



Five Secrets to Hiring a B2B Telemarketing Agency

How to identify B2B telemarketing
agencies that command results

by Jeff Kalter, Co-Founder and CEO

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Executive Summary

Today's digital landscape is sparking a major transformation in B2B marketing. Buyers are spending a significant amount of their time online, and they often opt to do their own research when looking for the products and services that solve their challenges. Content marketing and social media marketing offer great promise in enabling marketers to interact with buyers online and provide them with the information they seek. Unfortunately, these methods can distract marketing from its core business objective, which is to support sales teams by generating qualified, actionable leads.

It is this very objective of lead generation that is creating a divide between today's sales and marketing organizations. On the whole, B2B marketing organizations find the task of generating leads difficult. At the same time, sales teams claim that the leads they receive from marketing don't meet their quality standards.

B2B telemarketing offers the potential to not only generate quality leads but also bring sales and marketing organizations together as they work toward a common goal. As many marketing organizations realize, outsourcing lead generation to a B2B telemarketing agency is highly effective.

Yet not all B2B telemarketing agencies are created equal. In this white paper, we'll refute and disprove telemarketing's negative reputation and discuss the important qualities of effective telemarketing agencies. Our goal is to ensure that marketers have the information they need to outsource telemarketing with confidence.

B2B telemarketing agencies have the skills and expertise to fill the lead generation gap and provide sales with the quality, actionable leads that command results.

Market Drivers

Bridging the Divide Between Sales and Marketing

Increasingly, marketing organizations are focusing their efforts on inbound marketing activities, and rightly so in our digital age. At the same time, sales organizations want immediate results. In their pursuit of the next sale and fulfilling their quota for the month or quarter, they don't have the time or patience to wait for inbound marketing efforts to take effect.

What's more, B2B marketing organizations reveal that generating leads is a significant challenge. According to Marketing Sherpa, 74% of marketers say that generating high-quality leads is their greatest challenge, and 49% report that generating a high volume of leads is a challenge.¹

Sales teams feel the effects of this difficulty. Often, the leads that sales teams receive from marketing haven't been thoroughly qualified, or they aren't ready to buy in the short timeframe in which sales teams typically operate. In most cases, sales teams simply don't use the leads that marketing generates, knowing that these leads don't produce the results they need. Research shows that as many as 70% of leads generated by marketing departments are ignored by sales.²

What results is a divide between sales and marketing organizations. And this misalignment will only continue as sales and marketing teams work toward diverse goals. Trends in digital marketing will only increase marketing's focus on inbound activities. And in a weak economy, sales teams are all the more focused on closing the next sale.

Clearly, if marketing is to effectively support their sales teams, a solution must be found. B2B telemarketing agencies have the skills and expertise to fill the lead generation gap and provide sales with quality, actionable leads that command results. A B2B telemarketing agency can act as an extension of sales and marketing teams to do much more than generate leads. In this way, B2B telemarketing agencies bridge the divide between sales and marketing, creating alignment as they work toward a common goal.

