



How new technology is changing the way marketing and sales interact with leads

Overcoming the limitations of autoresponder-based systems

How sales teams engage prospective customers has changed. Tweets, text messages, emails and voicemails have replaced lunch meetings, eye contact and firm handshakes. Managing sales leads has become more challenging due to the immediacy and often impersonal nature of the Digital Age and the Internet sales environment.

Customer relationship management (CRM) software and autoresponder systems, often as part of a marketing automation platform, have emerged as the lead management tools of choice for sales teams. In reality, the use of autoresponders can backfire. The emails they distribute are often seen as low priority or spam and may never be opened. Despite efforts to create email content that is fresh and not canned, email from autoresponders can usually be identified quickly by the use of telltale graphics, links to more information, and stern “Do not reply” warnings.

Although salespeople would like to respond personally to leads from digital channels to qualify their intentions to buy now, to buy later, or to end the sales conversation, the deluge of digital communication makes it impossible for sales teams to keep up. According to the Sales Lead Management Association, 48 percent of salespeople never follow up with a lead¹. And, 33 percent of the leads who showed interest are not contacted¹. Why? Most likely because the salespeople are overwhelmed by a deluge of inbound leads.

The good news is that relief can be found in a new sales approach that uses sales conversion management as part of a lead management program to intelligently find hot leads. This solution can interpret email text, respond appropriately in a conversational style and identify the hottest leads for a busy sales team. This new era of sales conversion management significantly advances how marketing, inside sales and sales organizations nurture leads.

This white paper explains the key differences between autoresponder systems and the new technology that is significantly improving sales efficiency and effectiveness for sales conversion management and qualification.

¹ Cargill, Gil. [“Prospecting Is a Numbers Game.”](#) ChannelPro. Jan. 2014

The limitations of autoresponders in email marketing

Email marketing gained traction with the widespread availability and adoption of the Internet in the early '90s. Costly marketing via postal mail and individual telephone calls was abandoned in favor of email blasts to thousands of potential customers. It wasn't long before the term spam entered the vernacular and policymakers took notice by passing legislation to offer recipients of promotional emails some protection and recourse.

With the mainstream adoption of email marketing, autoresponders soon followed. An autoresponder is a computer program, usually integrated with a CRM system, which automatically generates a pre-configured email response. Initially, autoresponders were limited to "Your email could not be delivered" messages. Their use was soon expanded for email marketing purposes to provide information and follow up at pre-determined time intervals. Today, marketing automation solutions using autoresponders can be configured to track the clicks made by a customer shopping on a company's website, for example, to trigger an automated email offering more information. Autoresponder systems can often generate email drip campaigns and email blasts to push information to customers and leads.

Why autoresponder-based systems fall short

While the goal of a marketer is to get leads engaged and motivated to buy, autoresponder emails are no substitute for a personal email or phone call from a live, knowledgeable salesperson. In fact, this automated approach can hinder rather than escalate the qualification of inbound leads. Key drawbacks of autoresponders include:

- **One-way, impersonal communication** – Autoresponder messages are nearly impossible to personalize for individual customers. In addition, they are not designed to elicit a personal response or a request for a salesperson to call. This one-way communication neither supports the salesperson's goal of quickly qualifying the lead's intention to buy, nor does it allow the salesperson to personally engage the person in the two-way communication that is so important to closing sales and building strong customer relationships.
- **Often perceived as spam or ignored** – Savvy Internet users know what a canned autoresponder email looks like, so they may immediately delete it, mark it as spam or ignore it. Some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) automatically tag autoresponder email as spam and whisk it away to a spam folder, so the recipient may never see it at all. According to the Global Email Deliverability Benchmark Report (2011), only 81 percent of all permission-based email makes it into inboxes worldwide, despite opt-in confirmation that such email is desired. Globally, one out of five emails lands in a spam folder, while 12 percent of all emails are blocked by ISP-level filters².
- **Not intended to elicit a response** – Most autoresponder messages are not designed to obtain a response and responses are ignored. The "Do not reply to this email" warning flags a message as computer-generated text from the start. And although the company's CRM system may be able to capture whether the recipient opens the email and clicks on any of the graphics or links, the salesperson still lacks any knowledge of whether the person was browsing or is seriously interested. As a result, the lead sits lukewarm or even cold within the CRM system.

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Autoresponders do have value in the customer-care situations for which they were designed: pushing basic information. Customers of ecommerce sites, for example, enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that their online orders or subscription service requests were received – and later knowing that an order has shipped and how to track it.

Autoresponders may also be effective for answering simple questions about company policies or pricing, and for generating reminders for service appointments and special sales events. Unfortunately, autoresponders fall woefully short when the goal is to determine the quality of a lead and the person's current intent.

Introducing sales conversion management

Today, most businesses use some kind of marketing automation application to create and distribute content to prospects in the hope of turning them into leads. These applications typically rely on autoresponders and their inherent one-way communication. While open rates, click-throughs and corresponding website activities can be monitored, the recipient has no opportunity for two-way engagement or interaction. As a result, unqualified leads are passed from marketing to inside sales or sales groups, which causes frustration.

Even though a lead may have downloaded a white paper, inside sales and sales teams have no idea if the person is a student doing research or someone that is ready to buy now. Consequently, considerable time and effort has to be made to contact the lead via phone or email to qualify them. Not surprisingly, this approach is inefficient, costly and does not scale well if thousands of leads are being provided by marketing.

Driven by artificial intelligence (AI) technology, sales conversion management provides the missing piece of automation between marketing automation tools and the lead hand-off to inside sales and/or sales groups. By automating the penultimate stage of the sales cycle – contact, engage, nurture, qualify and follow-up – it is possible to increase the effectiveness and ROI of all current marketing/sales automation tools. Best of all, sales conversion management bridges the gap between marketing, inside sales and sales by improving the quality of leads so reps can focus on selling and closing prequalified buyers that intend to buy.

A new era of personalized, automated engagement

A sales conversion management platform driven by AI delivers a more effective alternative than autoresponders for personally qualifying and engaging leads – and determining customer intent quickly – from a heavy influx of leads.

