

Sound Telecom
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HOW TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A SUCCESSFUL TELEMARKETING CAMPAIGN

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Abstract:

This article is focused on presenting the reader with a thorough understanding of the basic steps necessary to design and implement a successful Outbound Telemarketing Campaign.

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Sales may come and sales may go, but one thing is for certain – nothing will cost you time, money and potential sales faster than a poorly organized outbound call campaign. Not to mention the guaranteed frustration you will experience. Sound Telecom has been a part of many successful outbound call campaigns and has seen its share of poorly executed disasters. What's that, you say? Sound Telecom has been responsible for a failed campaign? No, not exactly. We'll do everything we can to make an outbound call campaign successful, but we can't help folks that absolutely refuse to listen to good advice.

Sound Telecom takes your business very seriously. Unfortunately, some of our past clients have not shown the same care and attention for their very own sales projects. We'd like you to benefit from our experience and avoid making some very basic mistakes that can make a disaster out of a perfectly good outbound call campaign.

What do I need to do?

In order to properly launch an effective outbound campaign, you must pay attention to the following 6 steps. The name of the game is *anticipation and preparation*.

1. **Know your Market** – It is essential that you fully understand your targeted customer before you start calling. There are three primary areas of focus here:
 - ✓ *Demographics* – Where does your target market live (geographics)? What is their median income and how old are they?
 - ✓ *Psychographics* – You need to thoroughly understand why your customers want to be customers of yours. This involves a detailed study of the wants, needs and desires of your target market. This involves a detailed study of the wants, needs and desires of your target market. You need to thoroughly understand why your customers want to be customers of yours. Pay attention to ethical and moral standards and particular cultural orientation and so on.
 - ✓ *Radius Mapping* - A list broker targets specifically identified consumers by mapping their proximity to a certain location using a common factor such as zip code or area code and so on. It is also possible to target "around" a competitor's location

Thoroughly review your existing customer data for trends and information on their buying behaviors. You can find detailed information on these topics by reviewing US Federal Census statistics, State and Local Demographic statistics and other business statistics generally available to you at your local chamber of commerce. You can also discuss this with a reputable list broker.

2. **Develop a Compelling Reason to Listen** – Seems logical, doesn't it? You cannot contact people on the phone and try to pitch them new business if you don't have a pitch to begin with. You need to have a strong compelling offer or a reason for the customer on the other end of the phone to *want* to take action. Create your offer first and then think through all of the possible rejections and objections prospects might throw at you. Develop rebuttals for each. This is how you craft an agent script. We *need* these types of scripts in order to be responsive and informative while speaking to prospects. Make sure that you clearly explain your unique value proposition. Are you providing a solution? Do you have a compelling offer? Your prospects need to know what it is that makes your approach a worthwhile thing to listen to. Remember also these two very important rules:
 - ✓ KIS – Keep It Simple – You don't have very much time to get a person interested in what you say. So why would you want a highly detailed, overly complicated sales approach? Prospects will tune you out if they cannot immediately grasp what it is you are trying to say and accomplish.
 - ✓ KIR – Keep It Real – Do not try to use "clever" tactics and "tricky" sales techniques. These foolish attempts at speaking to a prospect are better suited to the proverbial used car salesman. When you underestimate the intelligence of your prospect you are doing everyone involved a disservice. People like to be spoken to with dignity and respect so base your sales approach in reality.

3. **Get a Great List, Not a Good List** – This could be the single most important thing that you do...get a great list. You need to devote research and resources to obtaining a high-quality, reliable list. *If you do not have a well-qualified, targeted list your outbound telesales campaign will fail.*
 - ✓ Use the Internet and do Thorough Web Research – You can find out a lot about your consumers by using the Web as a research tool. You can also make side-by-side vendor comparisons on list brokers.
 - ✓ Study Existing Regulations – Whether you are doing Business-to-Business or Business to Consumer telemarketing you must be fully aware of the existing federal regulations regarding your campaign. Business-to-Business campaigns are generally exempted from federal calling regulations. However, Business to Consumer campaigns *must* adhere to the rules contained within the federal Do Not Call regulations. You can review these rules in detail by visiting <https://telemarketing.donotcall.gov/>.
 - ✓ Use a High-Quality List Vendor – If you don't know what to do, speak to someone who does. Sound Telecom has aligned itself with several reputable vendors and we are happy to refer you to them. Many successful campaigns have also been based on existing customer data lists.
 - ✓ Don't be Penny-Wise and Dollar Poor – You get what you pay for. By scrimping on lists you will end up with a sub-standard product most of the time.

