The Human Factor

What makes B2B Telemarketing Effective?



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Making B2B Telemarketing Effective

In a marketing world where the hot topics are Digital, Social Media and Content; human interaction still lies at the heart of successful business development with B2B prospects.

The majority of B2B sales are closed only after face to face meetings.

This underscores the importance of human interaction and reflects why Telemarketing is an important part of creating B2B sales opportunities.

With the unique ability of human interaction to influence prospects, how can this crucial marketing channel be effectively implemented?

The Importance of Getting it Right

We have all experienced poor telemarketing – intrusive calls at home, recorded calls on our mobiles or completely inappropriate or pushy calls at work.

In B2B markets poor telemarketing is not only a nuisance and ineffective, but can also be damaging.

Emotional Influences

B2B buyers are human beings. Their business decisions are influenced by emotional and social factors as well as objective and rational ones. The goal of successful B2B telemarketing is to build an understanding of and a relationship with the buyer. The human factor is the foundation of this relationship.

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Turning a phone call into the beginnings of a positive relationship with a buyer requires the Telemarketer to use significant interpersonal skills and very quickly to convey trustworthiness and warmth to the person they are speaking to.

The necessary skill level of the Telemarketer to gain this trust is particularly high as they do not have facial expression or body language to help convey warmth, or indeed as much time to develop a relationship as at a face to face meeting.

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B2B Telemarketers must be able demonstrate:

- A good understanding of the buyer's needs and situation
- A good understanding of the goods and services they are promoting
- A good understanding of how the two fit together

To maximize the value of the human factor of telemarketing, the campaign briefing should incorporate the emotional and cultural factors likely to influence a buyer as well as their individual and organisational needs. This helps the Telemarketer to connect emotionally with the buyer.

> "The human characteristics and two-way dialogue of telemarketing are key strengths over other marketing approaches."

B2B Telemarketers need to quickly show human characteristics and empathy. This is essential to start to build a relationship which will enable the Telemarketer to obtain the information they need to qualify and understand the buyer's business and personal objectives.

Telemarketing in a B2B environment is a subtle skill. It is far removed from consumer call-centres working with scripted responses and automated high-volume calling. Appropriate skills and support are needed, particularly as for most B2B companies they will have a highly limited prospect pool. Attempting to push the buyer too hard, too early will simply lead to alienation and the buyer terminating the call.

Implementing Telemarketing Programmes

Telemarketing has a real strength over other marketing approaches because of its ability to be a dynamic, two-way communication channel. Human engagement through telemarketing should be introduced into the marketing mix at an early stage. The buyer is able to connect with a human being and it allows information to be obtained by the seller to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of future communication through a variety of marketing channels.

The first human interaction a buyer has with a proactive seller will often be through telemarketing. It is therefore vital that this initial conversation goes well (regardless of whether they are in-house or external).

The buyer's perception of your company will be as heavily influenced by this first human interaction as it will by subsequent interactions further along the sales process.

When implementing a telemarketing programme it is worth spending considerable time and resources ensuring the right approach. Your telemarketing strategy should allow the value that human interaction provides to really demonstrate to the buyer that you are the type of business that they will want to work with – culturally and emotionally as well as having a compelling sales proposition.

The best raw data available should be used and high-quality collateral needs to be available that the buyer can be directed to substantiate messages that the Telemarketer delivers.

Close, on-going support and measurement of results are also essential for long term success.

Tone and Inflection

An appropriate, respectful and warm tone of voice can influence the conversation in a positive way right from the start. Effective Telemarketers use a tone that is neither aggressive nor overly apologetic for the imposition on the buyer's time. They come across as confident and self-assured without being arrogant. The encounter is about positivity, presenting a new opportunity to a buyer and helping them to meet a need. As the Telemarketer does not have the benefit of facial expression to help convey sentiment they need to convey positivity and warmth through their voice.

> Tonality of speech and composed timing bring the prospecting into an engaging two-way conversation; the first step in building a relationship with them.

Compose can help here, too. It is easy for the Telemarketer to be hasty or to feel rushed trying to gain information before being cut-off.

