



10 Tips for Highly Successful B2B Telemarketing

“If you don’t help your customers reach greater heights, who will? Your competitors?”

Don Schultz



White Paper

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Executive Summary

This white paper explains telemarketing best practice and presents the case for prospecting using specialist telemarketers so that your salespeople can spend 100% of their time selling and closing. The likely results: more revenue, more commission and more job satisfaction for your teams.



Key Tip:

"... successful B2B telemarketing hinges on really understanding your target audience and engaging with them on their interest level..."



"Thanks to Business Advantage and your team for all their efforts, the campaign has been a tremendous success."

Workstations Marketing Manager, IBM

In many B2B companies, sales reps 'should' make hundreds of cold calls every month to set appointments and/or generate leads. But busy reps usually prefer to work on closing their existing pipeline. Prospecting often slips on the priority list; as a result, the sales pipeline isn't always filled with new prospects.

Instead of forcing a sales team to devote time to prospecting, many companies use an in-house or outsourced telemarketing group to make a high volume of calls, find decision makers and qualify leads for the field sales group.

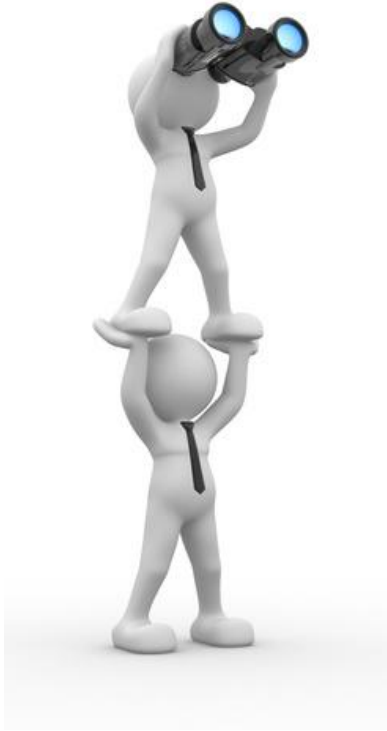
When telemarketers handle prospecting, salespeople can spend 100% of their time selling and closing. Your company can produce more revenue in the same amount of time; your reps earn more commission, they're doing what they love, and they're more satisfied with their jobs.

Since 1992, Business Advantage has been helping many leading IT vendors and their channel partners to qualify and generate leads for ongoing pipelines. We have delivered literally hundreds of highly successful B2B telemarketing campaigns. We have spoken to tens of thousands of senior decision makers across all business sectors. We thought you might benefit from the experience we have gained and we share the following with you in the hope that they will help avoid pitfalls and lead to better practice.

The central theme of this document is that successful B2B telemarketing hinges on really understanding your target audience and engaging with them on their interest level. This pivotal theme recurs throughout the following ten tips.

1. Take the Long View
2. Know your Audience; Define your Terms
3. Preparation Precedes Power
4. It's a Matter of Trust not Coercion
5. Don't get Caught Selling
6. Speak their Language, not yours!
7. Integrate it with your Other Media Channels
8. Be Open and Transparent
9. Just because it's B2B, don't Ignore Emotion
10. Once you've got the Baton; don't drop it!

1. TAKE THE LONG VIEW



“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Companies that do things consistently outperform those that don't. Telemarketing is best not thought of as a short-term tactic. Too many companies approach it hesitantly, warily, some jaundiced from previous encounters. Their commitment to it is questionable and their engagement half-hearted. All too often they will try it for a few days and then quickly turn away again, convinced that they were right all along and that the thing doesn't work. Of course they are right, when they attempt it like that, it invariably doesn't work.

B2B telemarketing works best when there is a long term, ongoing, consistent approach and when the long term value of the 'demand' generated and not the short term value of the 'lead' generated is at the forefront. Companies' interest in your business proposition requires nurturing over time. The purpose of B2B telemarketing is to take the 'prospect' on a journey of discovery, moving them from cold to warm to hot. Sometimes this can happen rapidly; most often it happens over a longer period of time. At first they may not even know who you are; it takes time for various senior business decision makers to learn how you are different from the rest.

Demand generation and nurturing imposes a need for you to be flexible in your approach and in the way you handle responses and enquiries. Sometimes the sheer complexity of the sales cycle means that you simply cannot expect them to concertina the decision making process conveniently into your third quarter figures. This is about medium to long term pipeline building not a short term sales fix. You have to take the long view.

