were emailed to Sales Management at the end of each day. While DCS did improve sales call records this was not the ideal solution.

Other attempts at internally designed programs did not reach the same level of success as ISS. We built a system that created and tracked promotion activities as well as a system that tracked dispenser and other consumable items. Both of these systems were not conducive to a field sale force because of our lack of connectivity between the field and headquarters. We replaced both systems with a spreadsheet-tracking system. Spreadsheets allowed some level of accurate and up-to-date tracking, but their lack of immediate accessibility statewide was a significant downside.

We were at an impasse. We needed to either commit to the time and resources it would take to overhaul and dramatically expand our current program, or seek an outside vendor

with technology designed for sales force automation. While we liked the custom design of our own systems it was proving to be just too time consuming and expensive to continue. The most important factor in finding a vendor was their system's ability to integrate with our existing system's data.

After an extensive vendor search, we selected the OrderPad for Lotteries Software Suite. Specializing in lotteries, OrderPad understands the kind of information we deal with and issues we face. They were able to design a system that looks and feels very similar to what we had in place for our Inside Sales Department. They seamlessly integrated our system into theirs and consolidated everything into a streamlined software-suite. This created a sense of consistency in technology and minimized confusion.

OrderPad contains a series of tools that we had not even visualized (but find endlessly valuable) including Retailer Service History and Project Management. Retailer service history records are recaps that the sales

rep completes after each retailer contact. Anyone with authority to view a retailer can now see their complete service history. From a management standpoint, this history helps to document and quantify issues on a macro basis. It gives managers a picture of what the sales rep accomplishes throughout the day. It also eliminates the need and expense of a GPS or a similar tracking system.

The Project Management module provides reps with an automated method for the organization of directives and objectives, by being able to instantaneously retrieve and input client information to their Tablet PCs. Managers are able to assign projects and tasks for completion. The sales reps then see those tasks and can easily check off a task as completed. Management can see at any time, progress toward completion of any task they assign. Sales reps also have the ability to assign themselves tasks for completion. OrderPad displays a checklist of tasks within each affected retailer record, which improves overall route efficiency.

These tools provide us with another database of information. We are currently working with OrderPad to create a system that will allow us to develop the mining of this raw data to identify areas where efficiency can be improved.

By adopting OrderPad our field staff spends significantly less time contacting our central office to gather accounting, licensing and sales information. They use less paper and information gathered has become more accessible and immediate. They are able to spend more productive time with customers. Additionally, those who work within the office no longer have to research field rep information requests and can focus on other tasks. Although we have had this software for a little over two years, we are continuing to find new ways to utilize this system to maximize our overall efficiency.

When looking back at all that the Missouri State Lottery has accomplished in terms of technology for our field sales team, there are a few lessons to be learned. Building our own systems to achieve higher

levels of productivity, efficiency, and ultimately profitability is possible, but there are limitations. Short of having an entire team of programmers and developers on staff, what you produce is difficult to fully match what you had in mind. The costs and time restraints of implementing your own systems can be high, especially if you run into problems along the way, which I assure you, you will. Going with an outside company can alleviate a lot of the issues created from doing it on your own, but be sure to know exactly what you are looking for in a field sales software, or at the very least, know what you want to achieve. Finally, whether you decide to build your own or bring in an outside vendor like we did with OrderPad, be prepared to have this technological journey be an ongoing one. There are always more tools, more ways to process and collect information, and more ways to increase your sales team's efficiency and effectiveness.

