

## **No Wonder Inquiry Management is Difficult, Look at the Departments Involved! \***

By James W. Obermayer  
Sales Leakage Consulting, Inc.

When you look at the number of people and departments that touch a sales inquiry to get it processed, no wonder the system sometimes breaks down.

The departments and labor services involved in inquiry management include:

1. Agencies: advertising, public relations, direct marketing and online services agencies create demand through all of the traditional lead-generation tactics. They have an interest in the outcome. They also drive response into a receptacle that they control: web site landing page or telemarketing contact center.
2. Electronic inquiry nurturing service organizations that follow predetermined pathways for sending email communications to the not-ready for a sales call inquirers; marketing automation software or an ASP provider comes to mind
3. Inbound telemarketing (taking toll-free calls), which typically reports to sales, marketing, or both.
4. Inquiry Qualification Departments. This could be inside the company or an outside vendor. While the business rules governing the pursuit of a qualified lead varies, these people will call inquirers to qualify and nurture them. In the process they eliminate students, competitors and other illegitimate inquiries (prisoners comes to mind).
5. Outbound Lead-Generation department.
6. Inside sales.
7. Marketing.
8. Marketing communications.
9. Sales operations.
10. Field (sales) marketing managers (becoming more common out of frustration with marketing departments that do not generate enough demand).
11. Sales channel management.
12. Demand management department, which may report to sales or marketing. Also known as inquiry management department.
13. Data entry, which may be in sales or marketing.
14. Warehousing for collateral, which includes picking and packing literature packages (includes a letter, literature, technical data sheets, business reply device, dealer locations, etc.) and mailing the package.
15. Printing Vendor: In addition to printing collateral, printers may warehouse and ship your literature individually or in bulk quantities to resellers.
16. Direct mail houses that may warehouse and ship your literature to inquirers or in bulk to resellers.
17. IT services: Internal for software hosting, report generation, programming for sales force automation and contact management.

18. IT services: External, including ASP software/services provider, sales force automation software, contact management and CRM.
19. Outsourced inbound and outbound telemarketing facilities.
20. Outsourced bulk literature distribution facilities within your own company. This is often a corporate department servicing the needs of many far-flung business units.
21. Inquiry management vendors. Includes advertising agencies that do this work, telemarketing firms, printers, fulfillment vendors, and direct mail vendors that do it part-time.
22. International offices that may have to mimic the domestic operations for all of the above.

These departments are involved in:

1. Creating inquiries in a manner that the company can accept (electronic, toll-free calls, business reply cards, reader service numbers from print magazines, lead forms manually completed by in-field reps or prospects).
2. Receiving and sorting inquiries.
3. Data-entry of records: about 50% require manual data entry and 50% are now electronic direct from the inquirer via the Web, trade shows, direct mail landing pages, and contact centers.
4. Warehousing and inventory maintenance of literature.
5. Creation of literature packages (could run into hundreds of packages).
6. Assembly and mailing of literature packages
7. Creation of electronic fulfillment packages and the content that goes into the “packages.” Creating hundreds of PDF collateral packages can be daunting.
8. Screening for duplicate inquiries.
9. Screening for competitors.
10. Screening for previous inquirers (tracking: being able to view all those from the same company that have inquired in the past).
11. Grading the inquiry with the assignment of a “rank” to judge the inquiry source. This is a big issue and not all services or software packages can do this automatically.
12. Nurturing of the inquiry if it is not sales-ready: email, mail, and the telephone.
13. Sales territory definitions: by zip codes, area codes, county, state, country, product, distribution channel, product value, etc.
14. Sales lead distribution by sales territory or by product, by sales channel or any combination of these as in item 13 above.
15. Sales lead closure: reporting on the sales actions taken (closing the loop).
16. Reporting: marketing and sales report creation and distribution. These reports with charts and graphs can add-up from 5-430 reports.
17. Accepting toll and toll-free calls from promotions.

Just viewing this list is a checklist of sorts as you consider managing your most valuable and perishable resource, sales inquiries.

\*This information has appeared in various articles and workshops Obermayer has presented. Most recently it has appeared in his book, James Obermayer, *Managing Sales Leads: Turning Cold Prospects Into Hot Customers*, (Mason, Ohio, Textere an imprint of Thomson/South-Western, 2007) and Racom Books, Page 92.