

HOW TO CHOOSE A TELEMARKETING AGENCY

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- Prepare a draft briefing document.* This should include:
 - A short description of your business and strategy
 - Who you are targeting
 - Objective(s) of the telemarketing campaign
 - What you are offering
 - Results from previous campaigns or tests, if available
 - Your expectations for results and feedback
 - Budget considerations
 - Timescales

- Visit each agency.* Discuss your briefing document. Ask to see around their operation. Get a feel for how they handle calls, customers and prospects. They will be calling on your behalf - will they project the image you want?

- Get the agency's comments on your brief.* Ask them how they would handle a campaign like this. Have they done similar projects before? Who would work on this project (management and calling team)? What reporting procedures will they use?

- Get a written proposal.* Make sure that all costs are detailed. These would normally include:
 - Script preparation, review and testing
 - Briefing and training for calling team
 - Set-up of target list and reporting procedures
 - Time and materials costs for calls
 - Management time
 - Any results-based commission (e.g. per sale or appointment)
 - Any other costs?

- Ask for a sample script.* This should include "decision trees" which guide the caller depending on the response to each question.

- Ask for references.* Who have they worked for previously? Contact at least two previous clients. Ask how successful the project was. Would they use the agency again? If not, why not? What do they like most about the agency? What do they like least?

- Do they understand your objectives?* Will they portray the image you want? Are they giving value for money, based on anticipated results. As a first-time client, can you reduce the risk by making the payment rates dependent on results? If it proves profitable, of course you'll pay the full rate in future!

- Ask them to conduct a test.* Prove it works before giving them the full contract.

- Finally, don't just go for the lowest quote.* Weigh up how each agency is likely to perform. Do you get on well with them? Do you trust them? What concerns do you have? Bring your concerns out in the open and assess how well they put your mind at rest.