



## Houston, We Have a Solution

How the country's seventh largest newspaper instilled a culture of collaboration into its recruitment ad team and became a model for the rest of the industry

**Customer:**

The Houston Chronicle, Recruitment Ad Sales

**Challenge:**

No CRM in Place with Growing Need to Serve Market

**Customer Base:**

300 to 400 Accounts

**Sales Reps:**

10

**Implementation**

**Date:**

July, 2005

**Features in Use:**

- Lead and Account Management
- Filtering for Targeting
- Call Logging
- Reports and Performance Analytics
- Email and Telesales Campaigns
- Automatic Call List Assignment
- WANTED Technologies Integration
- Billing Data Feeds

The Houston Chronicle is growing. The Hearst publication has the second highest daily and Sunday readership penetration or market reach percentage among the country's largest designated market area (DMA) according to a 2005 Scarborough Research report — second only to the Washington Post.

The Houston metropolitan area is growing as well. According to its market and readership report, the city is the third most popular city for companies on the move and the second most for expansions and relocations. Houston also features a DMA population of over five million and features a growth rate that's double the national average.

What does this have to do about selling recruitment ads? Simple math: more companies with more jobs need more people, so they run more ads.

Like most newspapers, however, the Chronicle had fairly traditional recruitment sales processes and tools. That means the sales team moved with little orchestration and reps were left drifting on their own. There wasn't an adequate command center to take care of the unstructured communication processes.

For ad managers like Brad Sherman, that involved a lot of verbal hunting and hounding for information about lead and account status, as well as rounding up data together in Microsoft Excel to attempt to build a picture of revenues and forecasts for his executives. "There was nothing in place," says Sherman. "We have 300 to 400 accounts, with 10 salespeople actively engaging 65 - 75 clients at any given moment — and advertisers are a dynamic bunch whose requirements change quickly. Without a way to centrally track calls or emails, you never knew what was going on without a lot of legwork."

### Ground Control for Major Chron

In search for an answer, Recruitment Director Michael Dawes, met Relationals CEO Pankaj Malviya at a Newspaper Association of America (NAA) conference and saw value in the Relationals Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution.

This new way of thinking about sales processes made sense. A CRM would allow the Chronicle to centralize their customer data, provide a structured method to organize information about customer engagements, streamline reporting, and provide a conve-



*Brad Sherman and his team have led the charge at the Houston Chronicle to strengthen their sales processes and improve productivity*

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nient way to communicate and re-market to their base. They could be proactive and smart about targeting, campaigning and following up.

The Chronicle reviewed various CRM vendors including Green Beacon, Siebel, Salesforce.com and Dovarri, and ultimately chose Relationals. “Relationals had a clear advantage because their platform and expertise was established in the media and newspaper advertising space,” says Sherman. “You combine that with a willingness of their support and development teams to tune the system to the unique needs of the Chronicle, and we’ve never had a reason to look back.”

### **Successful Takeoff**

Since implementing Relationals CRM, the Chronicle recruitment team has seen an increase in revenue of about eight percent. “Obviously you need to attribute part of that to having a strong sales team,” adds Sherman. “But Relationals enables good salespeople to be really great salespeople by allowing them to be more productive and to focus on the selling effort, rather than administrative tasks. Relationals is a significant timesaver and makes both reps and managers more efficient in collaboration and communications.”

Communications across the sales team is vital at the Chronicle. Two of the 10 sales reps focus strictly on new business, and once that first transaction is complete, they hand the account off to one of the other eight reps for future relationships. Relationals’ 360° view of account records, activities, contracts, ad buys, and calls and contacts made, streamline the handoff process and ensures the continuing connection to that customer.

Relationals also enables Sherman’s team to be more strategic when they’re not selling. “In our one-on-one meetings, data recorded into Relationals lets us analyze what’s going right, wrong, and the next steps, rather than simply what’s going on.”

Those next steps are also facilitated through Relationals, as reps can quickly filter account and lead data to pinpoint targets for approach, including re-solicitation to neglected or cold leads. “When we first started using the campaigning features in Relationals, reps would run their own mini-campaigns as they needed to,” explains Sherman. “Now we’ve involved the marketing team and it’s become more strategic, for example where we might target specific industries and have a complete campaign going out to them or campaign around a job fair. Relationals also lets us quickly automate ‘send-and-phone’ campaigns where our reps can follow up when the prospect has read the email.”

Of course, there’s always more to do. “The next logical step for us would be to start measuring the effectiveness of those campaigns and tune them accordingly, but right now we’ve seen a result in the thousands of additional sales. We’re also investigating other systems indirectly related to sales operations that we can feed into Relationals so it can become our sales portal.”

### **The View from Above**

The Chronicle recruitment team’s success has also gotten the attention of the paper and its parent publisher Hearst Publications. Relationals has led to newspaper-wide adoption for the entire advertising organization, including its retail, classifieds and display teams, amounting to over 200 users. Additionally, Hearst Publications is in the process of rolling out Relationals from a corporate level to all 12 of its newspaper properties.

“It’s really been a great year and a half,” says Sherman. “We’ve really grown with Relationals, and while it might be a bit of a culture shock internally and within the industry, we’ve proven that this is a solution that works.”



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