Challenges

Marketers Deterred by Telemarketing's Negative Reputation

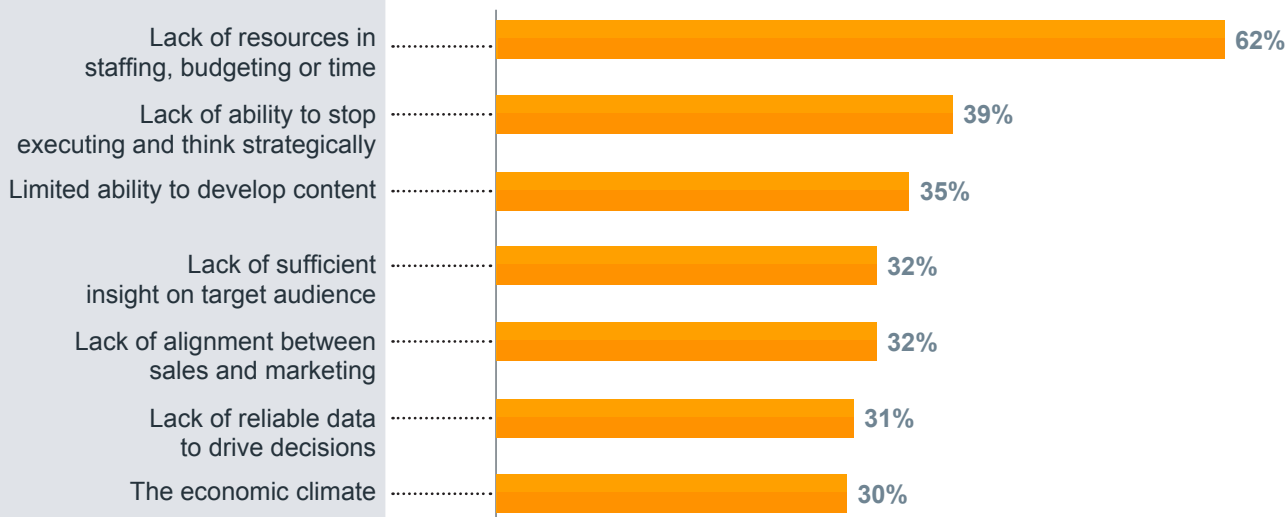
Many B2B marketers recognize the power of telemarketing as a solution to their lead generation challenges. And outsourcing the

¹ 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa, 2011.

² The Sales Lead Black Hole: On Sales Reps' Follow-Up of Marketing Leads, American Marketing Association, January 2013.

telemarketing function to an agency with the skills and expertise in B2B lead generation proves highly effective. In fact, the Marketing Sherpa study mentioned above notes that 62% of marketers claim that a lack of resources is their greatest barrier to success.³ Rather than bringing telemarketing in-house, marketers are best served by outsourcing it.

Barriers to Success in B2B Marketing



Source: 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa, 2011

However, it's difficult to discuss the power of telemarketing without also addressing its negative reputation. Despite the great promise that telemarketing holds in generating leads and bringing sales and marketing toward a common goal, many marketers are deterred by telemarketing's negative reputation. They fear that a telemarketing agency could potentially damage the brand.

While it's unfortunate that this negative perception keeps marketing organizations from getting the resources they need, their fears are not entirely unfounded. Unfortunately, there are some agencies that have tarnished the name of B2B telemarketing. These agencies use invasive tactics to pitch products and services that are entirely irrelevant to the person they are calling.

What's more, many corporations have outsourced the telemarketing function to offshore agencies. At best, these offshore agencies pay little heed to the language barrier. At worst, these agencies are simply unable to communicate marketing messaging and effectively sell the products and services they pitch.

³ 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa, 2011.

A Gallup honesty and ethics poll reflects the negative reputation that telemarketing holds among the American public. According to the poll, 53% of respondents said telemarketers rate low or very low in honesty and ethics. Professions such as nursing and pharmacy rank high, while telemarketers rank above only car salespeople, lobbyists, and members of Congress.⁴

Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields -- very high, high, average, low, or very low?

	% Very high / High	% Average	% Very Low / Low
Nurses	84%	15%	1%
Pharmacists	73%	23%	4%
Medical doctors	70%	23%	6%
High school teachers	62%	29%	8%
Police officers	54%	35%	11%
Clergy	52%	36%	9%
Funeral directors	44%	43%	9%
Accountants	43%	49%	7%
Building contractors	26%	58%	15%
Journalists	26%	46%	27%
Bankers	25%	48%	26%
Real estate agents	20%	57%	22%
Lawyers	19%	43%	37%
Business executives	18%	48%	32%
Labor union leaders	18%	37%	41%
Stockbrokers	12%	46%	40%
Advertising practitioners	11%	52%	34%
Telemarketers	8%	38%	53%
Car salespeople	7%	44%	47%
Lobbyists	7%	27%	62%
Members of Congress	7%	27%	64%

Source: Gallup, Nov. 28-Dec. 1, 2011

⁴ Gallup poll, December 2011

What's more, stories in the news portray telemarketing in a very negative light. Google searches reveal stories of telemarketers targeting vulnerable and lonely elderly to commit fraud and theft. Other stories identify irate benefactors who discover that a significant portion of their charity donations goes to the telemarketing agency.