Using a framework that optimizes text classification, the AI component reads responses to outbound messages and interprets the lead's intention based on a classification of words in the lead's response emails. The AI-based application can then automatically take specific actions based upon text classifications without human intervention. Depending on the interpretation of the text, the system will proceed to follow up with a series of messages appropriate to the lead's response, will send an alert to a salesperson to contact the person, or will stop sending emails altogether. Essentially, the platform creates a two-way, personalized conversation between the lead and the company's sales team.

Most importantly, the sales conversion management platform crafts email messages in response to the lead's initial information request that read as if they are coming from a live human, not a one-size-fits-all autoresponder. The platform uses a friendly, colloquial conversational style in text messages that do not contain unnecessary graphics or links, unlike autoresponders. For example, the system may capture a phone number in the initial email and then use that phone number in future messaging to specifically ask, "Is 555-555-5555 the best number to reach you?"

As the conversation between the AI platform and the lead continues, the application becomes more effective in responding to frequently used data or phrases, and as a result it can interpret a lead's mood or intent more accurately. Drawing upon this information, the sales conversion management platform can determine the correct action to take: either send an alert to the sales team to follow up on what has become a hot lead, continue to send messages to engage the lead, or stop communication altogether with someone who is uninterested.

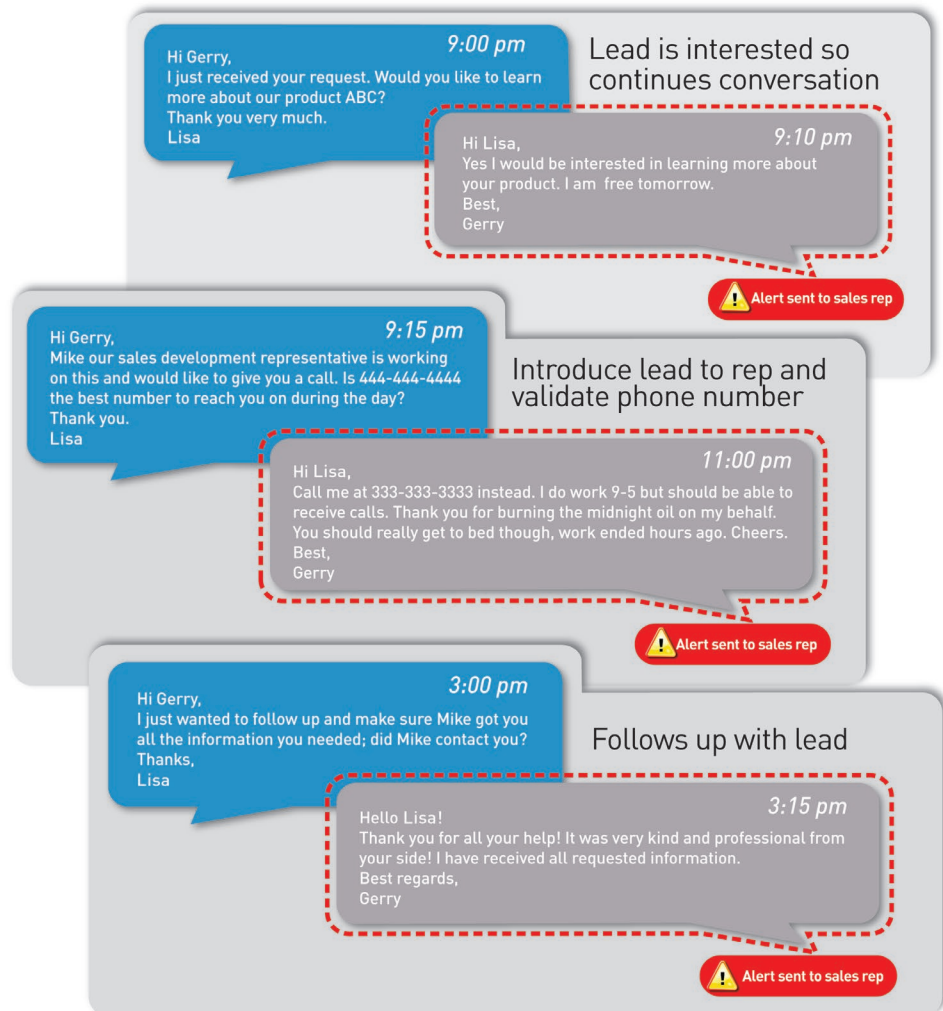


Figure 1: Conversica engages leads in two-way email conversations, gathers valuable information and knows when to alert sales reps when a lead is ready to begin the sales process

In addition to intelligence with a human touch, an advanced sales conversion management platform can offer the following advantages to sales teams:

- **Visibility of all leads** – Using an intuitive dashboard, salespeople can efficiently manage all of the leads that respond and identify the leads with the strongest intent to buy. Furthermore, advanced analytics provide management with unmatched visibility into lead source quality, conversion rates and lead abandonment so they can make more informed decisions on sales and marketing strategies.
- **No lost leads** – A typical salesperson may send three, four or five emails and place a handful of phone calls over a five-day period before giving up on a lead. In contrast, a sales conversion management platform can start engaging leads within minutes after a request comes in and continues to engage and nurture leads until they ask for a salesperson to call or opt out. There are no lost leads because the platform makes several more attempts than a salesperson would and waits for a response far longer – whether it takes one day or several months.
- **Sales team management** – Internet sales managers can track salesperson responsiveness and effectiveness via conversational emails that ask if the person received a call or the requested information. Internet sales managers can also see at a glance how many leads responded and were moved to an appointment and how many leads are still pending.
- **Integration with Salesforce and other CRM systems** – A sales conversion management platform will integrate with CRM systems or can work as a standalone system. For example, communication alerts from the platform can be displayed inside the lead or contact record within a message history screen in the core Salesforce system, making it easy for salespeople to track the progress of each lead and the related responses.

