
*Increase Sales & Lower Your Costs
Using Business-to-Business Telesales*

*“You can reach a hundred
prospects every week with
just one telesales agent.”*

—Darrell Goldrup
B2B Telesales Manager

taction
THE CONTACT CENTER

In the business-to-business arena, how can you lower your cost per sale and increase revenue?

One solution is to supplement field sales with a telesales force. The reasons for doing so are numerous. With successful implementation, the benefits will flow to your bottom line.

Telesales agents pitch prospects and sell to and service accounts without incurring travel expenses or long windshield times. It's all in the numbers. Telesales agents make more sales calls in less time. The result? More deals closed for a lower cost-per-sale.

Other benefits of a telesales team include:

- Telesales agents can move from one corner of their territory to another in seconds.
- They make appointments at the convenience of their dealers, not a travel schedule, creating a positive buying atmosphere and greater dealer satisfaction.
- Telesales agents move seamlessly from pro-active selling to real-time dealer support — another step toward enhancing dealer satisfaction.
- They change sales campaigns instantly, based on available inventory and other factors.
- They sell to and service accounts that have not reached their full buying potential because field salespeople are concentrating on larger key accounts.
- Telesales agents don't spend time booking flights and renting cars, traveling from appointment to appointment, calling the home office, plotting a daily travel plan, lugging sample cases, and waiting for appointments.
- Telesales agents are available whenever their dealers need them.
- One telesales agent can reach hundreds of prospects every month.

Managers cite other benefits. "I gather the troops to deliver messages, pep talks, updates, and impromptu training daily — whereas with field teams it's only practical to get together once or twice a year," says Randy Anderson, who heads up B2B operations at Taction. "Plus it's simple to keep tabs on a telesales team. Calls are tracked, recorded, and monitored. There's daily accountability, performance feedback, and tailored coaching."

Telesales agents are ideal adjuncts to a field sales team, offering support for special programs, and assisting field salespeople by completing paperwork, making follow-up calls, setting up appointments, and making advance calls to help the field salesperson squeeze in an unplanned sales visit. They also bird-dog problems and expedite solutions, and perform a number of sales-oriented or administrative tasks to let field salespeople keep their feet on the street.

BREAKING IT OUT

Accounts and duties can be split between your field sales and telesales teams in many ways. For instance:

FIELD SALES

Key accounts
Accounts with multiple locations

TELESALES

Lower volume accounts
Less frequent purchasers
Accounts in territories that aren't covered by field salespeople
Accounts in geographically far-flung areas
Accounts that make small but frequent purchases throughout their buying seasons

SHARED DUTIES

Contract renewal
Activation of lapsed accounts
Support of special sales campaigns

Realigning your B2B sales force for more efficiency and effectiveness by incorporating a telesales team can mean reduced costs, increased revenues, and enhanced dealer satisfaction. It can also mean happier, more efficient field salespeople when telesales agents are there to support them.

Key Considerations

There are several key considerations when incorporating your telesales team into the sales and marketing plan. In addition to deciding how duties will be split between field sales and telesales, you'll want to consider the following questions.

- *Will the telesales team be managed within the organization or will it be outsourced?* If the team is outsourced, you eliminate: the time and expense it takes to advertise for, interview, test, background check, and hire agents; the need to administer benefits; the need to set up complex data and telephone systems (including toll-free numbers for faxing and calling); and the need to train, coach, and motivate your agents for their position in general and for multiple tailored sales campaigns in particular.
- *How will the telesales team be compensated?* Will agents receive a commission? What other methods of compensation will be used to inspire agents to meet their quotas? How will inside support agents be compensated?
- *What channels can agents use to succeed?* Agents must be able to exploit every possible channel, including direct mail, e-mail, snail mail, e-fax, and telephone. For instance, Taction telesales agents have e-fax that is converted to e-mail and pushed directly and immediately to their desktop.

GIVE YOUR TELESales TEAM TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Be sure your website, catalog, and collateral support and supplement the information your telesales agents convey about your products or services.

Send mailings that combine a cleverly presented sample and imaginative collateral.

Make special offers that give telesales agents a great reason to initiate contact with prospects or reactivate lapsed accounts.

A Case Study

The Boyds Collection, Ltd., is a Pennsylvania company founded more than 25 years ago and best known today for its high quality plush bears and detailed resin figurines. The company's chairman realized Boyds needed to re-align its sales resources to counter a decline in the collectible and gift industry. Boyds' goals included reducing costs and providing even better experiences to its wide network of loyal dealers.

Boyds' decision came down to two very different companies: one of the largest outsourced call centers in the world or Taction, a small Maine contact center that has focused on high-touch, highly customized service for more than 20 years. Boyds had experimented with a direct-to-consumer catalog with Taction and although that concept was ultimately shelved, the company now understood firsthand the service and experience that Taction brings to the table. Ultimately, Taction's specialized plan to help Boyds incorporate an inside sales and support infrastructure led to the selection of this boutique contact center.