Fortunately, there are many in the telemarketing industry who defy this negative reputation. The American Teleservices Association Code of Ethics states, "ATA supports a targeted marketing approach, recognizing that untargeted calling is not in the best interest of consumers, businesses, or the telemarketing industry. Calls should always be targeted to people or companies likely to have a use for the particular product or service being offered."⁵

The American Marketing Association also promotes ethical norms. Its code of ethics encourages marketers to embrace ethical values. "This means building relationships and enhancing consumer confidence in the integrity of marketing by affirming these core values: honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, transparency, and citizenship."⁶

Clearly, not all telemarketing agencies reflect the negative reputation that is so pervasive among the American public. In fact, by identifying several important criteria, marketing organizations can hire telemarketing agencies that generate the leads their sales organizations need.



Solution

Five Secrets to Hiring a B2B Telemarketing Agency

How is a marketing organization to ensure that their outsourced telemarketing agency complies with ethical values? How do they ensure the telemarketing agency will protect their brand's integrity? The key to ensuring ethical norms in an outsourced telemarketing agency lies in identifying several important qualities. Here are five secrets to hiring effective B2B telemarketing agencies.

Secret #1

Ensure the agency specializes in B2B

When evaluating telemarketing agencies, the most important consideration is whether the agency specializes in B2B. Marketing to consumers is entirely different from marketing to businesses. In fact, the B2B audience has changed in recent years. The Internet has dramatically transformed buyer behavior, particularly in B2B.

⁵ American Teleservices Association, 2012

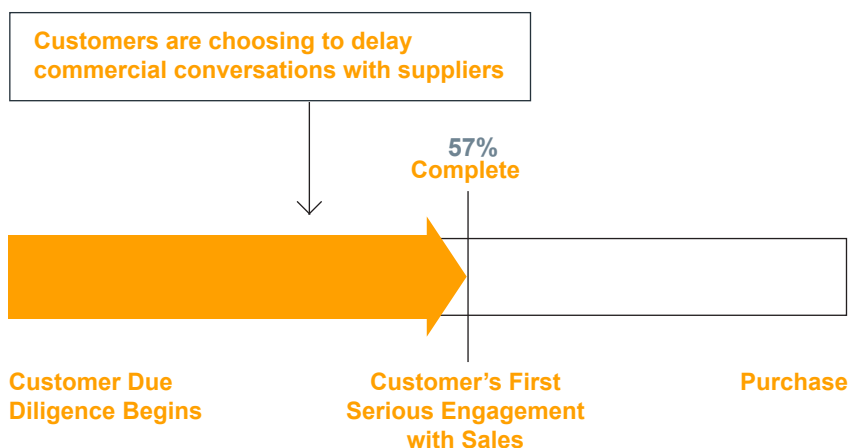
⁶ American Marketing Association, February 2009

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Today's savvy, educated, and overworked prospects only invest time in learning about a business if marketers offer them quality, educational, and relevant information.

Insights from *Harvard Business Review* support this theory: "A recent Corporate Executive Board study of more than 1,400 B2B customers found that those customers completed, on average, nearly 60% of a typical purchasing decision—researching solutions, ranking options, setting requirements, benchmarking pricing, and so on—before even having a conversation with a supplier."⁷

Degree of Progress Through the Purchase Process Before Engaging Sales Customer Average



Source: Corporate Executive Board, Marketing Leadership Council Customer Purchase Research Survey, 2011

An untargeted, unfocused telemarketing campaign yields few results with a B2B audience. On the other hand, the telemarketing agency that specializes in B2B understands the needs of B2B buyers and addresses them effectively.

More specifically, the B2B telemarketing agency should be able to speak intelligently about the following:

B2B products and services are more complex. Agents must be educated and experienced enough to not only understand marketing messages, but also communicate them without a script. Agents must also be able to answer impromptu questions about complex products and services.