Ultimately, a sales conversion management platform can deliver benefits for each stakeholder in the sales process:

- **Leads and customers** – The personal engagement via email creates a more pleasant experience when researching or buying products online. Leads and customers will feel more cared for and connected, making them more likely to buy from the vendor.
- **Salespeople** – The platform helps each salesperson quickly and efficiently qualify more leads. As the program identifies and alerts the sales team to the hottest leads, salespeople can spend more time talking to the leads who really want to talk to them and who intend to make a purchase, thus helping them close more sales more quickly.
- **Sales managers and executive management** – The platform becomes a tool for providing visibility into the customer experience and a means for monitoring the sales team and optimizing how it responds to customer inquiries. Informed by the analytics within the platform, sales management can optimize the efficiency of the sales team and raise customer satisfaction scores.

Introducing Conversica

Conversica is a revolutionary sales conversion management platform for marketing, inside sales and sales organizations. Presented as a custom online persona, Conversica nurtures leads from interest to intent through natural, two-way email exchanges. Conversica automatically sends alerts to the sales team when a qualified lead is ready to purchase.

Conversica builds upon autoresponders and their demand generation capabilities by:

1. Creating automated, two-way email-based communication with leads using a human persona
2. Obtaining lead contact information automatically, such as the best number to reach them
3. Determining the lead's intent in real-time by interpreting text in the email response
4. Alerting the salesperson to contact qualified leads who indicate intention to buy now
5. Following up after the salesperson's initial contact to continue to nurture the lead and get additional information or feedback

Unlike old-school autoresponders, Conversica increases engagement and automatically collects information, qualifies interest, and ultimately improves conversions for thousands of leads all day, every day. By increasing engagement, Conversica can significantly increase the number of qualified leads assigned to sales representatives, potentially increasing sales. Critically, sales organizations will save hundreds of hours a year by not chasing dead leads and become more effective by focusing on those that are most likely to purchase.

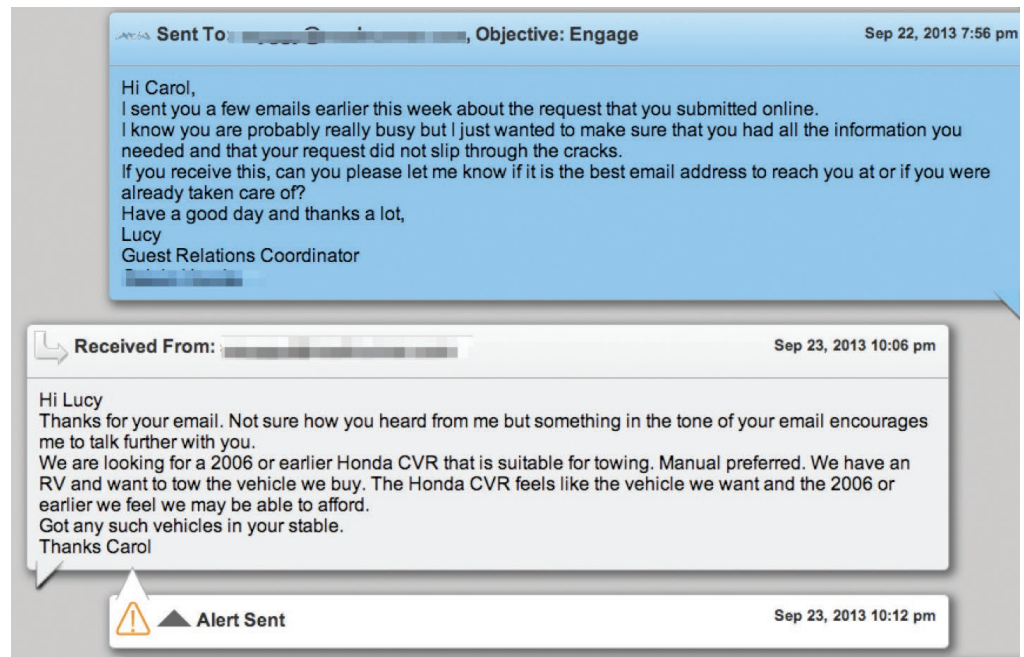


Figure 2: Conversica (in this example, named Lucy), typically achieves a higher engagement rate with leads than other approaches such as cold calling and email marketing

The Conversica solution is based in the cloud, which simplifies ownership and eliminates on-site installation and upgrades. A cloud-based solution enables Conversica to be easily accessed from any Internet-connected devices.

You can use Conversica as a standalone system or use it with a CRM application. Implementation can be completed in hours, depending on your customer requirements. Conversica is most cost-effective when purchased as a yearly subscription.

Conversica makes your lead management solution complete

These days, filling the lead pipeline is critical and demand-generation campaigns play a vital role. Marketing automation tools such as Pardot, Marketo and Eloqua can effectively drive the demand generation engine by sending out email blasts and providing access to in-depth reports on emails received, returns, opens and click-throughs. Drip campaigns driven by these tools enable businesses to stay in front of potential customers on an ongoing basis, but the outgoing emails are essentially autoresponders with limited engagement potential. Furthermore, once a lead from these automated campaigns enters the sales pipeline, these tools do not provide insight into which leads are ready to buy right now.



Figure 3: Enterprises can build a powerful, end-to-end solution by combining CRM, marketing automation and sales conversion management applications

To take marketing and sales programs to the next level, Conversica should be used in conjunction with a CRM application such as Salesforce, as well as a marketing automation solution such as Pardot, Marketo or Eloqua. This combination creates a robust, end-to-end solution that encompasses customer relationship management, sales automation, demand generation and sales conversion management. With Conversica doing the heavy lifting of contacting, engaging, nurturing, prioritizing and qualifying leads, sales opportunities are likely to increase, as is the return on investment from the other tools that form a complete marketing and sales solution.

Conclusion

Today's sales teams spend the vast majority of their time attempting to make contact with leads. Even though email marketing and digital channels have filled the lead pipeline to the bursting point, sales and marketing groups lack insight into the quality of the leads that are generated. As such, enormous sales resources are wasted chasing poor quality leads.

A new era has arrived where artificial intelligence can be used to automate the difficult, laborious task of making contact, nurturing and qualifying leads. Conversica lets sales teams focus on closing deals with qualified buyers who intend to purchase. The bottom line: having an sales conversion management solution such as Conversica may significantly boost sales productivity, sales opportunities and company revenues.

