

Search Engine Marketing 2.0

Every salesperson knows there are two ways to sell on the phone – outbound and inbound. Outbound is the hated way. The salesperson gets a list, calls a prospect, interrupts whatever they're doing and boldly states, "Buying my product will cure all your problems."

Inbound phone selling is the loved way. Here, a prospect has a problem and has researched possible solutions. The search for a provider has been narrowed down to the salesperson's company, and then the money call gets made.

In the past several years, the Internet has enabled independent telecom agents to pursue inbound telemarketing and avoid outbound telemarketing in ways that were economically prohibitive just a few years ago. In the old way, telecom agents made the phone ring by spending obscene amounts of money on yellow page ads, direct mail and the like. Unfortunately, money spent in this fashion was essentially a gamble, as success or failure could be measured only after the cash was spent.

This is the case no more, as Internet search engines have brought "search engine marketing" or SEM to anyone with a credit card and the desire to measure demand for any product or service. Of course, some may say that Internet marketing and SEM are "old news." But what's old is the notion that the Internet can serve up the customer, seal the deal and deliver the product all while the savvy Internet marketer soaks up the sun on some tropical beach. The new Internet marketing geniuses have learned that the Internet is really about replacing the yellow pages and making the phone ring.

SEM works because it allows the two parties of any

transaction to do what they both do best in the most efficient manner possible. The two parties are, of course, the buyer and the seller or, more accurately, the person with the "pain" and the person with the "cure."

In business-to-business marketing, very few genuine buyers have the luxury of calling sellers all day with no real intent of ever buying. (Yes, there are a few "nuts" out there that do like to talk to salespeople, but salespeople who get caught up with them deserve it. To avoid these situations, always remember to "close early and often.") Most buyers who indeed do have some pain need just two questions satisfactorily answered prior to transacting business. And no, it's not questions of price and availability.

What buyers need to know is, "Are you going to rip me off?" and, "Will you take care of me?" It is almost a Freudian situation, especially in the chaotic world of today's telecom environment. Buyers first and foremost want to avoid pain. Then, in the absence of pain, they want to seek pleasure if possible. (And you thought SEM would be boring.)

To see how and why SEM does or doesn't work, use a few of your own recent purchases as examples. Take a piece of paper and jot down a few of your recent "risk" purchases (things you could have gotten in trouble for if done improperly). Now, for each risk purchase, write down a short outline of the decision matrix you followed. Finally, write down why you purchased from one vendor and not the others.

If you're like most risk purchasers, you probably followed a decision matrix that looks something like this:

1. **History:** What led up to the current pain? (I heard a noise coming from my refrigerator that seemed to be coming from the motor in the back, but I had hoped it would just go away.)
2. **Justification for action:** Will it get worse if I do nothing? (Do I really need to buy a new refrigerator? They didn't even have refrigerators a hundred years ago. No, my spouse would never go for not having a refrigerator.)
3. **Avoid pain:** What's the easiest way to not get ripped off? (Buy a refrigerator from Sears. No one ever got divorced over buying an appliance from one of America's most trusted names, right?)

four-line text advertisement that describes a product's best benefits, Internet access and a cell phone.

Step 1: Keyword discovery: Write down all the "yellow page" headings a prospect would look under to find your product or service (e.g. long distance service, high-speed Internet access, pre-paid calling cards, etc.)

Step 2: Search term discovery: Write down the terms and adjectives that best describe your service or best describe how your prospects might want to find your service if typed into an Internet search engine (e.g. cheapest phone rates, best phone cards, Internet access price comparisons, etc.)

Step 3: Competitive analysis: Now go to www.google.com or

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4. **Seek pleasure:** How do I get the world's best refrigerator for the least possible price? (Is that magazine called *Consumer Reports* or *Consumer Union*)
5. **What it's worth:** How much do I really want to invest in this purchase? (I mean it's just a stupid refrigerator, right.)
6. **Purchase execution:** Let's do it. (Find refrigerator, buy refrigerator.)
7. **Post mortem:** Happiness or regret? (Does your new refrigerator leave you with "refrigerator envy," or are you bragging about its ability to chill beer in nine minutes or less?)

Do this exercise a couple of times with your own recent purchases until you understand what's really going on in the mind of the average risk buyer. Then it's time to take the real test. Put yourself in the shoes of people who consider buying your telecom agent products and services.

The beauty of SEM is that by the time the phone rings, your sale is 90 percent sold and it's really yours to lose. And generally the people who lose are the ones who fail to ask a quick question or two to find out what part of the decision matrix the caller is in. Once you know where they are in their decision matrix, selling your product on the same call can be a cinch.

"Oh you've got that 'refrigerator buzzing noise,' and you want to replace it before you have to replace all your food, right? Have you decided what kind of refrigerator you need and how much you want to spend to solve this problem today? Hmm, yes, uh huh. Well sir, your situation is similar to many of your neighbors that we've helped out, which is why we've put our best model on sale and backed it up with a 90-day money back guarantee. If we can meet your price, haul away your old fridge and get it in there tomorrow, what color do you think your wife would want?... I'm glad you called today because we have just one left in that color. Why don't you give me your credit card number so I can make sure no one else gets it, and then we'll arrange for delivery."

But you thought this article was going to be about selling telecom via search engine marketing, right? Well it is. Now that you know how and why SEM works, here's the good stuff.

The Easy Way To Test Telecom Search Engine Marketing

Materials needed: A credit card with about \$200 available, a

your favorite search engine and type in the various combinations of your keywords and search terms. If your Web site doesn't come up but your competitors do, be happy because you've found something you can do that probably will make you richer. (If your site is already coming up number one on Google but your phones aren't ringing, we don't know what to tell you.)

Step 4: Market testing: Determine if there is indeed a market for your product by buying an "AdWords Select" search ad on Google at www.google.com/ads/. TAA has test marketed many telecom products via Google AdWords and can state in no uncertain terms that it works – if you do it right. The process is short and sweet. You put in your four-line ad, a toll-free number pointed at your cell phone (orders come in 24x7) and an Internet landing page (if you don't have a Web site use one of TAA's "free storefront sites at www.telecomagent.org). A little Google secret: only buy "exact phrase matches" and put in as many different exact phrases as you can come up with even if it's several dozen or hundreds. Also, spend more over a short time frame (even 90 minutes) so your ad will appear more prominently.

Step 5: Advertising analysis and follow-up: The beauty of Google AdWords is that unlike yellow page advertising or direct mail you can turn it on and off or change the advertising copy whenever you want. Furthermore, the search term and keyword statistics you get back are phenomenal. With this quick and dirty SEM "test for success" you can now determine if you want to get into the SEM game of making your phone ring.

As a homework assignment, analyze the ads and search results that do come up with your keywords and search terms. Which ones are personalized and push you to call a phone number? Which ones try to capture your email address with a "newsletter subscription" or free analysis? Which ones are impersonal? Which sites do you think prospects shop only, and which ones do you think close deals? Go and do the same.

For future "In The Trenches" columns we'll detail how to take SEM to the next level past simple "pay-per-click."

Telecom Agent Association (TAA) shows telecom agents how to market telecom services and helps telecom vendors find successful telecom agents. For more info, visit www.telecomagent.org or call 888-878-2141.