⁷ The End of Solution Sales, Harvard Business Review, July-August 2012

The telemarketing agency that specializes in B2B understands all of the nuances that come with a long sales cycle. B2B sales are based on relationships, not transactions.

The effective telemarketing agency must be able to cultivate and protect the company's valuable relationships.

B2B products carry a longer sales cycle. The telemarketing agency that specializes in B2B understands all of the nuances that come with a long sales cycle. B2B sales are based on relationships, not transactions.

B2B has fewer potential buyers than B2C. When a company's customer base is small and focused, the telemarketing agency must take care with each and every call.

B2B products and services carry complex pricing models. With their complex products and long sales cycles, B2B companies need a telemarketing agency that understands and communicates intricate pricing.

B2B audiences have different buying emotions. A B2B prospect has very different considerations when evaluating a product. B2C buyers are often guided by emotion and gut feelings. B2B buyers are driven by research and results.

B2B buyers come in many forms. In B2C marketing, there is typically only one buyer to consider. In B2B, the entire chain of command must be considered. B2B companies must market to all decision makers—c-level executives, business managers, IT executives, and end users—all of whom have differing requirements.

Secret #2

Ask the agency about its experience with enterprises

While marketing to a B2B buyer is a complicated endeavor, working with enterprises carries additional complexities. This holds true whether the marketing organization or the targeted buyer represents an enterprise.

Typically, products and services offered by enterprises must be marketed according to the benefits they bring and the challenges they solve. All enterprise-level sales are based on three criteria: relationships, solutions, and insights.

Relationships: Complex products and services offered by enterprises require deep, lasting relationships between the company and its customers. No transactional selling is involved. For this reason, the effective telemarketing agency must be able to cultivate and protect the company's valuable relationships.

Solutions: All products and services sold by enterprise organizations are worth much more than their specific features and benefits. They bring value to the buyer because of the challenges they solve. This is the fundamental idea behind solution selling. First uncover the specific needs and challenges faced by the targeted buyer, and then present the ways in which the product or service resolves those challenges. Top B2B telemarketing agencies have the skills and expertise to perform this with finesse.

Insights: Insight selling goes beyond solution selling and is all about offering new ideas to the savvy buyer. Enterprise organizations that follow an insight selling approach challenge their buyers see their needs in a different way. These enterprises then present their products and solutions in light of the new insights. It's a complex sales model that only the enterprise-focused B2B telemarketing agency can accomplish.

Secret #3

Inquire about industry expertise

With such complex issues presented by the typical B2B marketing organization, industry expertise is crucial. Even if a telemarketing company specializes in B2B and has experience with enterprises, it cannot expertly communicate marketing messages unless it has deep industry experience.

With demonstrated expertise in a particular industry, the telemarketing agency will:

- Fluently speak the industry's language
- Understand the typical buyer's needs and challenges
- Stay in touch with industry news and trends

Typically, it's plainly obvious when a company doesn't have industry-specific experience. They may be able to communicate marketing messaging, but when it comes to interacting with decision makers who live and breathe in their industry, the experience is lacking. The B2B telemarketing agency without industry experience is unable to answer impromptu questions and use the terminology that resonates with the buyer.

Secret #4

Ensure the agency employs top agents

For every telemarketing agency, the agents on the phones are the ones who stand on the front lines. Top executives can say all the right things when speaking about their services, yet the quality of the work performed is only as good as the quality of its agents.

All agents are highly trained and college-educated. They are intelligent enough to carry ad-hoc conversations without relying on scripts.

When ensuring that a telemarketing agency specializes in B2B and demonstrates experience with enterprises in a particular industry, the marketing organization should ensure that the agents on the phones reflect these qualities. There are several factors to consider:

- The agency assigns dedicated agents to every client so agents become thoroughly familiar with the company and its products and services.
- All agents are highly trained and college-educated. They are intelligent enough to carry ad-hoc conversations without relying on scripts.
- Agents are assigned roles based on their industry expertise.
- The agency assigns a dedicated project manager to oversee all work.
- Agents only work in languages they speak natively.