Good Telemarketers allow the prospect time to process information, reflect on questions asked and give considered answers. Tonality of speech and composed timing bring the prospect into an engaging two-way conversation; the first step in building a relationship with them.

In face-to-face situations, part of our interpretation of language is done visually, using lip-reading and expression. With only auditory cues, Telemarketers need to allow more time, and infuse the voice with the expression that would appear on the face. The ideal aim is 120-130 words per minute of inflected, engaged and positive speech that will allow the prospect to warm to the caller in a relaxed way.

A Shift of Emphasis

In consumer marketing, the emphasis is almost always on making a sale during a call. The product value is typically low which does not justify the resources to call again and individuals can usually make decisions at the time.

In B2B marketing, the environment is very different - the buying process is likely to have multiple stages and involve multiple individuals. B2B calls therefore become a means to generate interest and create agreement to proceed to the next stage. This might be calling back at a more convenient or relevant time, providing useful follow up information or arranging a face to face meeting. The outcome or objective of a B2B call will rarely be a closed deal.

A key goal in B2B telemarketing is to create trust and interest with the prospect and to agree the next actions to move the dialogue forward.

Because of the different objective, B2B Telemarketers have to approach the call very differently from those in the consumer sphere. The primary shift needs to be away from a sales-pitch and towards a natural conversation that connects with the potential buyer. The role of the Telemarketer is to help, not to pitch, and it is successful because buyers look for positive relationships where they feel they are being assisted.

Language and Words

A range of linguistic factors influence engagement and relationship building.

Phrases and language that the buyer uses or that are relevant for their industry will build credibility. Jargon will distance potential buyers and excessive informality (particularly before a relationship exists) can come across as disrespectful.

The difficulty is in striking a balance between the personal and the professional. Warmth is needed whilst maintaining a dialogue that builds trust and demonstrates expertise. Negative or apologetic words must be avoided and reframed to create an upbeat and positive impression.

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pressured. The long-term dividend will be a potential buyer who is confident in the seller's information and is more likely to progress to the next stage of human interaction; a face to face meeting with a member of the sales team.

Demonstrating a Cultural Fit

Most of us buy from people we like and we are pre-programmed to like those who are similar to us. Purchasing decisions – even those by professional B2B buyers – are influenced by emotional and cultural fit.

The human approach achievable through telemarketing allows each interaction to be highly personalised. Demonstrating shared values is an essential element in winning trust and building a relationship.

Connecting at a cultural level gives the effective telemarketer a significant advantage. For example a formal approach to a small motor repair business is unlikely to generate engagement, whereas it would be perfectly appropriate for a legal practice.

Big businesses tend to trust and buy from big businesses. While matching these cultural expectations, there is still ample room for maintaining the personal touch. Listening to individual needs and emotional cues or demonstrating empathy with the challenges of a more rigid decision-making structure can go a long way towards building rapport with a buyer.

Connecting at a personal level builds trusted relationships. This is demonstrated by phrases such as "I fully understand your situation" and "I often find that my customers in a similar position to you have found our product / service product really helpful."

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Emphasising Emotional Messages

Buyers respond to emotional messages at every stage of the buying process. Identifying an emotional trigger in many cases is the key to overcoming inertia and starting a buying dialogue.

In one study 48% of B2B buyers who responded to a CEB survey acknowledged that they had failed to speak up about a new solution that they wanted to purchase.

Buyers are fearful of the impact of poor choices of suppliers or products. Emotional engagement may be used to identify and emphasise the pain of a current situation, and to minimise concerns about making a change.

Positive emotional responses can also drive the move to change to a new supplier. Those who perceive the purchase as offering an increase in status, or some form of improvement in their work situation will also be more likely to choose a particular supplier.

Persuasiveness

There is a distinction to be drawn between an aggressive sales pitch and intelligent persuasion. Persuasion is entirely appropriate in a B2B context.

An effective Telemarketer is one who persuades by first identifying the buyer's needs and then demonstrating an appreciation of their challenges. By showing an understanding of these specific challenges, the Telemarketer can then present the solution in the appropriate way.