For more information

See for yourself how Conversica is revolutionizing sales conversion management. To learn more call +1 (888) 778 1004, email sales@conversica.com or visit www.conversica.com to set up a product demonstration.

About Conversica

Conversica is the only provider of sales conversion management software for marketing, inside sales and sales organizations. Presented as a customized online persona, Conversica engages and nurtures leads through natural email exchanges until the lead converts into an opportunity or opts out. Conversica is used by more than 7,500 sales representatives worldwide and has assisted in the creation of more than US\$7.6 billion in sales revenue.

Founded in 2007, Conversica is now a portfolio company of Kennet Partners and is headquartered in Foster City, California. To learn more, visit www.conversica.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Google+](#), [YouTube](#), and @myconversica on [Twitter](#).



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Customer relationship management (CRM) software and autoresponders have emerged as the lead management tools of choice for sales teams. In reality, the use of autoresponders can backfire. The emails they distribute are often seen as low priority or spam and may never be opened. Despite efforts to create email content that is fresh and not canned, email from autoresponders can usually be identified quickly by the use of telltale graphics, links to more information, and stern “Do not reply” warnings.

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The good news is that relief can be found in a new sales approach that uses sales conversion management as part of a lead management program to intelligently find hot leads. This solution can interpret email text, respond appropriately in a conversational style and identify the hottest leads for a busy sales team. This new era of sales conversion management significantly advances how Internet business development teams nurture leads.

This white paper explains the key differences between autoresponder systems and the new technology that is significantly improving sales efficiency and effectiveness for sales conversion management.

The limitations of autoresponders in email marketing

Email marketing gained traction with the widespread availability and adoption of the Internet in the early '90s. Costly marketing via postal mail and individual telephone calls was abandoned in favor of email blasts to thousands of potential customers. It wasn't long before the term spam entered the vernacular and policymakers took notice by passing legislation to offer recipients of promotional emails some protection and recourse.

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Why autoresponder-based systems fall short

While the goal of a dealership is to get leads engaged and motivated to buy, autoresponder emails are no substitute for a personal email or phone call from a live, knowledgeable salesperson. In fact, this automated approach can hinder rather than escalate the qualification of inbound leads.

Key drawbacks of autoresponders include:

- **One-way, impersonal communication** – Autoresponder messages are nearly impossible to personalize for individual customers. In addition, they are not designed to elicit a personal response or a request for a salesperson to call. This one-way communication neither supports the salesperson's goal of quickly qualifying the lead's intention to buy, nor does it allow the salesperson to personally engage the person in the two-way communication that is so important to closing sales and building strong customer relationships.
- **Often perceived as spam or ignored** – Savvy Internet users know what a canned autoresponder email looks like, so they may immediately delete it, mark it as spam or ignore it. Some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) automatically tag autoresponder email as spam and whisk it away to a spam folder, so the recipient may never see it at all. According to the Global Email Delivery Benchmark Report (2011), only 81 percent of all permission-based email makes it into inboxes worldwide, despite opt-in confirmation that such email is desired. Globally, one out of five emails lands in a spam folder, while 12 percent of all emails are blocked by ISP-level filters².
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Autoresponders do have value in the customer-care situations for which they were designed: pushing basic information. Customers of ecommerce sites, for example, enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that their online orders or subscription service requests were received – and later knowing that an order has shipped and how to track it.

Autoresponders may also be effective for answering simple questions about company policies or pricing, and for generating reminders for service appointments and special sales events. Unfortunately, autoresponders fall woefully short when the goal is to determine the quality of a lead and the person's current intent.

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autoresponders and their inherent one-way communication. While open rates, click-throughs and corresponding website activities can be monitored, the recipient has no opportunity for two-way engagement or interaction. As a result, unqualified leads flood into Internet business development teams, which causes frustration.

Even though a lead may have requested information, sales teams have no idea if the person is someone that is ready to buy now. Consequently, considerable time and effort has to be made to contact the lead via phone or email to qualify them. Not surprisingly, this approach is inefficient, costly and does not scale well.

Driven by artificial intelligence (AI) technology, sales conversion management provides the missing piece of automation for the lead hand-off to a Business Development Center, Internet sales or sales group. By automating the most critical stage of the sales cycle – when a lead decides to engage in the sales process – it is possible to increase the effectiveness and ROI of all current marketing automation tools and programs. Best of all, sales conversion management improves the quality of leads so reps can focus on selling and closing buyers.



Figure 1: Conversica sales conversion management software works with dealership CRM systems to increase the ROI of leads purchased from aggregators

A new era of personalized, automated engagement

A sales conversion management platform driven by AI delivers a more effective alternative than autoresponders for personally engaging leads – and determining intent quickly – from a heavy influx of leads.

Using a framework that optimizes text classification, the AI component reads responses to outbound messages and interprets the lead's intention based on a classification of words in the lead's response emails. The application can then automatically take specific actions based upon text classifications without human intervention. Depending on the interpretation of the text, the system will proceed to follow up with a series of messages appropriate to the lead's response, will send an alert to a salesperson to contact the person, or will stop sending emails altogether. Essentially, the platform creates a two-way, personalized conversation between the lead and the dealership's sales team.

