



Clarify Insight Paper

International Telemarketing - The Illusion of Locality

Introduction

The B2B buyer's journey has changed radically in a few short years. B2B buyers are now in control and marketing departments need to understand this fact, understand their buyers' needs, and react in an appropriate manner. We need to stop "random acts of marketing" and learn how to build for the long term, educate rather than sell, and build lasting relationships on an international scale. Prospect organisations are always looking for efficiency gains. As technology makes the world a smaller place international businesses increasingly need to rationalise the vendors they work with to deliver products, services and capabilities.

Companies that have recognised this trend and have found ways to make this rationalisation easier are winning not just more, but bigger business - the challenge then lies in ensuring that you still retain good margins, and not just end up with bigger but less profitable business. This presents an opportunity for next generation international telemarketing. Companies should be utilising intelligent telemarketing, telenurturing, and opportunity identification activities that are able to identify not just the rationalisation opportunity but also all the up sell and cross sell potential associated and ensure this is developed.

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The role of telemarketing

There is much debate about telemarketing becoming irrelevant in the new B2B buyer journey. Many people argue that telemarketing is dead in a B2B world where prospects spend a huge amount of time online and in social media forums researching, educating themselves and seeking views from peers around the world. Prospects may only engage with a seller when they are ready to buy, and have a preferred vendor of choice. So why bother with telemarketing, let alone on an international level?

Waiting for a prospect to decide what they need to buy transforms the sales process into a first come, first served situation of jumping on explicit opportunity where neither the buyer nor the seller may end up with the best and most profitable solution for them - meaning your close rates and ROI will be unpredictable and unmanageable. The fact is prospects still want to engage, face to face or over a phone, when ready. They want and need to be educated so they can identify and choose a solution of the most benefit to them. The trick is to stop selling, and start listening.

There is still a place for identifying and responding to explicit requirements of course, but telemarketing services must be developed to support the new buyer's journey too; educating them and understanding their business pains, helping them discover what options there are available, and being ready to deliver when they are ready to buy. The identification and nurturing of pain led, latent opportunity is how relationships are built, and larger deals are won. When positioned effectively in the buyer's journey, telemarketing is a very visible face of the brand - the shop window. However, brands can be just as easily damaged by low quality, uninformed, poorly researched and educated phone calling.

Next Generation telemarketing

Much as prospects seek out efficient vendors - the vendors themselves need efficiency in their sales and marketing partners. There is no room anymore for one trick ponies, telemarketing needs to be flexible and scalable across propositions, geographies, and the business needs as they evolve. They need to be able to support and enhance the buyer's journey and the sales cycle from seed nurturing, to lead and opportunity generation and nurturing.

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The days of running campaigns in isolation of broader strategy are surely dead. A telemarketing agency needs to be a strategic partner, there needs to be a unified approach to communication. So the need for effective international telemarketing is there – but how do we deliver it? The obvious hurdle of language barriers is the tip of the iceberg – and too often agencies believe they have found the trick to international telemarketing when they employ language speakers.

International considerations

Traditional telemarketing fails in an international arena. It is not enough to pick up the phone and ask if there is an opportunity. The people you put on the phone to represent your brand need the same skills as top sales people – they need to understand your proposition and have the ability and motivation to engage consultatively and develop opportunity over time, not simply qualify in or out. They need the skills and language to navigate global accounts. They need to be able to build rapport and trust, which means a natural sensitivity to issues of culture and dialect – and the ability to interpret personal behaviour and the mood of the prospect. Prospects need engagement on their wavelength, to reduce the risk of suspicion or reluctance to give out information over the phone. The agency itself needs the infrastructure to support international engagements, native language speakers and consistent proposition training and messaging across geographies. However, it will never be a case of one size fits all – every territory will come with its own particular obstacles and opportunities.

Another key consideration is how to get buy in and support from the sales teams who will be the recipients of the telemarketing output. Local sales teams want local services, not centrally run services imposed upon them. The further the distance between you and them, the harder you have to work to establish and maintain your credibility.

The answer is Think Global, Act Local.

To get value and buy in, local sales teams want to be involved in scoping services with people in their own territories who understand their culture and sales practices. Marketing teams need to have consistency of reporting, use of systems and data, approach and measurement across international territories. This is most easily achieved via a single agency with a single relationship, who can offer both international account management and centralised programme management with local delivery centres, in country. More and more organisations have a global account list and are looking to sell and deliver services to global parties, this approach relies on

taking an international sales and marketing strategy. Agencies must fulfil this need and be international themselves, if they are to effectively deliver results for international clients with international prospects.

Telemarketing cannot, therefore, ever be truly international. Localisation is key. There can only be well targeted, locally sensitive, regional telemarketing delivered in the right way for the market – that can be managed centrally at an international level. This ‘illusion of locality’ benefits the local sales teams by offering them an escalation point from their local service, and one level of accountability. It allows controlled management of internal politics and structural issues, and objectivity in measurement, reporting and refinement. It allows sharing of ideas and success, as well as local autonomy and communication.

At Clarify we have had great success in implementing a ‘Prime and Wingman’ model for our global clients. Each account has a Prime owner, usually based locally to our customer’s Group HQ, and Wingmen who take ownership of subsidiaries in local countries. All activities are coordinated centrally by the account Prime. As an agency we can therefore integrate closely with the customer across regions to ensure high quality is maintained and the brand is communicated consistently.

How can the ‘illusion of locality’ be effective?

One of the primary challenges of managing an international telemarketing programme is creating a unified approach; a single voice to the customer – delivered on a local level that is relevant to the audience. This can only be achieved by ensuring that all the salespeople involved (both telephone and field based) have a good basis in consultative/conceptual selling and understand the propositions they’re taking to market and that these are regularly reviewed and reinforced across all countries and regions. There needs to be established strong relationships between those individuals based on the phone and those in the field, at both a global and national level where applicable.

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Integration of other campaign mediums

Another challenge is that of how to aggregate and manage the data and intelligence gathered – we need to ensure that there is an ability to represent all engagements with prospects at both a regional level and as a global entity. Some CRM systems have the ability to create hierarchies of accounts and display this information but you also need to have carefully defined what is important to capture and put in place rigorous controls to ensure information is collated and analysed.

The international organisations you'll be targeting tend to be more advanced in their means of communication than might otherwise be the case, meaning the potential for multi-channel (web, social media, telephone and email for example) campaigns to be successful is greater than ever. The challenge lies in being able to use the information you have to target your messages effectively (dealing with many different contact roles in large, complex organisations is a particularly unique B2B marketing challenge) and making sense of the wealth of information that will be coming in from multiple geographies so as to establish the best overall strategy and set of tactics to engage each organisation.

In conclusion

As globalisation continues apace and the world becomes a smaller and smaller place - it remains as important as ever to provide intelligent, consultative solutions to international organisations and to support this with equally sophisticated sales and marketing practices.

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About Clarify

Clarify provide outsourced sales cycle development services, delivering high value sales pipelines exclusively to enterprise technology organisations with complex value propositions. Clarify are experts in early stage customer acquisition and high quality pipeline development – our consultative sales teams seek out both latent and explicit opportunity to consistently deliver results.

Our unique combination of the best people, sophisticated sales techniques, meticulous data management and professional training and infrastructure will optimise your sales cycle development activities. The result is a seamless link between sales and marketing, predictable delivery of ROI and increased sales productivity to retain competitive advantage.

Get in touch

To learn about how Clarify can help your organisation with your international sales cycle development activity, get in touch with our Business Development team:

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