

Using Telemarketing to Support Marketing Campaigns

By BNET Editorial

published on BNET.com 9/28/2007

Telemarketing can be an effective tool for increasing sales and customer response rates. Customers often find it simple and convenient to do business over the phone.

When incorporating telemarketing into your sales program, take a systemic approach, using it to enhance other sales and marketing programs. Telemarketing provides opportunities to increase sales and customer contact, improve service levels, conduct quick, cost-effective customer research, and reduce overall marketing costs.

What You Need to Know

Can I use telemarketing instead of a traditional sales force?

In most cases it will be more effective to combine sales force and telemarketing activities. Eliminating your sales force completely would be a drastic move, particularly in businesses where face-to-face contact is important or where the sales process is prolonged or complex. Telemarketing may be appropriate substitute for direct sales in companies that sell low-value products.

What are the benefits of using an external telemarketing company?

An external telemarketing company will offer your customers an extremely professional sales experience. Customers should not notice any difference, since the company would be fully briefed on your products, company, processes, and standards.

Is it advisable to use telemarketing to conduct customer research?

There are pros and cons to using telemarketing to conduct customer research. The main risk is that customers will doubt the research's independence or objectivity, or they might think you are trying to sell something. However, using telemarketing can make conducting research quicker and easier.

What to Do

Approach Telemarketing Systemically

Be sure to approach telemarketing systemically when you plan your marketing program. Telephone contact is best used to increase the effectiveness of other sales and marketing efforts.

Take Orders

Customers find placing orders over the telephone more convenient than filling in and sending forms. Using telemarketing in this way also increases order speed and accuracy.

Access New Customers

There are customers you may be able to reach through telemarketing who would be inaccessible or too expensive to reach through other methods. You can therefore use telephone contact to broaden your sales reach while at the same time reducing administration costs.

Increase Response Rates

Offering customers a toll-free number they can call will make them more likely to respond to your marketing efforts. Monitoring and evaluating customer response rates will assist you in planning future efforts.

Conduct Customer Research

Conducting customer research interviews on the telephone is much quicker and more cost-effective than doing so in person. Information gathered through help lines, customer service centers, and telesales calls can also provide useful research data for analysis.

Conduct Rapid Market Testing

You can develop telephone marketing campaigns to evaluate marketing and promotional strategies on a small scale before moving forward with a full campaign.

Support Your Sales Force

There are many ways you can use telemarketing to support your sales force and increase their productivity. For instance, telemarketing staff can help follow up on sales leads, set up appointments, or establish good prospects. These “pre-qualifying” activities then allow the sales force to focus on face-to-face meetings or other direct contact with top prospects.

Increase Contact with Customers

Telemarketers can make courtesy calls to add a personal touch and increase your customer contact. These calls can be used to get feedback, offer additional products, or just thank customers for their business.

Provide Customer Service

One common use of telemarketing is to provide a number for customers to call where they can report problems and complaints. These helplines show customers you care about their issues and can help resolve their technical difficulties.

Integrate Campaign Support

Telemarketing is most effective when it is integrated with other sales and marketing efforts. This helps ensure consistent, high-quality customer service on every contact, whether it be face-to-face, online, or by telephone. Integrated marketing efforts will:

- ensure effective campaigns
- increase customer retention rates
- improve customer profitability
- cultivate high-profit customers

- maximize your return on investment

Reduce Costs

Telemarketing can help reduce your overall marketing costs, especially if you've relied on a traditional, on-the-road sales force in the past. Using a traditional sales force is not always the most cost-effective way to reach people. Many people prefer doing business by telephone, so sometimes you can meet customers' needs with a telemarketing team. Then, refocus your sales force to work on prospects that require face-to-face meetings. Remember to set monitor costs and progress, so that you can evaluate your campaign's effectiveness over time.

Provide Customer Follow Up

Telemarketing can be used to double your sales effort for profitable customer groups by conducting direct marketing first, followed by a telephone follow-up call. The telephone contact offers cost savings over face-to-face meetings, and many customers prefer telephone contact to face-to-face contact anyway.

Increase Sales and Marketing Resources

If your company has limited marketing staff, using an external telemarketing firm can help increase the resources available to you. You can pull in support to run a fully integrated marketing campaign, without hiring and training new employees. This may help you get new products to market in the shortest possible time. Most external firms offer extremely high standards of customer service. Staff are thoroughly trained in your company's products, and they serve as professional representatives of your company.

Evaluate Telemarketing Efforts

It is always important to measure the effectiveness of your marketing efforts, including telemarketing. This will help you in planning your future campaigns. Information you can analyze to evaluate telemarketing efforts include:

- campaign response rates
- regional call patterns

- call flow patterns
- help line inquiries
- customer requests

What to Avoid

You Duplicate Marketing Efforts

Take care not to duplicate your efforts by having telemarketing staff and your sales force do the same things. This decreases your marketing effectiveness and can be annoying to customers if they are contacted multiple times, by different people, for the same reason. Plan carefully, so that sales and telemarketing efforts are integrated to increase sales and make the most efficient use of resources.

You Fail to Measure Effectiveness

Telemarketing provides a great deal of valuable information, which can enable you to monitor campaigns or identify sales and marketing trends. Continually evaluating this data is important to ensure effectiveness and assist with future campaign planning.

You Fail to Integrate Telemarketing with Other Marketing Efforts

Telemarketing provides many opportunities for increased sales and marketing support, but there are many reasons that companies may fail to use it to support their marketing efforts in a fully integrated way. For instance, the sales force may be suspicious of telemarketing efforts, or incentive and commission programs may discourage full integration. It is important to take time to overcome these barriers to have a fully integrated and effective marketing program.

Where to Learn More

Books:

Bodin, Madeline and Keith Dawson. *The Call Center Dictionary: The Complete Guide to Call Center and Customer Support Technology Solutions*. 3rd ed. New York: CMP Books, 2004.

Linchitz, Joel. The Complete Guide to Telemarketing Management. New York: PFS Press, 2000.

Web Site:

Contact Center World: www.contactcenterworld.com

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