

## Top 5 ways to leverage teleprospecting for high quality enterprise leads

By Dennis Head

When your solution is expensive and the sales cycle is long, it is essential that you find ways to help your sales channels be more productive. Providing them with highly qualified leads when the prospect is ready to talk to sales helps move the sales activity from prospecting to selling. The key is making sure that the lead is truly qualified. There is no substitute for a live discussion with a highly skilled teleprospecting manager to insure that the prospect is ready to talk to your sales person.

With the advent of automated lead scoring systems that measure and score both the firmographic and behavioral attributes (Digital Body Language) is there still a role of physical interaction from a teleprospecting manager with the prospect? The answer is yes if the value of the opportunity is high. Teleprospecting is not inexpensive and for maximum productivity, it needs to be consistently fed with warm inquires and managed effectively

Target your qualification process to match the opportunity value of the leads. The higher the value of the lead opportunity and the longer the sales cycle the more important the lead quality is. The key step is insuring you have alignment with your sales channels and Marketing with the definition of a qualified lead. Utilize the lowest cost lead qualification process that will deliver the lead qualification your sales teams require. If you can deliver marketing qualified leads that meet your sales criteria by utilizing only lead scoring with out teleprospecting you should do this. It is most appropriate for lower value opportunities and shorter sales cycles where lead volumes are most important. On the other hand a \$50,000 opportunity with a 6-9 month sales cycle, you should consider teleprospecting to insure the lead quality is ready for sales.

### Teleprospecting is a challenging job

Tele-prospecting is a challenging job, as Dan McDade of Pointclear describes the steps<sup>1</sup> : they qualify raw leads, nurture lukewarm prospect into hot categories and then develop leads to the point they can be handed over to the sales force as qualified. This may take months to work through this process. The tasks require skill, patience and discipline to engage the prospect in a conversation that may take place over an extended period of time.

- Multiple contacts by phone, email, voice mail before the conversation begins, this could take as many as 6 to 12 attempts before they can effectively engage in a meaningful discussion.
- Patience is required, as the executive many times will not engage until the priority escalates. They may, however, then recall the emails and calls and be ready to be engaged.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan McDade PointClear

- Once the conversation begins, the agent must manage the process through probing, documenting and tracking the progress of future communication with appropriate content to move the prospect forward.
- The objective of the tele-prospector is to qualify the opportunity until it is ready for sales or disqualify it as not meeting the established lead criteria.
- When the tele-prospector turns over the lead to sales, it has complete information on the opportunity, the key drivers, the pains and problems, how the decision is to be made (Decision process) and the decision criteria of what the decision will be based on (Decision Criteria) including timing, and budget. This information is provided in detailed lead notes that are part of the lead.

**In summary; the objective of the tele-prospector is to build a trusted advisor relationship with the prospect that will establish credibility that is transferable to your sales force. Building that relationship early in the buying cycle is very important.**

### **The following are five ways that you can increase the quality and productivity of your tele-prospecting team.**

The recommendations are all proven practices that were utilized by the Avaya eDemand lead program over eight years. This team produced over 15,000 qualified leads that generated more than \$1.5 Billion in sales funnel pipeline.

**1. *Define the skill level of your agents;***

Match your skill requirements to the complexity of the job. If you are selling a high dollar complex product to executives, you will need agents that have the competency and confidence to speak to a VP/ CXO level. College educated, with prior sales experience may be a primary consideration. These resources will cost you more but they are worth it if they are able to uncover pains and needs that your solution can solve.

**2. *Make the commitment to train your agents well.***

With sophisticated products/ solutions your agents cannot just read scripts. They need to uncover the problems and understand the solution and what it will solve. With an executive buyer, they must be able to answer the third level question. Their focus should not be on the technical details of the products (that's the sales reps job) but they must understand what problems that the solution solves.

**3. *Measure what is important; many call centers are very transaction driven, volume of calls, talk time and a wide range of metrics that the CRM system can measure.***

Although these elements are important to the effective management of the call center, your primary focus should be on the quality of the lead. Lead volume is important as long as the leads meet the established lead criteria. A more important measurement is the conversion rate from a Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL a lead that marketing says is qualified) and a Sales Qualified Lead (SQL the lead that sales has judged as qualified and will work) this is the primary measurement of the success of the program. The real key is the length of the

sales cycle, the longer your sales force needs to spend to sell the product, the higher the need is for lead quality.

**4. Active management process required.**

You will need to manage your teleprospecting vendor actively, with weekly reviews of key performance indicators such as lead volumes, unqualified rates and lead conversion ratios by various lead sources. On a quarterly basis you should have a complete review of the quarters performance to identify areas for improvement and reinforcement.

**5. Provide Tools and resources for success:**

Depending on the sophistication and dollar value of your solutions, your teleprospecting agents will need access to tools like email, web research tools from Google search to subscription tools like Hoovers, Harte Hanks Computer Intelligence or other relevant research for your industry. The objective is to arm them with precall resources that will help them research the potential prospect, identify the appropriate contacts and decision makers and better target those companies they should call. The result is to make them better prepared to call in a professional manner and get to the right contacts in the organization. The better they are prepared the higher the probability of success.

**Utilized properly, tele-prospecting can be the key to the success of your lead program. They need to be an integral part of the relationship between marketing's demand generation and the sales force selling efforts. A strong two-way communication between both parties will help the teleprospecting team continually improve its skills and quality process.**

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