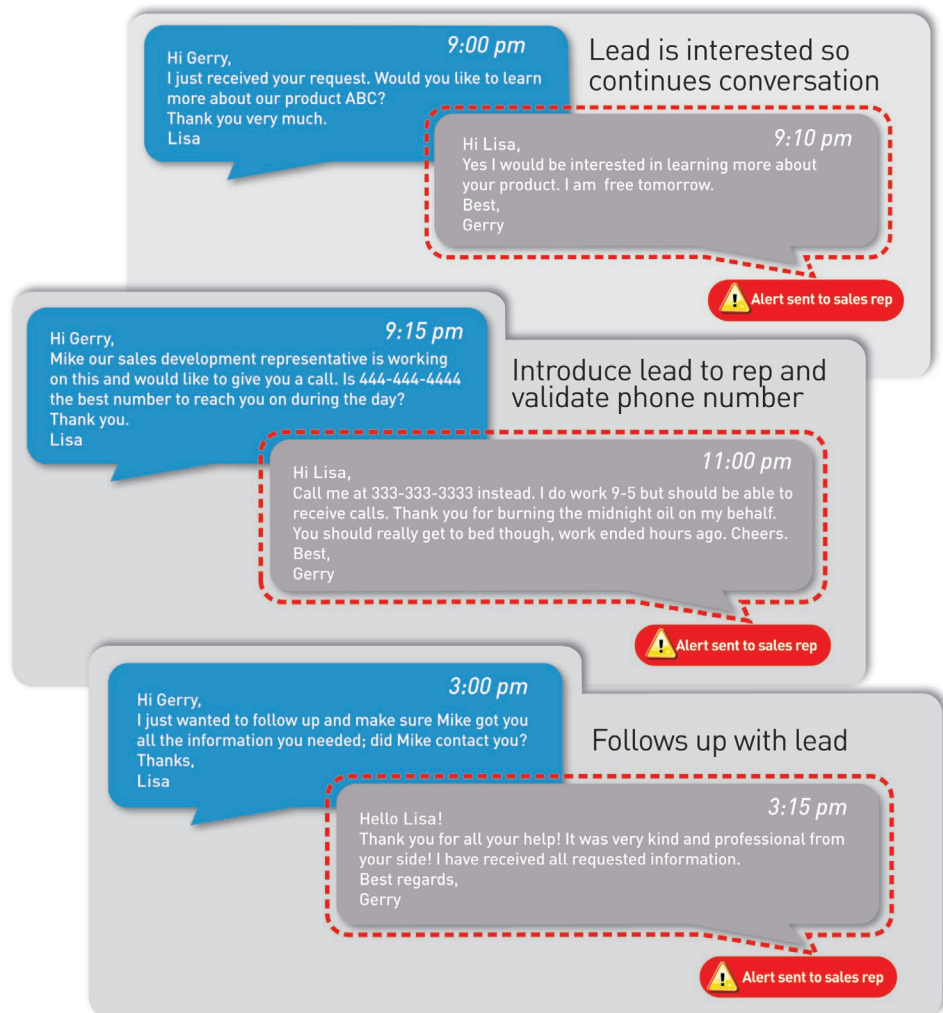


Figure 2: Conversica engages leads in two-way email conversations, gathers valuable information and alerts sales reps when a lead is ready to begin the sales process

Most importantly, the sales conversion management platform crafts email messages in response to the lead's initial information request that read as if they are coming from a live human, not a one-size-fits-all autoresponder. The platform uses a friendly, colloquial conversational style in text messages that do not contain unnecessary graphics or links, unlike autoresponders. For example, the

system may capture a phone number in the initial email and then use that phone number in future messaging to specifically ask, “Is 555-555-5555 the best number to reach you?”

As the conversation between the AI platform and the lead continues, the application becomes more effective in responding to frequently used data or phrases, and as a result it can interpret a lead’s mood or intent more accurately. Drawing upon this information, the sales conversion management platform can determine the correct action to take: either send an alert to the sales team to follow up on what has become a hot lead, continue to send messages to engage the lead, or stop communication altogether with someone who is uninterested.

In addition to intelligence with a human touch, an advanced sales conversion management platform can offer the following advantages to dealer sales teams:

- **Visibility of all leads** – Using an intuitive dashboard, salespeople can efficiently manage all of the leads that respond and identify the leads with the strongest intent to buy. Furthermore, advanced analytics provide management with unmatched visibility into lead source quality, conversion rates and missed opportunities so they can make more informed decisions on sales and marketing strategies.
- **No lost leads** – A typical auto salesperson may send three, four or five emails and place a handful of phone calls over a five-day period before giving up on a lead. In contrast, a sales conversion management platform can start engaging leads within minutes after a request comes in and continues to engage and nurture leads until they ask for a salesperson to call or opt out. There are no lost leads because the platform makes several more attempts than a salesperson would and waits for a response far longer – whether it takes one day or several months.
- **Sales team management** – Internet sales managers can track salesperson responsiveness and effectiveness via conversational emails that ask if the person received a call or the requested information. Internet sales managers can also see at a glance how many leads responded and were moved to an appointment and how many leads are still pending.
- **Integration with Salesforce and other CRM systems** – A sales conversion management platform will integrate with CRM systems or can work as a standalone system. For example, communication alerts from the platform can be displayed inside the lead or contact record within a message history screen in the core CRM, making it easy for salespeople to track the progress of each lead and the related responses.

Ultimately, a sales conversion management platform can deliver benefits for each stakeholder in the sales process:

- **Leads and customers** – The personal engagement via email creates a more pleasant experience when researching or buying products online. Leads and customers will feel more cared for and connected, making them more likely to buy from the dealership.
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- **Sales managers and executive management** – The platform becomes a tool for providing visibility into the customer experience and a means for monitoring the sales team and optimizing how it responds to customer inquiries. Informed by the analytics within the platform, sales management can optimize the efficiency of the sales team and raise dealership satisfaction scores.

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Conversica builds upon autoresponders and their demand generation capabilities by:

