

**Industry:**

Petroleum and environmental testing

**Description:**

Provides accurate and secure information to multiple divisions in many different locations.

**Business Challenge:**

Coordinate crucial information in real time to effectively obtain and retain clients.

**Product/Solution:**

*Commence OnDemand* captures, tracks, manages and shares vital customer information to specified individuals required for their jobs.

**Key Features:**

- Web-based hosted solution
- Fast, easy set up
- Manage sales, marketing, customer service
- One central system for all customer information
- Powerful reporting and analytics
- Supports remote and mobile users
- QuickBooks integration

**Results:**

- 114% growth in sales within the first 90 days
- Enabled sales departments to combine and streamline efforts and increase efficiencies
- Generate nearly \$100,000 gross monthly income in the Hydrocarbon department

## Commence Case Study

### **Information Management Fuels Sales and Supports Brand Strategy for Petroleum Company**

*-CRM Solution Drives 114% Growth in Sales within First 90 Days of Implementation-*

A key challenge for companies with multiple divisions spread across many locations is collaboration, especially when it comes to business-critical information. At Southern Petroleum Laboratories (SPL Inc.), a leader in the petroleum and environmental testing industry, customer information was stored in many disparate databases. As a result, sales and operations professionals were duplicating efforts and lacked insight into customer successes and service issues. To address this, SPL implemented Commence CRM from Tinton Falls, N.J.-based Commence Corporation in the fall of 2005 to improve information management. The company experienced a 114% growth in sales within the first 90 days and has been able to sustain that growth despite a chaotic economy.

Founded in 1944 and headquartered in Houston, Texas, SPL Inc., was one of the first major suppliers to service the petrochemical, refining, pipeline and retail markets with environmental testing services. Over the years, it has expanded its service to all major industry, key government sectors, and their suppliers and consultants and proven itself as a sustained leader in the industry. SPL's hydrocarbon services, the top supplier in this market sector, include testing of refinery gasses, sulfur compounds, petroleum fingerprinting, and forensic analysis. SPL field services include liquid and gas measurement accounting, fabrications, allocations and consulting services.

The company operates five divisions – environmental lab, hydrocarbon lab and field, fabrication, audits and loss control, and allocation and oil and gas accounting – and in many cases calls on the same customers for different products and services. The sales and operations groups had a CRM application, but it wasn't a synchronized system so each representative managed their own database. Without a central repository for information there was no consistency or commonality in effort across the company.

“We had people in the same division with different databases of information and it was redundant and sometimes conflicting,” said Randall Ritch, senior product manager/client services focal point, SPL, Inc., Hydrocarbon division. “As a result, we were in the dark about which were our best customers, recent activities

or any caveats to a new sales effort.

Realizing a centralized CRM database would offer efficiency gains and increase sales effectiveness, and having worked with the Commence solution at two prior companies, Ritch implemented it at SPL.

“Because of all the disparate databases, it was a very large undertaking,” he said. “That said, I was confident the solution would help increase sales. Within the first 90 days, just by having good information management, we were able to generate nearly \$100,000 gross monthly income in the Hydrocarbon department. That’s because Commence made it possible for everyone, regardless of department, to see what the other has done in terms of recent proposals, customer service issues or sales success.”

Commence Corporation’s “best in class” CRM software offers a comprehensive suite of applications for business contact management, sales and sales force automation, marketing, campaign management, lead management, project management, customer support and analytics. The solution is delivered on demand as a managed service hosted over the Internet.

“We chose a Software-as-a-Service solution based on the reliability and cost,” said Ritch. “If there are upgrades or maintenance to the application, it is handled by Commence and the support we get as a hosted client is endless.”

With the solution in place, SPL is able to use data to drive better decisions as well as leverage their brand as an industry leader to customers. It has also enabled the sales departments to combine efforts and increase efficiencies, eliminate redundant effort, and save money in the process. Among others, one way in which it has improved processes is by ensuring tight collaboration.

“We encountered a situation where our environmental department had an unresolved issue with a client and the hydrocarbon group had a past due invoice for the same account,” said Ritch. “We were able to investigate the history with the client and learn about the issue prior to approaching them for payment. When we saw the documentation that noted the issue was resolved, we were able to approach the client and get the invoice paid. The Commence solution enabled us to work collaboratively and make a responsible decision from a sales, marketing and reputation perspective.”

Along with better customer service, the solution also helps streamline SPL’s proposal process. A key component to success is ensuring proposals are submitted to clients and that timely follow up ensues. Sales cycles vary from as little as one day to as long as 18 months. To further increase efficiencies, SPL has integrated the Commence system with QuoteWerks sales quotation software. Together the two applications have allowed the hydrocarbon division to generate thousands of quotes and close nearly 80 percent of them.

“Commence is the repository for all the contact information and QuoteWerks is the repository for the products and services that we sell,” explained Ritch. “A core competency of Commence is the management of time sensitive information. QuoteWerks enables us to keep track of how many products we’ve sold and our profit margins. It’s a perfect marriage between the two solutions.”

By having this improved process in place, SPL has become more profitable and had its highest sales revenue year at the close of this past fiscal year. Another way the solution is impacting the business is it is serving as impetus to support the company's brand management strategy.

"Instead of giving the appearance that we are a bunch of little companies, Commence enables us to be consistent in service and demonstrate the cohesiveness of our organization," said Ritch. "It allows all our offices around the country to have access to the same up-to-date information and we produce a consistent response to every inquiry that comes into the company regardless of what division receives it.

"It's a very reliable solution that I've been using since 1994," he concluded. "I have never had a corrupt database error and I haven't had that type of success with any application. We have been able to demonstrate our effectiveness using the solution and generate more sales than we ever did in the previous 17 years without the use of this application."

### **About Commence Corporation**

Founded in 1988, Commence Corporation is a leading provider of e-business and customer relationship management (CRM) software solutions. The company's products are designed to provide small- to medium-sized businesses with flexible solutions that leverage the Web to offer an integrated platform for e-business. Commence supports thousands of users through a worldwide distribution network, with outlets in North and South America, Europe, and Asia/Pacific. For more information, contact Commence Corporation at 732-660-0990, or visit the company's Web site at [www.commence.com](http://www.commence.com).