



Case Study: Teaching Effective Lead Generation

Background

Like many smaller businesses, this Michigan-based financial software company grew from a loosely organized group of sales and marketing personnel to a more structured approach. However, the focus was always on accomplishing growth, not on efficiency. For this reason, process was typically an afterthought to accomplishment. New tactics were deployed, but were not set up in a way to guarantee effectiveness or scalability.

The market was one where continuous improvement demand drove replacement sales. In this market, finding viable new prospects was difficult because clients already had software, so the sale was to convince people that a different/better solution was needed. Further, it was largely a sale of timing, getting to the prospect when the need was the greatest. Prospects didn't have much desire to talk with vendors about new solutions until that time was right.

The Problem

Because the market dynamics had shifted over the last few years as mass adoption completed, it was a different sale from when it had been a new technology. By not adapting to this buying change, the company had experienced flat revenues for the last three years. In this environment, lead generation and initial qualification is a critical efficiency. An inside sales team can be a great tool in increasing the productivity of outside representatives, but only if they are working smart. This company's inside sales group was making almost 1500 calls to get one deal. The effectiveness of their calls was poor, with less than two-percent of calls returned. Further, the inside sales reps hated their jobs because they were so unsuccessful, so staff turnover was high.

The Solution

SalesPOP! created an optimized process map to match the dynamics of the new buying cycle. Included in this optimized process was a lead generation piece that served a dual function of providing better prospects as well as developing sales talent for future promotion. The focus of the inside sales unit changed from mindlessly making calls to providing value to potential prospects. This subtle but important shift meant that rather than calling people to see if today was the day they wanted to upgrade their software, the inside reps called to share industry information and tools for evaluating the productivity of their current software. Value-based messaging was developed by marketing and shared with the entire sales team, so it could be reused and repackaged in different ways.

Another shift that was made was in the techniques used in the calls. SalesPOP! trained staff on its FUSE messaging structure, so they could be relevant and concise. They taught staff to call into the appropriate level – CEOs in many cases – and get transferred down to the decision maker. Finally, they completely changed the measurements used to evaluate inside sales personnel. Rather than judging them based on the number of times they dialed the phone, SalesPOP! instituted a points system that rewarded the team for results in each call.

The Results

There was an immediate and demonstrable improvement in lead generation. The inside sales reps reported a much higher rate of return phone calls and the conversations were much more relevant for the prospects. Where before the training they would leave voice mail after voice mail, the reps indicated that they were having many more live conversations. And their satisfaction rate in their jobs improved dramatically. They understood they weren't being paid to dial a phone, they were being paid to deliver value. That always improves self-confidence.

In a program of this sort, there is always a bigger benefit over time because the value-based messaging drives prospect satisfaction. They see the company as being a partner and a consultant to them on industry topics. Though it is too early to see results from this changing relationship, the immediate impact has been profound. Most importantly, the company is training their next generation of outside salespeople by strengthening the inside sales program. Think of it as a farm system for rising superstars.