

eti Case Study: High Tech Manufacturer



SUMMARY:

Sales teams are tasked with, and largely measured by, their sales productivity. Sales activity directed to screening inbound phone calls or following up on incoming inquiries is usually a non-productive use of a skilled sales person's time.

The front-end response to inquiries generated via Web, telephone, email or other marketing channel needs a robust lead qualification protocol that can triage and segment the opportunities to then direct each inquiry as appropriate. Taking away from the sales force the front-end inquiry sorting responsibility enhances sales productivity by enabling them to spend a higher proportion of their time selling to truly qualified prospects.

Further, if there is a concurrent sales channel or partner program, many of the inbound inquiries may need to be directed to the channel. Again, this is not an efficient or desirable use of sales force time.

Management understands the need for a consistent highly effective lead qualification solution. Aside from responding, qualifying and processing the direct stream of inquiries, a robust solution has to be both flexible and agile to effectively manage all incoming communications — including important business prospects, existing clients, partners, potential partners, information gatherers and others.

A thorough and professional representation of the brand and a dedicated, stable and ethical approach must also be incorporated into the solution.

THE CHALLENGE:

1. The client was a large, well-known high tech manufacturer offering a range of automation solutions with applications offered to verticals including manufacturing, retail, transportation and logistics, healthcare, and hospitality.

The client's inside sales group was tasked with qualifying inquiries from multiple sources, screening and disposing appropriately of inquiries that were non-sales related and working with channel partners to provide qualified sales opportunities and drive new sales.

The inside sales group was territory-based and it was difficult to regulate and manage inbound inquiries that were beyond the scope of their specific territories.

2. A significant number of incoming inquiries were received daily from inbound calls, the Web, events, email broadcasts and fax or mail. There was a need to enable timely response to every inquiry, coupled with a process to monitor and measure results.
3. The client did not have a systematic method in place for tracking inquiries from their initial source to identify the channels that were most effective at driving inquiries and, more so, which marketing investments drive most effective and relevant inquiries and revenue.
4. As a growing business selling primarily via channel partners, there was an ongoing need for programs to support marketing initiatives, channel development, event management, database management and related activities to support growth.

5. The client needed a reliable mechanism to ensure that sales follow up by channel partners and sales representatives took place consistently and ensure that channel partners were selling their solutions rather than those offered by competitors.
6. There was a need for resources to integrate ad hoc campaigns and support a broad variety of other marketing initiatives.
7. Because of the complicated nature of the product and solution offering of the client, they needed well-educated, trained and experienced personnel to deliver this program, all managed and supported by a provider that had all of these capabilities as their core competency.

THE CAMPAIGN

eti Sales Support was selected as the outsource partner tasked with handling the front end pre-qualification of inbound inquiries, stimulated by a broad range of marketing initiatives driving inbound and outbound phone calls, from web forms, mail, email and fax. In addition, eti was engaged in managing and/or supporting a series of outbound telemarketing campaigns.

eti selected a team of Business Developers (BDs) and managers who were fully trained and operational within 6 weeks of initiation of the engagement. eti actively provided input and strategic insights relating to lead qualification best practices, pipeline development and closed-loop and compliance processes.

This created a strong effective working relationship early in the life of the program, enabling strong initial ROI and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

Throughout, the project activities were driven toward providing the best return on the client's marketing investment. The program remained dynamic, continually adjusting to market, marketing and organizational changes.

eti telephone systems, Web-based Client Portal and related database systems were deployed. Customization was required and completed to meet specifications and deliverables including:

- Custom survey mechanisms to ensure ongoing satisfaction and feedback
- Processes for follow up on leads not assigned to Sales or the Channel
- Survey of sales/partners receiving the qualified leads
- Survey to end users ensuring timely and appropriate contact, communication and follow up by Client Sales and Channel Partners
- Dedicated toll free numbers were established for inbound use that could be tracked to specific campaigns
- Voice mail and music-on-hold was provided for both business and non-business hours and non-business hours messaging was provided.

A process was implemented that provided a blended environment in which the BDs contemporaneously accepted inbound calls and made outbound calls to maximize operational efficiency. All inbound calls were answered timely and outbound calls made in response to inquiries from other channels.

The BDs engaged in a consultative qualification process to determine the best means of handling and routing inquiries. Inquiries that resulted in highly qualified (near-term) leads were directed to client sales or channel partners, non-sales related inquiries were routed to other sources as appropriate and eti maintained active responsibility for following up on all other situations until final resolution.

When following up on lead sources such as webinars and trade shows, an integrated email/phone follow up approach was instituted to maximize the cost effectiveness of the approach. In general, when it was discovered that certain lead sources offered lower potential, eti developed and implemented a strategy to follow up to the most cost effective manner.

All qualified leads were delivered dynamically via the eti Client Portal to the client sales team and a full email log of transactions maintained. Channel partners were similarly notified and given customized access to the eti portal. All parties were trained to dynamically update progress and activity.

Client personnel utilized the same eti proprietary tools as our BDs to communicate and assign leads dynamically. By working collaboratively on a single platform, detailed management reports could be created that track each inquiry from initiation to close, enabling analysis of return on marketing investment, lead source tracking and campaign analysis.

A broad array of dynamic, on-line management reporting was developed to support both Sales and Marketing, typically allowing full drill-down capability into the detail of every record.

RESULTS

The eti/client partnership grew an estimated five-fold from inception. Volume increased to handling over 50,000 inquiries per year.

Of that, 27% (over 14,000 inquiries) were identified and converted as highly qualified opportunities with a 90% assignment rate to the field.

Over 90% of all inbound calls were handled live with 70% handled in 30 seconds or less. Prompt follow up to after-hours inquiries and other left messages taking place.

In 2006, eti identified and turned over 16,000 Highly Qualified Leads. Sales estimates of \$100+ million were based on a historical conversion ratio and an average sale of \$25,000 for B-rated leads and \$100,000 for the A-level leads.

At that rate, the return on investment was \$88 of revenue generated per \$1 spent.

Overall, eti has been able to deliver call center inbound follow up combined with database management solutions, which truly track and account for every inquiry and every qualified lead assigned.



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