

REPORT REPRINT

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Backflipt applies machine learning and intelligent automation to sales engagement

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Software for sales teams is moving beyond systems of record and into systems of engagement. While many businesses today have primarily invested in systems of record, such as sales force automation (SFA), customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning, these systems are essential for managing internal operational processes. Now, companies must complement systems of record with systems of engagement for sales enablement that improves sales representatives' effectiveness during customer-facing interactions. As a result, disruptive tools that enable a sales representative to target the right accounts with the right dynamic content and guidance are essential.

The B2B buyers' journeys can be complex, demanding digital strategies similar to those of their B2C counterparts to help the sales engagement process. Buyers conduct their research across a multitude of touchpoints before making decisions. Sales organizations have been pursuing the optimal sales process since the beginning of time. As technology has evolved, options have emerged to help smooth out and fill gaps in the sales process.

THE 451 TAKE

Backflipit differentiates itself by its machine learning algorithms that analyze data and context of customer preferences and interests from emails, recommend contextually relevant content and detect new events that provide opportunities to escalate customer engagement. Its ability to draw on the strengths of third-party tools via integrations that are already a staple for sales teams can help it secure its place in everyday workflows. While there has been a lot of attention on the top of the funnel through marketing automation and account-based marketing, the industry is now ripe to flip spending toward money-optimizing activities at the bottom of the funnel. However, it's a crowded marketplace. Differentiating on machine-learning algorithms is increasingly difficult as everyone rushes to embed intelligence into the software stack. While data shows that sales operations spending budgets have increased, Backflipit will still need to fight for a seat at the table.

CONTEXT

Backflipit is funded by CEO Ram Kumar Jayam and other executives. Jayam, along with other Backflipit executives, funded and ran a few other successful companies before this one. Prior investments include Apere, acquired by Citrix for SSO and user lifecycle management, and Adaptec, which acquired Platys Communications for \$150m for iSCSI. The team uses its extensive network of advisors, entrepreneurs and executives to build the businesses and partners with growth capital firms to scale the operations. Backflipit's current area of focus is part of the sales technology landscape, which applies machine-learning algorithms to learn customer preferences in order to provide sales with recommended content and prescriptive guidance dynamically into customer email conversations. Backflipit brings an easy-to-use offering for medium enterprises, which sometimes can't afford long implementation cycles.

A common problem in improving marketing and sales effectiveness is the inability not just to find the relevant marketing content, but also to use the content effectively to improve prospect engagement. The industry is now noticing that mere records of sales interactions and relevant contact information for use by managers is giving way to software to assist in landing sales. New subcategories are emerging to enable sales teams to deliver content, provide analytic insight into the sales process and improve actual sales engagement. The goal is to present context-driven content that is relevant to prospects during the buying cycle. Elements also include the ability to track and close the sales and marketing loop to provide prospect and seller engagement feedback insight.

PRODUCTS

Backflip focuses on intelligent selling by nurturing opportunities and automatically recommending products of interest. Through integration with email systems such as Outlook, Exchange and Gmail, its self-learning algorithms analyze customer email conversations and content and then trigger recommended next best actions based on the real-time events.

Using machine-learning algorithms, Backflip connects and analyzes content repositories that reside in disparate locations across the enterprise. It connects to cloud services such as ShareFile, OneDrive, Box, Dropbox and Salesforce, along with premises-based repositories such as Microsoft SharePoint, Alfresco and others depending on API availability. It builds a graph of customer conversations with related interests and suggests a list of customers with whom to engage whenever new contextually relevant content is available. Customer recommendations save time and provide qualified reasons to engage in conversations.

The learning engine tracks customer preferences and interests from emails and analyzes content to match customer interests. The product automatically detects and acts on events such as new conversations and availability of new content based on current sales stage. By learning from customer conversations and analyzing the prescribed content, Backflip recommends an actionable list of opportunities to engage with on the product content changes. For example, prescriptive guidance of a list of customers based on new marketing content, product collateral, or case study that has been updated within specific content repositories.

Backflip has four different methodologies in its content-matching capabilities: lemmatize, frequency, similarity and feedback.

- *Lemmatization* groups inflected forms of words so they can be analyzed as a single item and is useful as a pre-processing step for understanding and using natural language techniques to analyze text.
- *Frequency* analyzes words appearing with high frequency to imply a strong relationship with a topic in the document, which suggests higher probability of contextual relevance to the audience.
- The *similarity* algorithm helps ensure accuracy of additional relevant documents with a high degree of accuracy.
- Last, Backflip's *feedback* algorithm continually learns from user behavior through acceptance of suggestions that form the root basis for the future comparisons of new data. It is accomplished dynamically across all conversations and all repositories.

Since Backflip is the glue between content repositories and email, it acts as the automated workflow gathering contextual product content into customer email conversations for sales representatives' use in email. Additionally, Team View sits as a component either in an opportunity management system such as Salesforce, email system or within Backflip to provide adjacent contextual information about the prospect and can also act as a collaboration mechanism with subject matter experts.

COMPETITION

The market is fragmented, with more than 1,000 vendors addressing some form of sales intelligence, enablement and automation. However, Backflip competes most directly with email tools such as Cirrus Insight (Cirruspath), ContactMonkey, LeadGenius, LiveHive and Outreach. However, most of these tools are email-tracking tools and do not provide deep intelligence on content recommendations for the email.

Other competitors could be considered partners such as Alinean, bigtincan, Bloomfire, ClearSlide, Docurated, Highspot, SAVO, Seismic and Showpad. These companies provide different approaches to sales-enablement tools. For sales content and engagement, the tools vary in breadth of the toolset, depth of advanced functionality for dynamic content and playbooks, coaching and level of analytics based on engagement data across communication channels. Customers should look for integration with other systems to deliver the right balance of automation, insight and enablement.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Backflipt fills a gap today in many CRM tools by connecting the disparate content that is rampant within enterprises to the sales engagement process. Its machine-learning algorithms' depth adds value in a sea change toward applying intelligence for sales effectiveness.

WEAKNESSES

It is not a broad sales enablement platform, which has feature-rich content, coaching and engagement offered by the likes of SAVO or Seismic. While it does have partnership and integration capabilities, Backflipt still may compete for similar space in the market.

OPPORTUNITIES

There is plenty of opportunity in the midmarket for an easy-to-deploy sales engagement offering. CRM systems like Salesforce and Microsoft are great systems of records, but they don't manage content effectively. While one can use it to house content, that majority of content today sits in many different content repositories. There is a need to intelligently link to it and recommend the right content at the right time with the right tool to improve sales engagement.

THREATS

The company is in startup mode, trying to differentiate with AI as everyone rushes to embed intelligence into the software stack. Backflipt will still need to fight for a seat at the table in a very crowded and competitive market.