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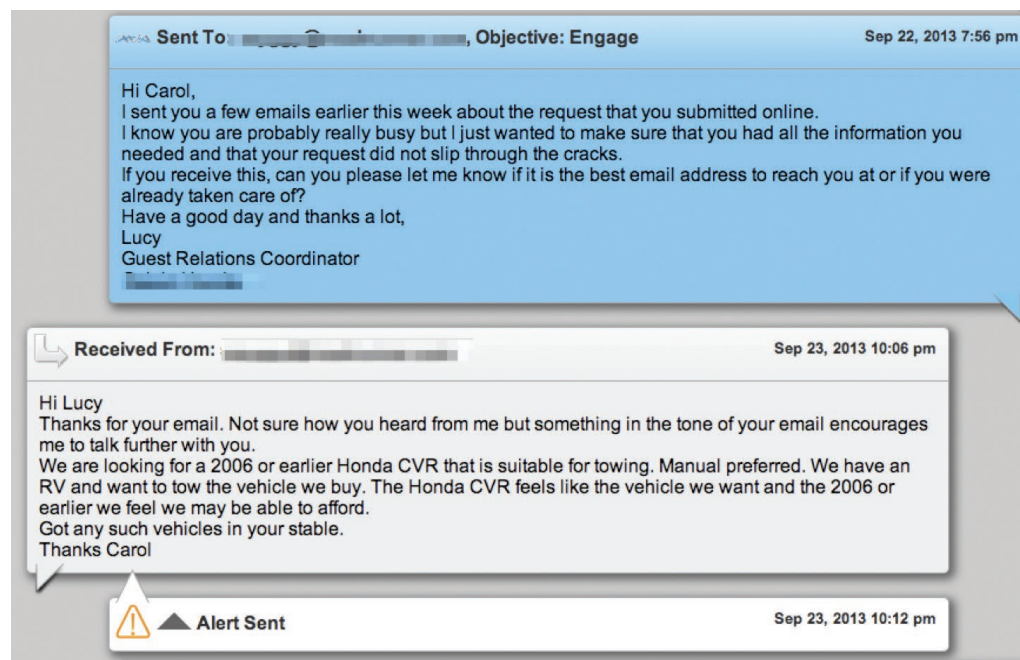


Figure 3: Conversica (in this example, named Lucy), typically achieves a higher engagement rate with leads than other approaches such as cold calling and email marketing

Conclusion

Today's Internet business development teams spend the vast majority of their time attempting to make contact with leads. Even though email marketing and digital channels have increase lead quantity, what dealership sales teams really need is an increase in lead quality. Unfortunately, dealership lack insight into the quality of the leads that are generated. As such, enormous sales resources are wasted chasing poor quality leads.

Furthermore, if your dealership is buying leads from autotrader.com, cars.com, Dealix and other aggregators, Conversica will increase your ROI over time. That's because Conversica provides the missing piece of automation for the penultimate stage of the lead lifecycle – when a lead decides to engage in the sales process.

A new era has arrived where artificial intelligence can be used to automate the difficult, laborious task of making contact, nurturing and qualifying leads. Conversica lets dealership sales teams focus on closing deals with qualified buyers who intend to purchase. The bottom line: having a sales conversion management solution such as Conversica may significantly boost sales productivity, sales opportunities and dealership revenues.

For more information

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The missing piece: Enhancing the value of marketing automation with sales conversion management

From the era of the traveling salesperson, to cold calling in war rooms, and even to the Digital Age of email and text messaging, manual processes for lead generation have remained unchanged until the advent of marketing automation tools in the 1990s. Today, demand generation campaigns are essential to filling the lead pipeline for global organizations. Marketing automation tools such as Marketo, Pardot and Eloqua drive the demand generation engine. They provide capabilities to manage, execute and track marketing campaigns, such as eblasts, and provide in-depth reports on emails received, returned, opened and clicked through. In addition, their lead scoring capabilities are designed to help salespersons prioritize their time by focusing only on the leads that show the highest propensity to buy.

Automating the lead generation phase of the sales cycle has liberated sales people from knocking on doors, making hundreds of cold calls or generating endless emails to prospects to uncover new leads. Today, marketing organizations use automated tools to push thousands of leads out to sales teams daily. But in the next phase of the sales cycle, automation grinds to a halt. In the sales conversion phase of lead management, sales teams still must personally contact each lead – using time-consuming, manual processes – either in person, by phone or by email to engage, nurture and qualify the lead.

Despite the proven benefits of marketing automation, the sales process is still broken, and there is a clear disconnect between marketing and sales teams. Yet they share the same goal of making lead-gathering more efficient, increasing the number of qualified leads, and converting them to sales. While marketing is meeting its goal of providing a large volume of leads, sales teams struggle to meet their quotas because they are not receiving the high quality, prequalified leads they want and need.

There is a clear need for automating the lead-chasing phase of the sales lifecycle. Many marketing processes have been automated and applications such as Salesforce have streamlined the management of the sales process. However, to date, there has not been an automated solution that helps sales chase down and verify the purchase intent of leads. What has been missing is a smarter, automated way to help sales teams make the sales conversion phase more efficient – contacting, engagement, nurturing, qualifying and following-up – after marketing hands off the leads.

Another missing element has been the ability to generate ongoing, automated, two-way communication between salespeople and leads, as well as the ability for leads to respond to email messages generated by the system. Despite their lead scoring strengths, marketing automation systems cannot identify a lead's intent to purchase in real time and alert sales as to the best time to call – or not to call at all. And lastly, what happens to the leads that are scored too low by the system? How can sales be sure that it is not missing out on leads who intend to do business with them today?

This white paper will clarify how a sales conversion management solution for automating lead contact, engagement, nurturing, prioritizing, qualification and follow-up represents the missing piece of a complete lead management cycle. It will discuss the advantages of adding an automated sales conversion management solution to increase the effectiveness and return on investment of customer relationship management (CRM) applications such as Salesforce and marketing automation solutions such as Marketo, Pardot and Eloqua. As a result, enterprises can bridge the gap between marketing, inside sales and sales by improving the quality of lead handoff, so sales reps can spend less time chasing leads and more time focusing on selling and closing prequalified buyers with intent to purchase.

What marketing automation can and cannot do

The age of online marketing has become a huge challenge for sales teams, who must manage a deluge of inbound leads pouring in daily. It is difficult, if not impossible, for sales organizations to respond to all of the leads – and as a result many hot leads are never contacted and the company misses out on potential revenue.

Enter marketing automation systems, which are primarily designed to support sales and marketing teams by automating high-touch, repetitive processes for lead generation, nurturing, qualification and lead scoring. These automated tools capture click-through rates and other information about the behavior of campaign leads, such as tracking who visited the campaign landing page to request additional information, watch a demo, view a price list, register for a webinar, or download collateral. Based on campaign interaction and what type of information is accessed, the automated system scores the lead and determines the person's propensity to buy. If the lead scores high, the marketing team assigns it to the sales organization as a hot lead.

If leads receive a low score – the system determines that the prospect was just looking, wanted to learn about best practices or doing product research – then sales will not receive that lead. Marketing may continue to nurture such leads with email blasts or drip campaigns until the marketing automation system scores the lead high enough to hand off to sales.