First, the Boyds field sales team was reduced by more than half. Those still in the field (called "Bearitory Sales Managers," or BSMs) began to focus on predetermined key territories and key accounts versus their former "every account in the territory" approach. They are assisted by a team of support agents at Taction, who receive bonuses based on the joint performance of these accounts.

The remainder of the Boyds' accounts are now assigned to a team of telesales agents at Taction. Each telesales agent serves hundreds of dealers in his or her assigned territory.

**GREAT SUPPORT RESULTS IN
HAPPY FIELD SALESPEOPLE**

"On Friday at 4:00 I received a four-page spreadsheet from [a major account located in Rhode Island] requesting item ship dates, case packs, prices, and UPC codes for the spring line. The report was due back on the buyer's desk by 5:30 that night! I called Jacky to find out where to locate the case pack information. Her response was, "Di, fax it over to me. I'll do it." I declined, it was 4:15 on a Friday and I knew she worked until 4:30. She then offered to help with the project and insisted she stay until it was completed. I would not have made the 5:30 deadline without her. As it turns out, the PO is being processed as we speak."

"I just got off the phone with my regional manager. I told her how awesome Jessica was. You make it easy to do a good job! Thanks Jessica!"

"I just wanted to tell you how helpful and wonderful you have been to me these last eight weeks while I have been learning the systems and accounts. It is nice to know that there are individuals who are willing to go the extra mile and take the time to explain situations and answer 101 questions!! I know that I can count on you to get back to me timely and with any answer that I may be looking for or if you don't know it you either direct me to the right source or you find it."

From Boyds BSM e-mails praising Taction support agents

These changes, coupled with significantly reduced travel by BSMs to dealers dispersed over a wide geographical area, immediately helped Boyds accomplish its first mission of reduced costs.

Understanding the Dealers

Next, Taction needed to find the most effective way to sell to the dealers in territories covered by its Boyds telesales agents.

Boyds Account Manager Rich Ellis was tasked with using his expertise in analytics to model Boyds' extensive dealer data into unique, custom-tailored reports.

Today, he maintains an accounts profile for each telesales agent listing active accounts (those who've bought within last year), inactive accounts (those who haven't bought in a year), and never active accounts (those who might have made an inquiry but never purchased or purchased before 2003).

"For instance, one agent's account list is 12 pages, with eight pages of active accounts sorted by size," says Ellis. "That instantly takes a lot of the noise out of his sales initiatives."

In addition to having a list that is sorted by opportunity, from large to small, the agent can tell what type of product each dealer is eligible for based on their "Paw" status (the Boyds' way to rank dealers), when the dealer last ordered, their current season's volume versus the prior season, their current year's volume versus the prior year, and notes on call resolution for each contact.

"We've given the agents much more information, enabling them to strategically plan their calling cycles," Ellis says. "Because now we know how big our customers are, we know their spending patterns, and we know what and when they last bought."

The Category Hit List

Ellis also developed a "Category Hit List" that shows category purchases by dealer, in such areas as licensed products, resin

products, and plush products. This has helped telesales agents make extremely strategic and tailored sales calls.

Support agents can help Boyds BSMs let their dealers know about such specials. "The BSM doesn't have

USING THE HIT LIST

B2B Telesales Manager Darrell Goldrup used the "Category Hit List" and its baseline showing above-average sales, below-average sales, and flat-line sales to view trends and then create a selling strategy:

"For instance, when I sorted all the M&M product buyers, I learned that many of them also bought Coca-Cola product items and did well with those. I was then able to sort all the M&M buyers who had not bought Coke items. I created call lists for each telesales agent and developed a target message. The message to those dealers: data suggests that folks who buy M&M have historically done well with Coke. This gave agents the tool they needed to impart valuable information to dealers and the confidence to close more sales.

Knowledge is power. The reports we've pulled together for addressing specific issues have given Taction's B2B sales group almost an unfair advantage over the competition. Once we have access to a company's data, we typically learn more about their business than they know themselves."

time to call all one hundred of their accounts to sell them Fairy Tots when they're on special," Ellis notes. "And maybe they don't even know who has bought Fairy Tots in the past." But with the Category Hit List, support agents can quickly assist the field sales reps in reaching dealers who have a special interest in a particular product line.

Additionally, when there are annual events, telesales agents determine which of their dealers participated the year before, and support agents can alert their BSMs to that information. "It's all about targeted programs versus shotgun programs," Ellis says.

Other reports Ellis has created give Taction's B2B Telesales Manager Darrell Goldrup the knowledge he needs to maximize the telesales team's effectiveness, down to knowing peak buying times during the day or the best items to include in merchandise packs to increase the probability for a successful close. "Ad hoc reports give me the flexibility I need to be creative in deciding which strategies will give Boyds a clear advantage over their competitors," says Goldrup.

