

Altman Dedicated Direct

STRATEGY... TACTICS... RESULTS

Column: **"After the Phone Rings ..."**

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Topic: **Outbound Telemarketing Promotions**

Outbound telemarketing has gotten a recent black eye. The do-not-call list established June 2003 garnered 10 million+ names its first day. We all know the frustration of getting unwanted phone solicitations from firms you've never purchased from.

But a call from a company whose product you currently enjoy is another matter. Consider these examples ... You bought a piece of exercise equipment two months ago and your interest is waning; the company you ordered from phones you to offer new video workouts and accessories to keep you motivated . . . You purchased a skin care system on continuity and are enjoying the results. After three months you are offered a free trial on a new makeup line designed for women your age. There are trial packages created in various skin tones to choose from.

Both of these examples show the value of outbound telemarketing. Outbound telemarketing lets you follow up with customers in a timely manner; contacting them at the right moment. It is a quick turnaround medium, that lets you execute campaigns within weeks, not months.

Outbound telemarketing is well matched to DRTV phone buyers. Use of the phone for ordering is common, and both mediums appeal to consumers who are more passive (compared to mediums requiring more consumer participation like internet search marketing).

One of the largest benefits of outbound telemarketing is its interactivity. Outbound telemarketing affords the opportunity for dialogue with customers as opposed to the one-way communication of television, direct mail or even email. This interactivity gives incredible flexibility; enabling you to react to customers and change your offer and script at a moment's notice based on results.

The interactive dialogue of outbound means you can address service concerns – your rep can determine if the customer has challenges using your product, allowing you to reduce the potential for a future return. This is especially helpful when using outbound telemarketing for reactivating customers who have lapsed, especially former continuity customers. The ability to solve the challenges formerly active customers had with your product or continuity fulfillment increases your chances of activating them again.

Finally, the interactivity of outbound telemarketing allows you to capture survey data to better understand customers and create more targeted products and offers. Answers to 1-2 key questions can often both help your current call be more relevant and help you improve future promotions.

Any discussion of outbound telemarketing wouldn't be complete without addressing requirements. First is having customer phone numbers. Though phone number look-up services exist for missing numbers, this usually identifies small percentages of matches – 10%-25%. A second concern is having sufficient names with numbers to make automated



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dialing productive. There are always names not home, voice mail, disconnected numbers, etc. -- 5,000 is often a minimum and most firms will want 10,000 names with numbers to be productive.

Finally, you must have valid credit card numbers from a previous sale to sell on an outbound call. No customer will share their credit card number with someone who phoned them, even from a company whose product they adore. Your call must allow the rep to advise the customer that the credit card they used previously will be billed. It's usually wise to repeat the last 4 digits and the expiration date to verify the card is valid.

Tip ... find an outbound telemarketing partner who bills on a PI (per inquiry/per order) basis to limit your risk and put the focus squarely on sales.

Have a question on any of this? Email me: Saltman@AltmanDedicatedDirect.com Next month we'll look at ancillary revenue streams from renting access your customer list and outgoing shipments.

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