

DIY Telemarketing

Employing a telemarketing agency will only be worthwhile if you have a reasonably large volume of calls to make. For smaller quantities you may be better off doing it yourself, or employing an independent freelance. Here's how to do it yourself:

- Make sure your objectives are perfectly clear.* Are you researching, arranging appointments, or selling something? Who will you be calling? It's difficult to sell to new prospects when you've initiated the call, unless you're "selling" attendance at a seminar or exhibition. Selling more of what you've got to existing customers is easier. Sounds obvious, I know!
- Identify your target list.* This could be your existing customers, or a subset. If you're starting from scratch you may need to rent a mailing/telemarketing list, or create your own from directories such as Yellow Pages, Business Pages or business directories at your local library. Whichever way you choose, get all the names, addresses and telephone numbers into a database or spreadsheet. You will need to update this as you go along, or at the end of each calling session.
- Develop your script guideline.* Choose a person you know who is similar to the people you will call. Write the script guideline as if you were speaking to that person. Make it so you can vary the words you use, so it doesn't sound like a standard script. Open with the major benefit they will get from listening to you and taking some action. Talk "you" rather than "we". Think about the different responses you may get to questions. Develop a "decision tree" so different answers lead you into different lines of questioning.
- "Dry test" the script.* Try it out on a colleague, your secretary, your partner, a friend. Does it flow? Do you grab their attention? Can you answer any questions they throw back at you? Adjust your script guideline accordingly.
- Test the script for real.* Start calling the people on your list. Set yourself a target number of calls for one hour. See how you perform against that target. This will indicate how long the whole exercise will take. Don't be despondent if a call results in a brush-off. Treat each new call as a new start and adopt the attitude "Next!". Provided you are polite, bright and professional, no-one should seriously object to being called.
- Keep track of your progress.* Note the number of calls you make. Note the number of actual people you speak to (some will be away, have voice mail, be shielded by their secretary, etc.). Note the number of successes you have. Set targets for "successes per session" and reward yourself with a break/drink/treat when you hit the target.
- Follow up promptly.* If you said you'd send them something, do it the same day. There's nothing worse than getting someone interested and then making them wait!
- Keep your records up to date.* Your database or spreadsheet will enable you to log who you've spoken to, what the outcome was. The next time you speak to that person or company you can check back.
- Just do it!* You may feel that telemarketing can be demoralising and repetitive. Don't make it sound like that when you're talking to people. Don't stop calling if you're feeling down. Remember, that next call could be the best one you make all day