Essentially, when evaluating a telemarketing agency's personnel, the marketing organization must ensure that all agents are experienced and intelligent enough to effectively communicate marketing messaging, explain complex products, and expertly address any objections the buyer may present.

Secret #5

Determine whether the agency can act as an extension of the marketing team

While many telemarketing agencies work on a project basis, marketers gain much more value if they see the telemarketing agency as an extension of their team. In this way, the telemarketing agency lends support in all campaigns, from strategy to execution. The telemarketing agency capable of doing so is characterized by the following:

- Takes a consultative approach, demonstrating the experience and expertise required to effectively improve campaigns and drive results
- Is highly transparent, allowing access to the agents on the phones
- Follows a proven, defined process
- Offers sophisticated, real-time reporting that's integrated with the marketing organization's CRM solution
- Produces measurable results, often exceeding expectations

What's more, as an extension of the marketing organization, the telemarketing agency provides additional services like responding to inbound calls, inbound chat, event marketing support, lead nurturing to stay in touch with prospects who aren't ready to buy, and strategic and tactical marketing support wherever it may be needed.

Conclusion

Top telemarketing agencies drive business growth

As discussed, many of today's B2B sales and marketing organizations are misaligned, disagreeing on what constitutes a quality lead. At the same time, marketing organizations find the fundamental task of generating quality leads to be a significant challenge. Consequently, many sales organizations simply ignore the leads generated by their marketing departments.

Telemarketing holds great promise in bridging the divide between sales and marketing by generating the high-quality leads that sales organizations so desperately need. Yet due to the prevailing negative reputation, many marketing organizations cannot outsource telemarketing with confidence.

Contradicting the negative reputation, top B2B telemarketing agencies are characterized by five important criteria: B2B specialization, experience with enterprises, industry expertise, high-quality agents, and a consultative approach that enables it to act as an extension of the marketing organization.

In the end, with these qualities at their core, top B2B telemarketing agencies generate quality leads, enable marketing to focus on inbound activities, and give sales the leads they need to close deals and drive business growth.

About the Author

Jeff Kalter, Co-Founder and CEO

Jeff Kalter is the co-founder and CEO of 3D2B, a B2B telemarketing firm that helps sales and marketing organizations across the globe generate qualified leads, cultivate relationships with targeted buyers, and grow existing customer accounts.

Jeff co-founded 3D2B in 2003 after recognizing a need for high-end global telemarketing services for B2B companies. What started as a small, two-person company has grown to a multinational business with more than 100 employees. Today, he leads the company in all strategic endeavors including marketing, business development, and operations.

Before founding 3D2B, Jeff held key positions in advertising, marketing, and sales for companies in high-end apparel, industrial waterworks, and technology. This experience includes the companies Bruce Supply Corporation, Central Foundries, which he co-founded, Toshiba, Cisco Systems, 3Com, and ESCADA in Germany.

Jeff earned his bachelor's degree in architecture from New York Institute of Technology. His background includes experience in graphic design, and he is a certified Salesforce.com administrator.

Happily married since 1995, Jeff devotes his free time to his passion for animals, cooking, skiing, scuba diving, and all things techy. Born and raised in New York City, Jeff currently resides in Rome, Italy and New York City.

About 3D2B

Established in 2003, 3D2B provides B2B telemarketing and lead generation services to help foster customer relationships and boost sales across all industries. With offices in Rome and New York, 3D2B assists sales and marketing organizations across the globe.

Founded on the principle of providing quality, specialized B2B telemarketing and lead generation services, 3D2B prides itself in the fact that its agents are highly educated, natively speak the languages they cover, and have industry-specific experience. For more information about 3D2B, visit www.3D2B.com.

Learn More

To learn more about how 3D2B can help you generate leads and improve the effectiveness of your sales and marketing organizations, contact us at **+1 718 709 0900** or **+39 06 978446 60 (EMEA)** or visit us at www.3D2B.com.

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