2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE; DEFINE YOUR TERMS



Don't start a telemarketing campaign until you really understand the needs of your target audience. People are fed up with being 'sold at'. But they are interested in things that are important to them. So find out what's important to them. This may require that you first do some research.

When the needs of the target audience are understood and each facet of your value proposition has been carefully matched to those identified needs, then you can start thinking about doing some telemarketing.

But first you need to do some defining! Define clearly what an ideal customer is. How big in terms of people or revenue or installed base? Which sectors? This flows into defining what a lead is. How senior does the contact person need to be? How big does the opportunity need to be? How quickly do they need to be in purchase mode?



“Rule No. 1: Use your own good judgment in all situations. There will be no additional rules.”

Bruce, Jim and John
Nordstrom



“These sales leads were a highly cost-effective source of information, allowing us to get in front of some excellent prospects, with extremely successful results.”

CEO (CAD Division), Thom
Micro Systems

Know your audience better; define your terms precisely; obtain better outcomes.

3. PREPARATION PROCESS POWER

In our view it's all in the preparation. Skip that part of the process or unduly hurry it and the results will always be worse. Prepare carefully and you will have a powerful outcome.

Developing the script or topic guide is a crucial part of this preparation. It mustn't scream how good your company is but it must raise issues of importance to the target audience. **You can't really write the script until you understand the needs of the people you will be talking to.** Attention to detail is critical here.

Telemarketers must be so well trained and briefed that they can articulate your value proposition so well and so confidently that they in effect become surrogates of your own professional sales people. Incidentally, the value proposition is not a bunch of bullet points about how wonderful your company is and your products and services are. It's really about the difference you are going to make in your prospect's business. The telemarketers must be sufficiently seasoned that they can go off script and engage in conversation with senior respondents in such a way that your company's reputation is enhanced.

To achieve this requires an investment of your time in the training and briefing process. Make your self or one of your trusted and most accomplished sales people available for the telemarketers to role play on the telephone with you. The telemarketers' confidence will grow, as will yours in them, as you listen to how well they handle the calls.

4. IT'S A MATTER OF TRUST NOT COERCION

You would think telemarketing is all about talking; actually it's all about listening. Listening to what's troubling the prospect and then responding with a solution. **The best B2B telemarketers are not the loud outgoing talkers, but the thoughtful considered listeners.** Of course, when the time comes, they must also be able to talk with confidence and when they do they establish a relationship of trust with the respondent. They must be able to ask questions skilfully, not trying to trick or trap, but simply to provoke serious thought and consideration. By so doing, trust levels build. Rapport is established. Agreement is reached.

Never at any time is there ever a hint of coercion; of trying to force the respondent down a path that they are clearly unprepared to walk. That approach either leads to instant resistance or false leads, where people, worn down by the fight concede to a meeting, only to renege later; usually when you the client follow them up and are faced with their denials or excuses. The net result is no lead at all.

5. DON'T GET CAUGHT SELLING



“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”

Ernest Hemingway



In his book *Scientific Advertising*, written way back in 1923, Claude Hopkins, makes the point that a salesman must be able to express himself briefly, clearly and convincingly. Common sense, you might think, and then he adds:

“Fine talkers, however, are rarely good salesman. They inspire buyers with the fear of over-influence. They create the suspicion that an effort is made to sell them on other lines than merit.” Hopkins likens ‘fine talking’ in sales to ‘fine writing’ in advertising, “a distinct disadvantage.” He says, “They take attention from the subject. They reveal the hook. Any studied attempt to sell, if apparent, creates corresponding resistance.”

The art of any selling is rather like acting; you must never be caught doing it. If it becomes apparent you are doing it, resistance will be the outcome.

Rather, find out what interests the respondent and talk about that in the context of your service or solution. This approach requires great skill but yields great results. The seasoned and well trained B2B telemarketer knows this and forms part of an elite and elusive band.

6. SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE, NOT YOURS!

Address your approach to the level of your respondent’s understanding. You cannot assume that you already know what that level is. It may not be where you think it is or where you think it should be. Just because you live and breathe the latest software/hardware/service delivery issues it doesn’t follow that everyone else does.

So, before you create your approach, make sure you understand where your target audience are in terms of what’s important to them. What are the burning issues they are wrestling with? What keeps them awake at night? Unless you engage with them on those things that are key to them, you are wasting your time. So, you may need to research a sample of your target audience before you embark on your telemarketing campaigns so that you can be assured you are going to strike sympathetic chords amongst your prospects.