4. **Set Realistic Expectations** – So you think it's reasonable to expect a 25% positive return on telesales calls? It may be time to reconsider that assumption. There are many disingenuous companies floating rumors of wild success and huge, "guaranteed" results. If you believe the hype, then we can definitively say, "Buyer Beware" and best of luck to you.
 - ✓ There Is No Such Thing as a "Guaranteed" Result – No reputable outbound telesales outsourcer will promise you a guaranteed result if they are worth their salt. Outbound projects are incredibly dynamic and rely on many outside, uncontrollable factors. What a reputable outbound campaign manager will do is meet or beat your *realistic* expectations.
 - ✓ Base Your Expectations on Actual Data – Never done an outbound telesales campaign before? Then do one in-house. Get a list of about 300 existing customers or purchase a quality list and spend time calling those leads. Track and closely monitor your results and

carefully review your data. This is a learning experience and will be a small reflection of what can and likely will happen on a much larger scale. Or, you can base your knowledge on existing inbound or outbound sales data that you have at hand. If you know that only 3% of your outbound calls have resulted in past success and then you contact an outsourcing vendor and expect to achieve 15% you will likely end up far short of the mark.

5. Understand Your Unique Timing – They say that timing is everything... and they're right. Your timing must be accurate in order to effectively target your market.
 - ✓ When are they at home or work?
 - ✓ Is it your proper buying season?
 - ✓ Is the buying season on the rise or on the wane?
 - ✓ What is the best time of day to contact your prospects

If you don't know the answers to these questions, then you don't understand your market's timing.

6. Be Prepared to Make Adjustments Along the Way – Sound Telecom prides itself on the fact that we include our clients in every step of the process as we build, train and launch an Outbound Call Campaign. In fact, you are likely to get to know our agents on a first-name basis. We will spend time with you each day if necessary giving you immediate feedback on the progress of a campaign. We tell you what your prospects are telling us. This way, we can make mission critical script changes and temper our approach if necessary to be as successful as possible. Our clients can "look under the hood" and are included as an integral member of the team.

Where did all my money go?

Let's talk about a past client of ours that didn't put much effort into his campaign and paid the price in both time and money. Let's call this person Ben. Our client, Ben, approached us and asked if we could help him prospect for new leads to increase sales for his electrical contracting business. Of course, we were happy to help. Ben's outbound project was to be launched in June to coincide with his seasonal business. Ben's customers are generally new home construction projects and remodels. Ben had never done an outbound telesales campaign and was not sure what to expect. Other electrical contractors in the area told Ben they had achieved super results with telesales and normally received 15% returns.

When Ben contacted us he had not done any research into the validity of this claim and expected us to duplicate these results. We were extremely hesitant because this is unusually high for *his* market. We knew this because we've done work with other contractors. We told Ben that a 3% return would be more realistic. Ben then said that the list that he had was of exceptional quality and was sure to bring in something close to the 15% that his peers were bragging about. We settled on a 5% expected return.

Ben had no compelling offer, no script and was not sure how to approach his customers. We pointed Ben in the right direction and worked with him to craft a script. Ultimately, however, who should know Ben's customer base better than Ben? Ben spent very little time crafting his script and rebuttals. Needless to say, when we finally received the approved final draft, it was the beginning of July – one month past our launch date.

