



Business To Business By Phone®
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SEVEN IMPERATIVES FOR MANAGING B-TO-B TELEMARKETING

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Most B-to-B marketers use phone-based marketing. What makes phone strategies work, what slows them down, and what stops them in their tracks is the same in money-making companies as in the also-rans: management. There are seven management imperatives for success in B-to-B telemarketing.

1. Senior management's active endorsement and participation.

If you have the big office and want the phone to make money, make it a performance criterion for yourself. It is OK to delegate responsibility for implementation, but don't default the phone enterprise to strictly operational oversight. Many good, workable phone strategies have failed for lack of executive endorsement.

With ongoing executive involvement, phone marketing's structure, corporate positioning, and result almost always improve. Structure includes program design and staffing, and making sure the bucks are present and accounted for. Don't try to run a telemarketing or telesales program on the cheap while expecting million-dollar results.

Positioning refers both to phone's citizenship within the organization, and to its location in the building. Phone is best positioned strategically, i.e., integrated fully within your marketing mix, not as an adjunct or preliminary activity. And while your callers won't need to share your executive suite, don't stick them in the basement next to the boiler either.

2. Big minds, not big heads, in the marketing and sales organizations.

For the most part, marketing managers are inexperienced with, "telemarketing," so they view it as something outside the media mainstream of web, print, trade shows, etc. Many sales managers have field sales backgrounds, not telesales, and often consider everything with the "tele-" prefix as subordinate to the field. In such companies, fear of change slows the full



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implementation of, and benefit from, a robust phone strategy. Sometimes, the fear is disguised as tradition. To get past it, please see Imperative 1 above. Then insist that everyone actually make and take live calls with real prospects and customers. Reality equalizes head size while it expands minds.

3. Synchronize your sales and marketing.

You may never get your sales and marketing organizations to love each other even if they both report to you. But you can – indeed, must ... coordinate their efforts. For starters, get the groups together to refine your lead qualification criteria. Then, as your phone marketers work with prospects, they can apply the criteria to rate lead quality on a point-count system. Leads rated above your “sales-ready” threshold go to the field or a channel partner, whose timely action on them is no longer optional, but required. Below the threshold, keep the leads in marketing and continue to develop them. Such synchronization costs only egos, but pays real dollar dividends.

4. Adequate and appropriate technology infrastructure.

Is everything in place for your callers to do what you want them to do efficiently and effectively? If you don't know, you're not alone. Because phone is new to many marketing managers, they often seek guidance in business-to-consumer phone shops. There they encounter predictive dialers, “universal agents,” “best practices” that aren't, and so on. Good business-to-business by phone requires a really good database, contact management or CRM software to make the database easily accessible to all marketers and sales people, and appropriate computer-telephone integration. This stuff doesn't have to bust your budget, but without it, you're at a distinct disadvantage.

5. Super people, well-trained.

“If I'd known I had to train them, I wouldn't have hired them,” said a sales manager who seemed pretty smart until he said that. (Good thing he's not a football coach!) If you want your telemarketers and telesales staff to perform well and improve continuously, you have to invest in them. First hire people who actually want to do phone. Once you have them, train them and



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provide practice opportunities, motivate them by inclusion, sustain them with recognition, and reward them for results.

6. Measure the right things right

Measurements used in business-to-consumer telemarketing are totally wrong in business-to-business. For example, call count focuses on quantity, which leads to mindless heads-down “drone-phone.” Talk-time measurements imply that longer means better, which often is not the case. Here’s what to measure instead:

Ratios, not absolutes. For example, sales v. conversations is more significant than number of calls. Conversations v. connects directly shows your callers’ ability to sell the value of the conversation and to get it underway.

Medians, (mid-points) not averages. For example, median conversation length ... half a rep’s or group’s calls are longer, half are shorter. Medians are less susceptible to peaks and drops than averages. For example, ten one minute calls and one ten minute call. The average is 1.82 minutes, the median is one minute ... the latter a closer representation of reality.

These guidelines help you balance phone production and artistry, increasing the likelihood of success. You also can use them to improve the accuracy and equitability of your compensation plan.

7. Monitor, coach, and counsel

There is no substitute for listening to calls. Are reps asking more than telling? Are they spouting features or selling the “you gets?” Are they saying “we” or “you?” Are they closing on a definitive next step or the actual sale?



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Call observation is not an interruption of management ... it IS management. Make it part of management's charter, at least 25% of every business day for first-level managers. Your managers (sometimes the callers, too) may balk at first. But they, and you, will benefit.

These management imperatives aren't always easy, but they are workable and profitable. May you market wisely and sell your socks off!

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