Bringing Lapsed Customers Back into the Fold

Taction's most recent success for Boyds has been the use of direct mail to reactivate lapsed accounts. Direct mail opens doors to dealers who have been "unavailable" to take repeated call attempts by agents. Ellis analyzed which Boyds accounts were dropping off, season by season. "You lose several hundred accounts each season. If you have a portfolio of 10,000 accounts and 20 percent drop off every year, and you don't have a reactivation plan, you lose two-thirds in just five years," Ellis noted.

He used the information to craft a direct mail piece offering juicy incentives to lapsed dealers to bring them back into the Boyds' fold. It was sent on "Black Friday," when retailers are traditionally too busy to talk to sales representatives. Only a limited number of telesales agents participated. Each piece was tailored with a photograph and direct telephone number for the telesales agent representing that dealer, offering a friendliness and personal touch not usually seen in direct mail.

The campaign had an extremely positive four percent response rate. Dealers who didn't respond were targeted to receive a second direct mail piece. Subsequent campaigns are performing at an even higher level.

Understanding Agent Performance

Boyds telesales and support agents at Taction also get a daily Telesales Agent Performance report, which tells the dollar amount they've booked so far in the period, where they stand in the period quota-wise for each of the four weeks in the period, their rank among the other telesales agents, and their run

rate (what they've sold each day and how much they need to sell each day going forward to hit their sales quota).

"It's even color coded, so we know at a glance who's below quota and who's excelling," says Goldrup. "I can review the previous day's performance in less than a minute. I know who needs coaching to make up lost ground. When agents are on pace, I recognize and praise them openly to leverage their actions within the team. For those below goal, I refer to system reports, such as phone switch data and daily sales trackers, to determine if there's a lack of effort or if it's a conversion issue. Then I structure a comprehensive strategy to address the performance factors, and I include the team manager as well."

Goldrup points out that Taction telesales agents are carefully selected: applicants are evaluated on twelve points, including a relentless drive to hit goals and a high comfort level with closing. New hires receive intensive training that is capped on the final day with two hours of role-playing and a sales overview module.

Once hired, their training is ongoing and includes packaged modules, like "Getting to the Heart of Telephone Sales," and modules developed by Goldrup for Taction, including "Attitude of a Sales Person," "Effective Closing Techniques," and "Effective Questioning," which teaches the ABCs of effective communication via phone and how to best set up a telephone sale.

"By using these modules to address performance issues as needed, we customize to each client and integrate our best techniques with their best information and techniques," says Goldrup. "Additional education and development comes from the monitoring we do. This is a process where the agent is given direct feedback in a real-time environment so they can make adjustments on the spot to increase sales success."

Client-specific training is also important. Boyds telesales agents set up display windows at a popular Maine gift store to better understand the challenges their dealers face. The agents pride themselves on creative suggestions to help dealers sell merchandise through in-store parties, local advertising, mailers to top customers, and more. Agents vie to be selected to attend the AmericasMart gift show in Atlanta where they help sell on the floor at the Boyds showroom and meet some of the dealers they serve in a virtual environment for the rest of the year. All of them attend the company's annual sales meeting.

Sweet Success

The real success of the Boyds telesales team at Taction is reflected in its satisfied dealers, who have embraced the program and its benefits. Dealers appreciate the expanded hours of service and the highly tailored service they get from knowledgeable telesales agents who understand every facet

DOWNHOME BOYDS TRAINING

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IF DEALERS AREN'T HAPPY, NOBODY'S HAPPY

But when they are happy, they take the time to speak up. Here are comments Boyds dealers have made about their telesales agents at Taction:

"Sue is absolutely wonderful. She is easy to deal with and she is on the ball. I've been in the corporate world for many years and I know what makes a quality agent. You have that in Sue. Major kudos to Sue for making my experience such a pleasant one!"

"I've never been more impressed. I love the friendly service that Harvey provided."

"I just wanted to take a minute to let you know as a new dealer that my experience with Boyds has been great! Everyone from my sales rep Maureen to my telesales rep Kim have all been so polite, cheerful, and helpful. Sometimes we don't take the time to tell people how great they are and what a good job they are doing. Keep up the great work."

"A [customer called our store] with a question about a resin piece. Jacky researched the issue and called his home and left a message on his answering machine. He later called back to express his thanks for the extra effort that Jacky put into finding the answer to his question and taking the time to call him back."

of their business: the size of their display space, what their clientele buys, and the nature of their competition. Some dealers meet their telesales agents at the Boyds showroom in Atlanta. But for many dealers, the virtual relationship alone has not only sufficed, it has increased their enthusiasm — and their budget — for Boyds.

To learn how Taction can help
lower your B2B sales costs
and increase revenue,
call today: 800.772.3182