One drawback, however, is that marketing automation tools do not truly qualify the intent of each lead. Although marketing automation providers often claim the ability to qualify leads, the information they can gather is limited since the tools do not enable two-way communication. As a result, marketing funnels over a large volume of leads that still must be manually contacted, engaged and qualified by the sales team.

Unfortunately, cold calling in the Digital Age is not as effective as it used to be. Statistics from a 2011 study from Baylor University's Keller Center for Research show that out of 6,264 calls placed during a two-week period:

- 17 percent were non-working numbers, 55 percent were not answered
- 28 percent of the calls were answered
- Of the 1,774 answered calls, 91 percent were not interested
- Agents generated 19 appointments and received 11 referrals
- Agents had to make 209 calls to obtain one appointment or referral
- Overall success rate for the calling effort was 0.5 percent (30 appointments and referrals/6,264 calls placed)

The problem is that leads screen phone calls. While contacting leads via email is less intrusive and annoying than phone calls, inside sales reps cannot keep up with responding personally to the increasing volume of incoming leads during business hours. Autoresponder email programs can fill in the gaps, but do so at the cost of being perceived as spam. As a result, the lack of an automated way to personally connect and engage with leads to qualify their intent has made sales conversion tedious and ineffective. Fortunately, a new paradigm of automated sales conversion management solves these challenges and enables personalized, two-way email conversations with leads 24/7.

The missing piece: An automated sales conversion management platform

Focused on the critical phase of identifying interest when it changes to intent to purchase, automated sales conversion programs driven by artificial intelligence (AI) complement and increase the effectiveness of marketing automation systems, not replace them. More than just an add-on program, an automated sales conversion management platform intelligently interprets email text, responds appropriately in conversational style and assists busy sales teams. By addressing the missing piece of automation in the sales cycle, sales conversion management has great potential to revolutionize how marketing, inside sales and sales organizations interact with leads and customers.

An automated sales conversion management platform can work behind the scenes and requires very little user interaction or IT maintenance. Using a unique framework for optimizing text classification, the AI component of the platform interprets the person's intent based on the wording in the lead's emails – and no human interaction is required. Depending on the text interpretation, the sales conversion management software follows up with messaging appropriate to the response, and/or sends an alert to the salesperson to call the customer, or stops the conversation altogether. Essentially, this solution creates a two-way, personalized conversation between the lead and the company's sales team rather than a one-way blast of information.

Most importantly, the sales conversion management software crafts email messages in response to the initial information request that sound as if they are coming from a live human, not a canned autoresponder. The program uses a friendly, colloquial style, and the messages that do not contain graphics or links as autoresponders typically do. As the conversation continues, the AI component of the platform becomes more confident in responding to repeated data or phrases, and as a result, it can interpret the customer's mood or intent more accurately and determine the right time to alert sales to make contact.

Enhance the value of marketing automation with intent

The most challenging phase of the sales cycle is identifying intent to purchase – the moment when a lead decides to take action to purchase and converts to an opportunity. Sales conversion management takes time-consuming, inefficient human intervention out of the equation by intelligently automating the engagement, nurturing, qualification, hand-off, and follow-up of all leads, regardless of volume or type.

If today's leading marketing automation tools have a blind spot, it is that they do not provide an automated way for salespeople to identify intent of the highly scored leads generated by the tools. While some advanced marketing automation systems have text-based follow-up drip campaigns, these emails appear to come from an autoresponder and risk being ignored or not opened by leads. In addition, leads cannot respond to drip campaign emails, so that opportunity for sales to connect and engage them is lost.

A sales conversion management solution complements the lead scoring capabilities of marketing automation systems by introducing another layer of automated processing designed to make salespeople more efficient. In addition, use of a human persona enhances the lead engagement

experience and motivates leads to respond with their intentions and, often, provide additional information about their needs or concerns. Whether the automated sales conversion management solution is used to respond to only the high scoring leads, re-engage old leads, or work all inbound leads, it can significantly accelerate the time to respond and make leads feel as if they are important to the company. Overall, this solution enhances the value of marketing automation tools by adding the ability to:

- Create automated, two-way email-based communication with leads using a human persona
- Obtain lead contact information automatically, such as the best number to reach them
- Determine the lead's intent in real-time by interpreting text in the email response
- Alert the salesperson to contact qualified leads who indicate intention to buy now
- Follow up after the salesperson's initial contact to continue to nurture the lead and request additional information or feedback

In addition, automated sales conversion management software can be easily modified to fit specific business needs. The platform is designed to send a personalized, timely email response to all inbound leads so that no leads fall through the cracks. However, it can be configured to respond to only those leads that have been scored high by the marketing automation system. But with that flexibility comes a caveat. Low-scoring leads still represent potential buyers who indicated interest by clicking through to a price list or requesting more information. By not contacting them, companies risk missing out on engaging leads with serious intent to buy – and potential sales. By adding sales conversion management on top of the marketing automation system, companies can easily and efficiently both confirm the level of interest for all leads, and most importantly, determine their intent in real time.

Benefits for a new era of sales conversion management

Using marketing automation tools in tandem with an automated sales conversion management solution delivers many advantages: marketing, inside sales and sales organizations can collaborate more effectively, save time, and focus on engaging and closing sales with leads that are ready to buy now.

