

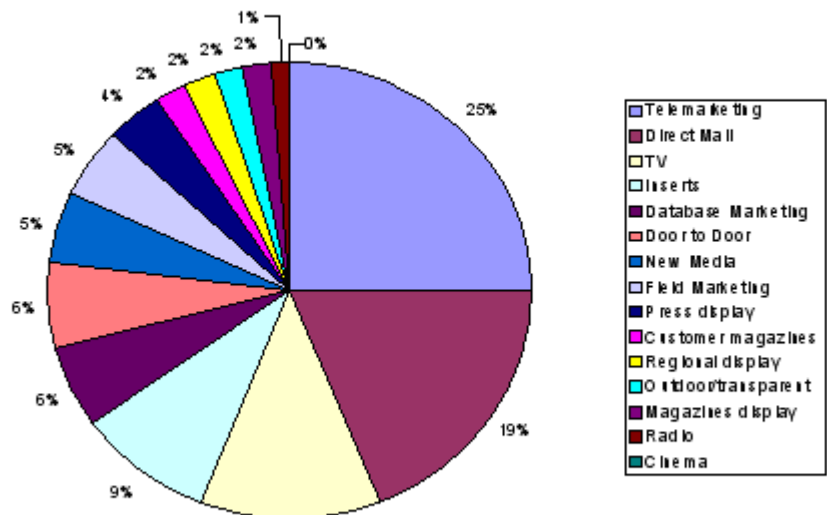
Topic:
Telemarketing

B2B Telemarketing Part 1. What Can It Offer You?

iCAD is produced by Business Advantage, a B2B research, business development and marketing consulting practice operating in the global IT, Digital and Telecommunication sectors.

This is the first of a two-part look at telemarketing in the business-to-business (B2B) sector. In this issue we put telemarketing into the context of other marketing initiatives, we define the term and then examine some of its uses in the B2B arena. In the next issue we look in more detail at what needs to be in place to really make your telemarketing project successful, whether to outsource it or keep it in-house, the legal issues and some real-life case studies of companies who have been there and done it.

It's a marketing conundrum that the telephone offers the most direct method of getting through to potential customers, but also has the greatest capacity to irritate them. The volume of telemarketing is increasing year upon year and now accounts for a quarter of the total annual advertising expenditure in the UK.



Expenditure Share by Medium
Source: The DMA Research Center/Advertising Association
Base: 2004

It stands to reason therefore that your own telemarketing campaign must be highly targeted and professional to get results. Failure in one or both of these areas can result in wasted resources and damaged business reputations. So where and how can B2B telemarketing actually work for you?



Autumn 2005

What Is Telemarketing?

While telemarketing tends to be most strongly associated with thick skinned individuals hammering their way through a list in search of sales leads, it is actually a very broad term that applies to a multiplicity of both inbound and outbound telephone marketing. The telemarketing industry in the UK was worth around £4.25 billion in 2003 according to the Direct Marketing Association. The significant growth in activity over the last 10 years is due largely to the huge increase in the number of call centres handling high volume inbound and outbound business/consumer calls. This work includes for example, handling responses to an advertising campaign, or calling existing customers to offer additional services. Generally a differing set of skills are required for inbound and outbound telemarketing, but this article concentrates on the latter, which tends to involve a wider range of selling skills.

B2B Telemarketing: Where Can It Work?

Telemarketing can form an integral part of a sales and marketing campaign, either as a tool for gathering the data that will be the foundation for your direct marketing approaches, as a follow up to other forms of direct marketing, or as an up-front weapon for identifying your best sales prospects. The most common functions of B2B outbound telemarketing include:

Improving marketing data: at a basic level this may include gathering the contact details of decision makers and their usage of products and services relevant to your market, but further probing can deliver more in-depth information - perhaps on distribution channels for example.

Telecleaning your existing data: it's your data, but is it a valuable asset? Only if it's clean and accurate. A professional team of telemarketers can ensure that your data doesn't embarrass you or let you down.

Lead generation: using a team of dedicated telemarketers to do this tough, up-front work can make more cost-effective use of your often highly paid field sales or telesales executives by allowing them to focus on closing sales rather than chasing prospects.

Event planning: if you're investing money in marketing events - perhaps a seminar to introduce your company to likely sales prospects in your target market, or presenting a new product or service to potential customers - telemarketing is an effective way to ensure the right people turn up in the right numbers. This method is often used as a follow up to a targeted mailing.

Direct mail follow-up: telephone follow-up to mailings, be they snail or email, have proven to increase returns, by between three and seven times as much in some cases.



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Autumn 2005

Point of sale promotion: for those distributing products through multiple channels, regular contact with distributors or resellers has numerous benefits. It can ensure that they are familiar with your products and have the right marketing materials to sell them successfully, but can also achieve the difficult goal of keeping your product/service at the forefront of their minds.

Company profiling: this offers the opportunity to go beyond the type of superficial prospect data held by most businesses and gain a full understanding of how potential customers operate. Information on aspects such as their decision making processes and whom they currently purchase from enables much better tailoring of sales and marketing approaches.

Customer contact: while all of the above functions are relevant to existing and potential customers, there is scope for more creative uses of telemarketing that have particular relevance to previous/existing customers. For example: you've set up a new website - so call your customers to introduce them to this new way of doing business with them. Or if you change location or company name - as well as writing to your customers, call them - and perhaps take the opportunity to pass on new product information and/or a special offer.

In the next issue of *iCAD* we will address the question **Does Telemarketing work?**
And then we will look at how to make it work better.

If you have any questions about telemarketing please call David Eaton, of the Business Advantage Group Plc, on +44 (0)1689 873636.

Business Advantage has specialised in the provision of B2B telemarketing in the IT and telecommunications sectors since its inception in 1992. Telemarketing campaigns in the hi-tech sector have been conducted in the UK and throughout Europe and North America. Our ethos is simple when it comes to telemarketing: Quality first and guaranteed, quantity second!

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