

Outbound Campaign Design and Management

For the last 75 or 80 years, business to business calling has included some form of telephone communication. In the last 25 to 30 years, these forms have increasingly become known as phone rooms, inside sales, sales representatives, service centers, and a myriad of other euphemisms for getting on the phone and selling someone something.

On the surface, this would seem like a no-brainer, but it proves the adage "all that is old is new again".

Outbound campaigns

Outbound campaign management and design is different from inbound. Some might say more simple or less complex. On the surface and from an outside point of view that appears fair. That view does not, however, reflect the extent of the variables and the probability of success. If it were easy, everyone would do it, and do it correctly the first time; and all campaigns would be successful.

Personalized, call-enhanced mail programs

Increase the effectiveness of your direct mail campaign by coordinating and integrating your mail and telephone programs. A pre-recorded message from a respected individual can create anticipation of the mailed item and dramatically improve the response of the campaign.

Fundraising

Political campaigns, state parties, trade associations and non-profit organizations use a variety of fundraising techniques. Absolute Customer Solutions has a broad range of successful experiences in renewing current donors and members, reactivating lapsed donors and expanding the donor base.

Business-to-Business

Business to business calling is done for all sorts of purposes. You can sell beer to pubs, marginal account management, conduct customer satisfaction and other surveys, provide account or dealer support, service outlying and hard to reach accounts, marketing support, appointment setting, political calling, cold call prospecting, lead generation and qualification, data verification, on-going communication, gaining and updating information through e-mailing, new contacts, multi-step programs etc. If you can think of it, it has likely been done and can be done by telephone.

Let us take a brief, general look at what is required for an outbound campaign. The demand and the capacity issues and terms are familiar to anyone in a call center. For an outbound campaign the demand requirements are finite and usually known in advance. The demand is the number of records/people/accounts needing to be reached within a certain time period. The capacity is usually flexible to meet whatever demand your campaign requires. This is different from inbound where a precise forecast, educated guesses or estimate of the demand is the critical factor for success. For outbound you usually know the number of calls required during a limited period. The script is known and can be timed; therefore, somewhat regulating the length of each call. The following estimates provide a high-level capacity requirement:.

- Size of the list, number of numbers to be called ÷ percentage of list likely to be reached ÷ reaches per hour = number of calling hours required

- Number of calling hours required ÷ Campaign duration (usually in weeks) = Staff hours per week ÷ FTE or PTE (Full and or Part time staff) = number of staff required.
- Number of calling hours required + (training hours per staff x number of staff required) = total staff hours required.

The List

Key to any outbound campaign success is the call list. Good list selection is part science, part artist ability, and part good judgment. Books have been written on this subject alone. In general, the better the list, the more success the campaign achieves. For instance calling existing customers capable of buying is even better than good prospects; good prospects are better than suspects; and suspects are better than random selections. For surveys and market research, there is an entire science to sample development and selection. In all cases, money spent to get the right list and the list right for the purpose is money well spent. List segmentation for the purpose of the calling makes the calls more effective and efficient. This is always the case.

It is important to estimate the amount of list penetration required or expected for each campaign. Only a few calls result in reaching the contact the first time. Multiply calls and callbacks are needed. Some accounts/people on the list might require many calls to reach them. At some point, repeated calling is fruitless. Therefore, the following terms will help with setting the expectations:

- Provide for some percentage of dead or out of service numbers no matter how good the file and excellence of source.
- Reach rate is a function of the number of dials per hour and the number of genuine contacts spoken with.
- Qualified contacts are always a subset of those people reached.
- Conversion rate or completion rate is the number of qualified contacts who decide to act on the nature of the call.

Telemarketing benefits many direct marketing campaigns and often quickly pays for the added expense by providing greater conversion than just the direct mail by itself. For instance, a mailing to prospects gets an average response of 2%. Following up the mailing with a call to the same prospect base gets a lift of between 3 to 5 times just the basic mailing responses alone. This means that instead of just 2%, the campaign will generate a 6 to 10% response rate. This means that for just a little extra effort a campaign will generate a lot more value and deeper penetration of the market you are going after.

Script development must conform to the purpose of the call. In market research in order to eliminate bias, a word for word script is used; and the staff is monitored to ensure they use exactly the wording provided. While in a business-to-business environment where the purpose is to develop a sales relationship, a more free form script performs better. These are script guides with key points to make. The difference between the extremely tight script and the open script guide points along with all the other forms is one area that baffles those new to this trade. Experience with different campaigns results in better judgment of what works in what situation.

Staff

Staff must be selected with the campaign and its purpose in mind. If the requirement is being able to read the patrons a survey, then the skills needed are those of attention to detail and adherence to instructions and directions. Provided these people make the number of calls required and follow the script, all should go smoothly according to the design.

For a business-to-business campaign where the calls are designed to generate appointments, sales or gather information, the required skills are different. The callers will have to think and respond to a variety of situations that are not always detailed in the script. This requires flexibility and the understanding that they have to do more than just follow the script.

Conclusion

Outbound campaigns have similar elements to inbound: people, process, purpose and tools. While these appear similar, they are used differently and can, in the hands of Absolute Customer Solutions, produce remarkable results. Today, outbound calling is an important part of modern sales and marketing.