We began to aggressively call the contacts on Ben's list according to Ben's instruction – between the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday thru Friday. The first thing that became immediately apparent was that folks were not home at this time – they were at work. Another thing that we noticed is that we had a lot of disconnected numbers. To top it off, of the people we were able to contact, over 30% of them spoke Spanish. Unfortunately, Ben did not engage us to converse with Spanish-speaking individuals, even though we could have provided this service for him. We knew something was wrong with Ben's list and asked him to secure a new list immediately. He went to his previous list vendor for 4000 "fresh" contacts. We asked to see the certification that the list was compliant with the federal Do Not Call regulations. The list was not compliant. We asked Ben to have it validated. He returned to the vendor only to pay additional money to have the list "scrubbed." Out of the 4000 contacts Ben originally paid for with his "reputable" vendor, only 700 of them were validated. This process took almost a week to complete. And,

as if according to plan, of these 700 contacts – over 30% of them spoke Spanish and Ben did not have any Spanish-speaking electricians and had not adjusted internally to this growing sector of the market! Ben thought he was really getting a “good deal” on a list from an anonymous Internet vendor. It ended up costing him far more than he had budgeted for. When it comes to lists don’t forget this important rule – *“You get what you pay for.”*

We recommended that Ben terminate the campaign immediately or get a good list and start again. He insisted that we press on because he was certain he had a sure thing. We continued and completed 2000 calls (half of the campaign’s total). Of those folks we were actually able to contact and that spoke English, we kept hearing the same thing over and over again. Either they had already contracted with another vendor or had any work they needed finished back in June, or they were renting and their landlords maintained all of their electrical needs.

Ben finally conceded the loss and we stopped at the halfway point. Ben spent several thousand dollars and ended up securing only two sales prospects. That’s almost \$1500 per lead!!! So what happened? Turns out Ben made a lot of the mistakes that we advised him against. They ranked as follows:

- **First** – Ben had no grasp of his market’s demographics. He didn’t know the area well and had overlooked the fact that much of the local community spoke Spanish. Something Ben was not taking into account and so he underestimated his market.
- **Second** – Ben did not have a well-thought out compelling offer and script designed. His sales pitch was weak and uninspiring and our agents continually fielded new rebuttals daily to which Ben was unsure how to respond.
- **Third** – Ben did not get a good list. Turns out that his vendor of choice sold him a very poor quality list with completely unusable contacts on it. Because Ben had to go back a second time to purchase additional contacts this cost him even more money. Then he had to pay to get the list “scrubbed” or approved according to federal DNC regulations. This “low cost” list ended up costing him time and money. Not to mention the fact that he did not engage us to communicate with the Spanish-speaking folks on that list, even though we could have done so.
- **Fourth** – Ben had completely unrealistic expectations. All of his friends in the business told him he’d get a 15% return. What they didn’t tell him is that they were primarily contacting their own customer base for over 75% of their outbound calls. The additional 25% of calls came from highly targeted lists purchased from reputable vendors. They were able to achieve 15% because they were calling mainly previous customers and were re-contracting them for new business!
- **Fifth** – Ben’s timing was wrong. The delay in creating a script set Ben’s project back one month. Because we started late, we missed the boat and most folks had already secured contractors.
- **Sixth** – Every time we asked Ben to spend time with us and listen to what our agents were trying to tell him he had better things to do. He would use phrases like, “I don’t know what you guys are doing, just sell!” and, “You’re the professionals. You figure out what we need to do.” Of course, Ben wasn’t participating in the process at all and was not willing to sit in the driver’s seat. Ultimately, Ben knew his product better than anybody else but was not willing to share his sales approach and offer insight on his past successful experiences.

Despite our best efforts, Ben learned a very expensive lesson. We’d like you to learn this lesson, too, but not in the same manner. Take our word for it, if you neglect any one of the six areas listed above, you are likely setting yourself up for a failure. Outbound telesales are an effective method of gaining customers and expanding your sales base. If you approach an outbound campaign properly, you will achieve realistic, repeatable results and can add this type of approach to your marketing mixture.