The research investment in a small, robust study will pay dividends. This will be in the form of better telemarketing results, not only from short term campaigns but also in the years to come as your enhanced understanding of your prospects’ needs fosters more meaningful dialogue.

On the subject of dialogue — eliminate all jargon from yours. Talk about the things that are important to your respondent in the language he or she uses, not in some meaningless marketing speak/techno-babble. Keep it simple and talk about what’s



***“When one door closes,
another opens; but we often
look so long and so regretfully
upon the closed door that we
do not see the one which has
opened.”***

Alexander Graham Bell



important to them not you. The business-to-business world and particularly the high technology sector are replete with TLAs, other abbreviations and strange hybrid techno-geek phrases. It's best to keep these at bay and always seek to demystify this world and make life simpler for everybody.

7. INTEGRATE IT WITH YOUR OTHER MEDIA CHANNELS

For maximum success, your telemarketing campaigns should form part of an integrated approach. Your telemarketing is perhaps preceded by an email or direct mail campaign; supported by material posted on your web site or an invite to a seminar or conference.

This is the approach that many big players who utilise telemarketing take. Xerox, for example, take the approach that telemarketing campaigns are always integrated with other media channels for maximum effect. "All of what we do is campaign-driven and all of what we do is integrated," Charlie Alexander, VP-teleweb at Xerox Corp., said. "A lot of times it will be a [direct] mail piece first with a 'tele-follow-up,' " he said, "The reverse of that would be a call to generate interest and follow up with information through mail. Another way we'll do it is, if we're on the phone with you, we might take you to the Web site."

The more your telemarketing efforts fit seamlessly in with other marketing activity, the more your visibility increases, the more your whole organisation will look as though it is in concert with its constituent parts.

8. BE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT

Don't violate rapport with the B2B respondent by using manipulating questions or techniques. Don't, for example, pose a question which manoeuvres the respondent into either answering in the pre-determined way you want him to or forces him to select the alternative answer which in effect makes him feel and look like a fool. You may think you've scored a point with this kind of verbal entrapment but you will have lost a prospect and damaged your company's reputation.

9. JUST BECAUSE IT'S B2B, DON'T IGNORE EMOTION

Just because the target prospect is a senior business executive responsible for big business budgets and achieving big business goals, it doesn't mean that they aren't also a warm, loving, caring, human being. Cold, impassionate logic may form part of their role and make-up, and may even be the basis of their decision making, but don't forget the part emotion plays.

"It is rare that one consistently gets good quality leads from telemarketing companies. Finding the right person and getting meaningful and accurate information from them is not easy. Over the past year Business Advantage has impressed us by regularly delivering good opportunities that meet our tight requirements in the quantity required."

Marketing Manager, DTE



"Individuals play the game, but teams beat the odds."

SEAL Team saying

Yes, you are talking with a mother, a wife, a father, a tennis player, a film buff; somebody just back from holiday. They are passionate about politics, religion, food, family values. They hate vague waffle and empty promises. They're suspicious of flowery words. They see through 'sales' techniques and contrived interest in their health and well-being. (How do you really feel when the first thing a complete stranger says to you on the telephone is "Hello, how are you to today?"). They can detect self interest a mile away.

They love honesty and straight talking. They love to talk about things that are important to them. They love to talk to people who are genuinely interested in them and their company. They can tell when it's not genuine.

10. ONCE YOU'VE GOT THE BATON; DON'T DROP IT!

Many marketers still plan the telemarketing campaign without the involvement of the sales personnel and only inform them once everything is underway. A recent study amongst 200 companies revealed that 80% of leads sent from Marketing to the Sales organisation are lost, ignored or discarded (Brian Carrol, CEO InTouch Inc). Before you embark on any lead generation venture, make sure there are no walls between you in Marketing and the Sales team. When you hand the baton to the sales team; it's important that they don't drop it.

For the most efficient results, the entire campaign should be planned with the co-operation of sales so that everyone knows what elements have led to the leads, what steps have been taken to answer customers' enquiries and what they expect. Leads should be checked before they are handed over to sales. Sending poor quality leads to the sales team can result in loss of marketing credibility, sales inefficiencies and missed revenues. Marketers should support the sales process; if leads that looked hot turn cool, marketers should resume responsibility and nurture them until they are reactivated again.



BT Global Services need to have absolutely accurate prospect and customer contact data in order to meet their business growth objectives. They recognize that the value of their brand is at stake if they do not communicate the right message to the right contact.

