

SUCCESS STORIES



INDUSTRY CASE STUDY ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

CLIENT PROFILE:

Gaines Kriner Elliott (GKE) is a CPA and business advisory firm based in Amherst NY. In May of 2008, GKE developed an initiative to more aggressively approach the market with their services.

CHALLENGE:

Marketing for accounting firms typically involves networking activities and market programs focused on awareness and branding. GKE's marketing activities were not generating a steady volume of qualified sales opportunities necessary to fill offseason (non-tax) capacity. In the accounting industry, if you don't fill offseason capacity, you lose money.

New business development activities are a primary responsibility of partners, who must also service their customers' demands. Thus, the partners' time available to execute new sales activities was constrained. GKE needed a structured process that could generate a steady stream of opportunities into their pipeline, and compress the partner sales cycle, while increasing brand awareness and linking marketing to sales return on investment (ROI).

The partners had to decide whether to invest the time and overhead to create a marketing process that would enable them to accomplish their sales goals, or outsource the function to a company that could deliver immediate results.

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Gaines Kriner Elliott experiences increased sales throughput by leveraging Athena's RAMP marketing process

GKE enlisted the help of Athena SWC, to execute a comprehensive marketing campaign that would focus on stabilizing their pipeline, increasing partner sales productivity, and producing the desired return on investment (sales throughput).

Athena SWC executed their Synchronized Relationship Acquisition and Management Program (RAMP), targeting companies in multiple industries throughout Western New York, with greater than \$10 million in revenue.

Within three months of partnering with Athena SWC, GKE finalized a \$50,000 annual business services contract with a major manufacturer, which is **50%** faster than their normal close ratio. In addition, they had an infusion of \$36,000 of potential new revenue into their active sales cycles.

Rocco Surace, GKE's Managing Partner, added, *"We started to see evidence of significant return on investment within a 45-60 day period."*

Athena's Synchronized RAMP solution brought a targeted, repeatable, and measurable process for generating qualified sales opportunities and injecting them into partners' sales cycles. The process provided a way for the GKE marketing department to measure quantitative ROI (sales throughput) of new business services.

The process allows much more productive use of partners time. Time that

Sales Process



historically has been spent in developing leads is now spent with clients. The RAMP process enabled partners to enter the sales cycle, when prospects were interested and ready to begin evaluating their need for services. This allowed partners to focus on closing new deals (compressing the sales cycle) and solving problems with clients.

Athena SWC created an infrastructure that allowed the new marketing department to consistently and proactively touch the market to create appropriate brand awareness, gather market intelligence, and keep the pipeline stabilized to combat the impact of seasonality.

Mr. Surace said, *"We believe that we are the first in our region to take advantage of this proven methodology and we are confident that this process provides us with a strategic competitive advantage within our target market."*