the telemarketing company

Insider Perspective

Telemarketing - Old Dog, New Tricks

If you were in the business of hiring a telemarketing company 15 years ago, much of what you would have heard from them would not be too dissimilar to what you would hear today. The language of telemarketing at least has not changed much over the last couple of decades. The KPIs are still essentially the same: dials, call attempts, decision maker contacts, results. These are the keys to success in any telemarketing campaign.

In the early days of a campaign, these critical but much overlooked metrics may wash over many clients who typically only want answers to three basic questions:

- How many results will I get?
- Can I be sure of the quality?
- How much will it cost me per result?

An hour of telemarketing time - then and now

To answer those questions now as it was then, we need to go back to that much ignored telemarketing jargon: dials; call attempts, DMC rates. Only now, they tell a very different story to the one they would have told in 2000.

In 2016 your specialist outbound telemarketing company will still be working just as hard as it was in 2000. Your telemarketer will still dial your prospects between 15 and 25 times every hour. But 15 years ago, a good telemarketing company would expect to talk to between 3 and 8 people an hour: 3 in a big company, 8 in an SME. Today, they will talk to 0.5 at enterprise level and 3 - 5 people in a small or medium sized business depending on level and function. Add 15 years of inflation into the price of your telemarketing campaign and you may be paying 3 or 4 times as much for every contact.



This is not to say telemarketing is not an effective channel. Nor would we, of all people argue that it is not cost effective, the ROI on telemarketing is well documented: In 2014 the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) reported that for every £1 spent on B2B telemarketing, a company could expect a return of £11. The hike in cost in terms of contact acquisition should not be seen as a reason not to use telemarketing, it is simply the reality of today's modern world and it's worth spending a few moments looking at what has fuelled this change and how telemarketing has responded.

Why?

The simple answer to why the cost of telemarketing has risen so dramatically is that people use the phone less. Email is now a default tool of communication. And even email is being quickly superseded by other forms of digital communication. This transformation has had a profound psychological effect on people's desire or need to use the phone. Many people

will leave a phone ringing and let it go to voicemail, unthinkable in the days before the ubiquitous email.

And therein lies the root of the longer answer, people are not wedded to the phone, not only because of email but also voicemail. Voicemail gives you the same flexibility as email: you can deal with it when it suits you. Furthermore, the fixed line has gradually lost ground to the mobile phone and now the smart phone is more 'smart' than 'phone' simply another vehicle for the all-conquering email.

To a certain degree, telemarketing has also been a victim of its own success, gaining ground in the 70's and 80's, by the 90's it had created enough irritation and disquiet in its marketing methods to attract the attention of regulators, the first restrictions on telemarketing in the US appearing in 1991 and the UK quickly followed suit in 1999 for consumers and 2004 for corporate subscribers.

Finally, the success of telemarketing despite all this has led to the concept of gatekeepers: people who restrict access to prospects. In a small company this is generally at switchboard level, in a large business through a PA or department member.

What does it mean for telemarketing?

Even 10 years ago people were talking about the death of 'cold call' telemarketing. Our business is testament to the fact these claims were then, as they are now, wildly exaggerated. If you are going to be ostensibly paying a lot more for a lot less, we understand how vital it is that every call counts. Our approach is to think about the call in four distinct stages:

Stage 1 – **Identification**: Be clinical in identifying and segmenting the audience you want to target

Stage 2 - **Confirmation**: Be sure to have identified the right person at the right level in the right department?

Stage 3 - **Qualification**: Be clear on the characteristics or criteria that need to be discovered: budget, need, present supplier, a renewal date, IT configuration etc

Stage 4 - **Solicitation**: If a close is not available, where possible get a commitment to further action

We have also seen a large number of our clients conduct their campaigns in two distinct phases. The first phase which includes the confirmation and qualification stages are performed by research, which in most telemarketing companies will be the less expensive service than its sibling telemarketing. The results from this phase of the campaign are then passed to the persuasive calling team to get the results – whether these are leads, appointments or sales.

The advantage of this approach is that stages 2 and 3 do not need direct contact with the final decision maker, making this phase overall a lot more cost effective. And, perhaps more important still is that your 'sales callers' in phase 2 are only calling known qualified prospects.

Befriending Digital

While digital may have changed the face of telemarketing to a degree, in many respects it has become its greatest asset.

If we return to our stages, in nearly every one the rise of digital can be found to ease, improve or simply assist telemarketing performance.

To illustrate this point, we only have to look at the wide range of website visitor identification tools now available for use. How much easier is it today than in 2000 to see who's on your website. If a prospect looks at your pricing page or downloads a piece of content their interactions can be tracked, monitored and passed to qualified calling agents to follow up.

For the 'confirmation' stage of the process

much of this information can now be found on the web. In 2000 there were 17 million websites, in 2014 there were 177 million. The company, the name, the job title and even some of the qualifying information may be available via desk-based research; another way of getting the right information to the sales caller

In the qualification stage, email is a natural ally to telemarketing. The ability to digitally 'nurture' prospects and to lead score based on digital behaviour and engagement can provide a steady flow of better qualified leads into a specialist calling team.

Finally, in the 'solicitation' stage, if a caller senses latent interest or opportunity, then literature can be sent immediately by way of follow up, or a screen can be shared to demonstrate a product or service. If these advances were not illustration enough that digital has only enhanced telemarketing, then hotkey transfers – a mechanism that was not widely available in 2000 now allows callers to immediately transfer a sales call to representatives on the client side to fulfill the sale.

In summary, the cost of acquiring a contact may be more expensive than in 2000 but telemarketing is as effective a channel as it always was. In fact, we would argue that digital in all it of it forms have hugely contributed to the continuing success of telemarketing and help maintain its position as a "top three" lead generation channel for both quality and quantity of lead generation.

Perhaps it is time you considered your options…

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