CASE STUDY – CONTACT DATA

Project: Contact Data Quality Initiative – Phase II

Commissioned by: Sarah Lester, Senior Manager,
UK Marketing Operations, BT Global
Services

Business Challenge

BT Global Services need to have absolutely accurate prospect and customer contact data in order to meet their business growth objectives. They recognize that the value of their brand is at stake if they do not communicate the right message to the right contact. They must be able to drill down to key decision makers.

Scope

This database marketing project consisted of:

- a) Cleaning 18,000 data records from BT's CRM system, amending errors, removing duplications, adding missing data, identifying inactive contacts and finding replacement contacts. Business Advantage were required to check contact details without speaking to the named individuals to get an independent authentication.
- b) Acquisition of a minimum of 2,000 new contacts from within 590 named accounts across a range of 24 specified business functions.

Methodology

- a) Business Advantage were not allowed to contact the named individuals directly, therefore, a two stage approach was taken. Initially, data was gathered from public domain sources and secondly, these details were confirmed by calling receptionists, or where receptionists did not know the information, others within the relevant department.
- b) New contact information was gathered using telephone interview techniques.

BT had strict data formatting requirements, Sarah stated:

"Business Advantage were able to meet these requirements plus were able to provide the data in a ready-to-load format, thus avoiding time consuming data processing by internal BT staff."

Business Advantage also provided BT with weekly feedback via a conference call and a hard copy report. Sarah said:

"As a result of being kept in the loop with these helpful updates we were reassured that the priorities of the project remained on focus."

Another challenge of this project was to collect email addresses, where this information was unavailable Business Advantage

“We were very pleased with the new contacts Business Advantage found for us, it has made a big difference to our effective reach.”

Sarah Lester, Senior Manager, UK Marketing Operations, BT Global Services

extrapolated naming conventions of colleagues and pinged across emails to these addresses to test viability.

Why choose Business Advantage?

This project was put out to tender and Business Advantage provided a proposal along with a number of other agencies. Information from all the proposals was consolidated and comparisons made.

“The results of the comparisons went through BT’s usual procurement channels and Business Advantage came out on top particularly in the areas of cost, approach, professionalism and flexibility.”

What impact did the result have on BT’s business?

Before the data was cleaned BT had some concerns about the quality of their data, Sarah commented

“Now we are confident that the data is accurate and we do not have any concerns going forward.”

The acquisition of the 2,000 new contacts was also important to BT, Sarah commented:

“We were very pleased with the new contacts Business Advantage found for us, it has made a big difference to our effective reach.”

Sarah’s final comment

“All deliverables were met within agreed timescales and to agreed formats. I was very impressed by their professionalism and flexibility as well as the cost of the project. All the staff were very helpful. I have recommended them to colleagues and have used them since on two occasions for data cleaning and data acquisition projects.”

Sarah Lester, Senior Manager, UK Marketing Operations,
BT Global Services



"Business Advantage's excellent research skills and comprehensive understanding of our market have produced research results we know we can trust to underpin our marketing decisions. Recent surveys of our target markets discovered a high level of interest in our new product."

Phil Henesey, European
Channel Manager,
Rasterex

BUSINESS ADVANTAGE – ABOUT US

If you plan to grow in a new way, perhaps by using one of the ideas above you should have an advantage, a business advantage. We've helped many companies make their growth journey as our market research and analyses always include actionable recommendations and implementation strategies.

Who we are

Formed in 1992 by CEO, Chris Turner, Business Advantage now has a professional staff of over 30 specialists in different markets, technologies and methodologies.

What we do

Business Advantage is a B2B research, business development and marketing consulting practice operating in the global IT, Digital Broadcasting and Telecommunications sectors. We specialize in:

- Marketing and management consultancy
- B2B market research
- Data services
- Sales development services

Our mission

To out-perform your competitors, you must get key activities right: strategy and planning; acquiring accurate market intelligence; and taking effective action to turn potential customers into real ones.

At Business Advantage, our commitment is to **help you create substantial and lasting improvements in your performance - a sustainable business advantage - over your competitors.**

Our Clients

Our clients include many leading international companies such as 3M, Autodesk, Canon, Dell, HP, Infor, IBM, Intel, Lexmark, Microsoft, , Oracle, SAP, Sony, Sophos, Synopsys, Xerox Engineering Systems and many small to medium sized organizations.

Additional Information

If you would like more information on this or other research, data or business development topics, please email info@business-advantage.com, call +44 1689 873636 or download other [Business Advantage White Papers](#).

Lastly – if all these tips are overwhelming please talk to us about some Consultancy to help you figure out your best telemarketing approach.