

First View: ConnectAndSell

Overcoming the Challenge of Voice Mail Hell

By Jim Dickie & Barry Trailer – CSO Insights

First Views are designed to introduce research clients to solutions we feel offer innovative approaches for dealing with the sales and marketing challenges that companies face today.

INTRODUCTION

In reviewing the results of both our 2007 Target Marketing Priorities and Sales Performance Optimization studies, it is clear that for the vast majority of companies, the phone is still a critical tool for marketing to and selling to customers. But this device does not always generate great results. In our survey of 423 call center/telesales organizations earlier this year, we asked, “What percentage of marketing leads result in a prospect taking a call?” Only 13.4% of the firms surveyed said their conversion rate was greater than 75%, while at the other end of the spectrum, 39.2% stated that their success rate was less than 25%.

For anyone who has tried to reach colleagues via phone during business hours, one of the key contributors to these poor conversion rates is obvious: it is very hard to catch someone actually sitting at their desk and available to talk. What we get most of the time is voice mail. In fact, studies of telesales time usage have shown that today, dialing for a straight hour will generate only .5 – 1.2 connects. It’s a Catch-22: We need to use the phone to talk to people, yet the people we are calling are rarely there to take the call. Frustrating as the situation is, it has become a fact of modern-day business life.

CONNECTANDSELL PROFILE

In our initial discussion with Andrei Stoica, a co-founder of Redwood City, California-based **ConnectAndSell**, we quickly found we were in complete agreement about the challenge, but not on the resolution. Andrei pointed out that while connecting via phone today is more difficult than in the past, it is not impossible. His position, and the mission of his company, is that the hurdle can be successfully overcome if you work both harder *and* smarter.

He then showed us how his company’s solution works. Since we were on the phone, we signed on to the service, he told the system he was ready, and in about 15 to 20 seconds we were connected to a business executive. Since this was a demo of ConnectAndSell approach, he simply asked the woman for her company’s mailing address. As we hung up, Andrei cautioned us to hold on, and a few seconds later we were talking to someone else on the phone. We were intrigued with the ability to connect with two people so fast, so Andrei shared the secret behind the ConnectAndSell service.

The Power of the Team

ConnectAndSell is a combination of people and technology. To support your sales force’s calling activities, ConnectAndSell provides a team of eight of their reps to help your rep

connect with prospects. The way it works is elegant in its simplicity. One of your salespeople sets aside a two-hour time period to call clients and prospects. The rep signs into the ConnectAndSell service online, uploads the call list he or she wants to use, and tells the system “I’m ready.”

Eight ConnectAndSell reps immediately start making calls. Within two-tenths of a second from the time any of them reaches a live person who starts to say “Hello”, the call is transferred to the sales rep. The contact information for the person on the phone pops up simultaneously on the screen in front of the salesperson, who then starts the dialog. Based on our firsthand experience, the transfer is so quick and smooth that the person getting the call has no idea that the salesperson didn’t initiate the call themselves.

After the conversation, the salesperson can update their call notes, and when ready to talk to another person, hit the “go” button, and the ConnectAndSell team starts calling again, and again and again. Based on the combination of working harder (eight sets of hands dialing versus one) and smarter (instantaneous call transferring and contact data pop-ups), the salesperson spends those two hours doing lots of talking— and zero time dialing.

Pay for Performance (Versus Effort)

The company charges a system set-up fee for new clients; the cost for the service starts at \$35 per connect. Because you only pay for the times you get to talk to a real person, you are not paying for all the false dials that didn’t get to a prospect. And if the ConnectAndSell reps cannot generate at least 5 connects in an hour, you are not charged for the connections they did make during that time period. To allow companies to test-drive the service, ConnectAndSell has a trial offer. The company will generate 145 connects for \$5,000.

REAL-WORLD FEEDBACK

Looking for validation of the concept from the marketplace, we interviewed Glen Vondrick, Executive Vice President of Emeryville, California-based Sendmail, Inc. Glen noted, “In an enterprise sale, multiple stakeholders from various departments can get involved with the decision process ...where ConnectAndSell has proved to be very valuable is in accelerating a sales rep’s capability to reach more new people in a shorter period of time, which ultimately speeds the sales process.”

Glen noted that Sendmail’s inside and outside salespeople are having 3 to 4 times the number of business conversations in the two hours they dedicate to using the ConnectAndSell service than they were previously having in a full day of calling on their own. Every single one of Glen’s salespeople has seen an improvement in performance.

Considering the potential gains from increasing the ROI on your marketing programs, along with increasing the number of prospects salespeople can sell to, ConnectAndSell almost immediately pays for itself, and is well worth evaluating.

Questions or comments about the perspectives presented here should be directed to Jim Dickie, (303) 530 6930 or Barry Trailer (415) 924 3500.