

Altman Dedicated Direct

STRATEGY... TACTICS... RESULTS

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

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Topic: **Maximizing sales from callers who don't order**

Whether you are lucky enough to be converting 75% of callers to buyers, or are scrambling for a mere 45%, there are ways to maximize sales by taking appropriate actions. Like wringing out a sponge, the first squeeze gets the largest volume, but enough water (sales) remains to make additional squeezing worthwhile.

Your first step is to have telemarketing identify and segment prospects based on their non-order reasons. The most common are:

1. Prefer ordering by check or money order
2. Want a brochure/catalog
3. Have questions regarding product usage

There may be other reasons specific to your product. Reasons for not ordering usually don't exceed 3-5 primary causes; the 3 reasons above are always present. Classifying segments allows you to focus and prioritize your efforts.

The first tactics implemented should be those executed while the caller is on the phone:

- o Accept checks by phone. You may be more successful capturing check orders by phone with an additional bonus "Mrs. Jones, you will also be eligible for this extra widget when you use our check by phone service today....".
- o Callers who want a brochure/catalog are interested but not convinced. You may get these fence sitters to place an order now, with an offer of a downsell to a lower priced "entry" version of your product. Caution -- be sure your phone reps don't substitute the downsell for a sales rebuttal causing a reduction in revenue for your main offer.
- o For callers with product usage questions, having as many answers as possible while they are on the phone will give you the opportunity to turn that call into a sale. Get phone reps to log questions for a period of 2-3 weeks so you know what information to provide and then train reps on that info.

Now that you've wrung out as many sales as possible while prospects are on the phone, your next step is to ensure you have information to follow up. Capture name and address for every non-ordering caller. Consider capturing email address as well, though not everyone has, or is willing to share their email.

Once the prospect hangs up, there is still opportunity to convert them. Critical Point: For successful follow-up conversion, ***time is of the essence***. Aim for delivery of follow-



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up within 2 weeks of the phone call; every additional day between the date of the call and arrival of your follow-up will diminish response. Don't be "penny-wise and pound-foolish" by mailing via 3rd class mail; use 1st class or consider a specialized mailing service that gets mail into prospect hands *FAST*.

A single approach for all segments can be used with minor copy changes in your letter, tailoring it to each segment's concerns. Copywriters, designers, and production experts who understand direct mail can save you money by taking maximum advantage of postal rates and standard paper sizes. And code each of the groups separately so you can analyze responses to determine which are worth mailing (potentially multiple times) and which aren't.

Consider email follow-up, but until spam volume abates significantly, mail continues to get stronger response. The best use of email may be an additional reminder to respond to the mailed offer, and for segments that don't respond well enough to support mailing costs.

You may never wring out every possible sale from the callers who don't buy, but make sure you take the right steps and sufficient actions to convert as many callers as you profitably can.

Next month we'll look at ways to reduce product returns even before the sale is made.

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