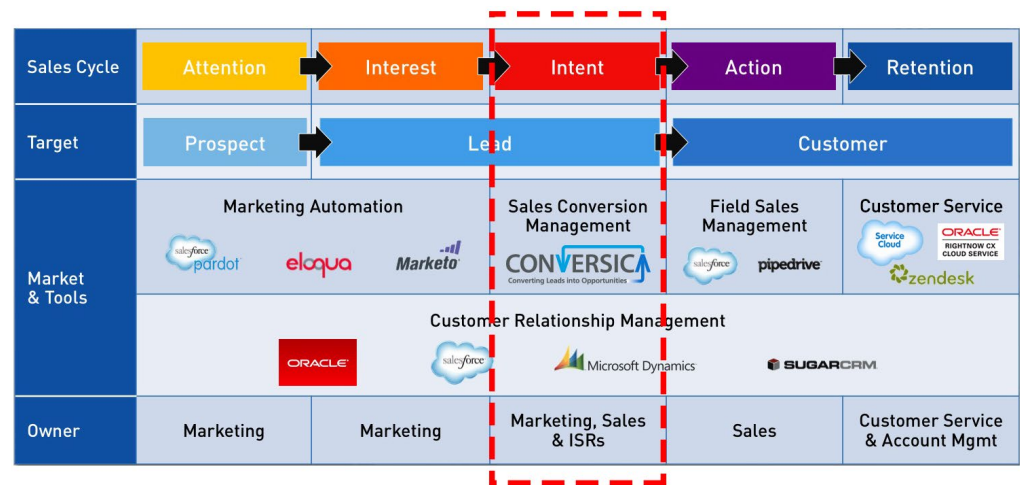
- **Marketing**
Integrated with marketing automation tools, a sales conversion management solution can work to bridge the gap between marketing and sales to create a more cohesive sales effort. A human persona on an automated platform can respond to inbound leads 24/7 and identify intent so that marketing hands off only the leads that show intent and request to speak with a salesperson. As a result, marketing can assign sales only the highest quality leads and sales can spend more time closing deals.
- **Sales**
By tapping into today's Internet and social media sources along with traditional channels, marketing funnels an increasingly large volume of leads to overwhelmed sales teams. Sales conversion management solutions can effectively prioritize leads so sales can quickly identify which ones are hot and qualified.

Adding sales conversion management to marketing automation solutions can help businesses:

- **Identify intent in real time** – Marketing automation tools rely on capturing campaign interaction to interpret a lead’s propensity to buy. AI-driven sales conversion management platforms add a layer of lead qualification to identify intent in real time. Similar to written confirmation that they want a quote or demo, leads tell the platform’s human persona that they want a salesperson to call, when, and at what phone number.
- **Increase proactive communication with leads** – Marketing automation systems are excellent at demand generation through email blasts, drip campaigns, and other automated email communication. An automated sales conversion management solution takes this one-way communication to the next level by engaging leads in two-way communication via natural, conversational emails from a human persona.
- **Engage and nurture throughout the complete customer lifecycle** – Automated sales conversion management enhances the demand generation benefits of marketing automation by enabling two-way communication between sales and leads across the entire lead lifecycle. Because leads perceive that they are being contacted by a real person, they are more likely to respond with their intentions, and later provide valuable feedback on the sales experience. The platform can also drive continual engagement and nurturing of existing customers through sales campaigns and customer care communications.

Introducing Conversica

Conversica is a next-generation sales conversion management platform driven by artificial intelligence for marketing, inside sales and sales organizations. Conversica provides the missing piece of automation for the final stages of the sales cycle so that marketing can assign sales only the highest quality leads. Presented as a customized human persona, Conversica uses artificial intelligence to nurture leads from interest to intent through natural, two-way email exchanges and automatically sends alerts when a qualified lead intends to make a purchase.



Conversica brings efficiency to the sales conversion management phase of the sales cycle by:

- Engaging the lead and getting a response to validate intent and eliminate cold leads
- Connecting the hot leads to sales in real time, so that the leads are expecting the salesperson's call
- Following up with leads that were handed off to sales to determine if the potential customer received a salesperson's call and the information requested

Unlike autoresponders or unsuccessful cold calling, Conversica increases engagement and automatically collects information, qualifies interest, and ultimately improves conversions for any number of daily leads 24/7. With a high engagement rate, Conversica will significantly increase the number of qualified leads assigned to sales reps, potentially increasing sales. Critically, sales organizations will save hundreds of hours each year by not chasing dead-end leads. Sales reps will become more effective because they can prioritize their leads and focus on those that intend to purchase. Conversica also closes the loop between lead generation and sales conversion by providing metrics on lead follow-up and response rates, so that no lead is ever dropped.

Conversica is most cost-effective when purchased as a yearly subscription and is a cloud-based application so no onsite installations and upgrades are required. Conversica will work as a stand-alone system or can be integrated with your CRM application. Implementation can be completed in hours, depending on customer requirements. In addition, Conversica can be accessed by any mobile device.

Pardot and Conversica help attract new customers

A leading cyber security company with a global client base uses the Conversica sales conversion management platform with the Pardot marketing automation system. Company managers report that the combination has helped the sales team connect with and qualify more leads across various types of campaigns – and gain seven new customers in just the first few weeks.

Conclusion

The reality is that sales organizations do not expect marketing to provide them with a larger quantity of leads, but rather, they want higher quality leads. Today's marketing automation tools focus on increasing lead quantity, not quality. Sales teams want high quality leads that they can contact and engage quickly to convert to opportunities, and ultimately, closed sales.

Incorporating a sales conversion management platform such as Conversica alongside marketing automation solutions or CRM applications provides the missing piece to automate the critical phase of the sales cycle and create a more robust and complete approach to lead management. Conversica and a marketing automation system complement each other to become an end-to-end solution that covers CRM, demand generation and sales conversion management. Most importantly, Conversica takes on the 24/7 job of contacting, engaging, nurturing, prioritizing and qualifying every inbound lead so that none of them are ever lost. As a result, marketing, inside sales and sales organizations can become more productive and efficient, while companies gain greater return on investment with their automated marketing systems.

For more information

See for yourself how Conversica is revolutionizing sales conversion management. To learn more call +1 (888) 778 1004, email sales@conversica.com or visit www.conversica.com to set up a product demonstration.

About Conversica

Conversica is the only provider of sales conversion management software for marketing, inside sales and sales organizations. Presented as a customized online persona, Conversica engages and nurtures leads through natural email exchanges until the lead converts into an opportunity or opts out. Conversica is used by more than 7,500 sales representatives worldwide and has assisted in the creation of more than US\$7.6 billion in sales revenue.

Founded in 2007, Conversica is now a portfolio company of Kennet Partners and is headquartered in Foster City, California. To learn more, visit www.conversica.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Google+](#), [YouTube](#), and @myconversica on [Twitter](#).