Encouragement to move to the next stage is far easier once credibility and trust have been built, the buyer's needs have been established and the relevance of a solution agreed.

Listen, Consider, Reflect and Advise

With well qualified prospect data it should be possible to start the conversation on the right foot, as the solution being offered is likely to be relevant to the buyer. But even carefully sourced prospect data about an organisation will not tell you the details of a specific buyer's or business's needs.

It is important that buyers feel that they are listened to carefully. Inappropriate responses to information that has been provided will cause alienation, a lack of trust and will destroy the potential of future relationships.

The Telemarketer should reflect back the information that is provided by the buyer to show they have taken on board their situation or needs. The Telemarketer can then provide relevant advice about solutions, the experience of others or additional sources of information that the buyer may find useful. Responses should be carefully considered. Honest dialogue is more powerful than bluster.

If the Telemarketer is unable to answer a query raised by the buyer it is better to agree a follow up, particularly if their issue is a complex one.

This situation can often be developed into a positive step forward in the sales process, as the natural progression is to move the dialogue from the Telemarketer to the Sales Team.

> "Even carefully sourced prospect data will not provide the details of a specific buyer's needs. Engagement by telemarketers can help you understand the buyer's personal objectives and priorities, alongside the business needs and timing."

Demonstrating Empathy and Curiosity

We all feel positive towards those who are interested in us and those who seem to understand where we are coming from. An effective Telemarketer will demonstrate these qualities in their conversations. The foundation of empathy is being able to listen, absorb and then to ask probing and insightful questions.

It is a delicate balance between showing interest without being considered nosey or pushy. Professional questioning on what the buyer feels will benefit them and the problems they find on a day-to-day basis will make them feel valued, without compromising any confidential information.

> "From the prospect's perspective the experience with both the telemarketing and sales teams should be consistent."

Integrating Lead Generation, Sales & Marketing Delivers Maximum ROI

Without doubt it is the human element that makes telemarketing so valuable. Yet it still needs to be supported by good management, efficient processes, high quality supportive marketing collateral and automated elements to make it maximise its effectiveness.

Good quality data underpins all telemarketing activity alongside the technology to maximise efficiency and enable analysis and continual improvement.

In a multi-stage B2B marketing process seamless post-conversation follow-up is as important as the calls themselves. From the prospect's perspective the human experience across interaction with both the telemarketing and sales teams should be consistent.



The prospect needs to feel that they are the centre of a seamless journey, instead of an individual being passed from department to department.

Customer Relationship Management systems that manage the prospect database from initial sales-qualification through to final negotiations should be integrated with Marketing Automation to deliver fully aligned marketing and sales activity.

With good supportive marketing and integration across the entire sales and marketing functions the initial telemarketing contact can ultimately be turned into a long-term relationship with new customers.

Conclusions

The Human Factor is integral to nearly all B2B sales, even in a world full of digital marketing options. Telemarketing is a powerful method of utilising human interaction at an early stage; helping sellers engage productively with buyers, understand their needs and communicate effectively.

Adept Telemarketers engage buyers at an emotional level, enabling them to obtain critical information that can influence further communication and build deeper relationships than would otherwise be possible.

Whether conducted in-house or by an external team, well-planned, professionally managed telemarketing can be a highly effective channel to initiate the relationships that form the basis of successful B2B sales.

About Beanstalk

Beanstalk specialise in high-quality Sales Lead and Appointment Generation through intelligent, integrated B2B Telemarketing. We create and manage qualified prospect databases that are very specific to each customer's needs. These databases become critical business assets that underpin all of their marketing activity and form the basis of the future sales pipeline.

In addition to our core telemarketing, we provide a full range of integrated B2B marketing services including content marketing, marketing automation, lead nurturing and digital and email marketing. We are a professional team of marketing, sales, design, content and digital marketing specialists.

To find out more about how we can deliver profitable sales growth for you please call us on **0845 474 2047** or visit **www.beanstalkmarketing.co.uk** for more sales and marketing insight.