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Some Practical Marketing  
Advice

# Timing is EVERYTHING – what’s the roll of calling in modern day demand generation?



BtoB technology companies are facing a different set of challenges today. Technology has changed, buyers have their own buying processes, supported by access to limitless information. Leads can no longer be generated, as much as built. This requires a different approach.

## CHANGES.....

- We have gone from single threaded communication to multi threaded.
- We have gone from one-to-many marketing to one-to-one
- We have gone to a state of permanent connectivity (24/7) with limitless access to information.
- We have gone from power and influence residing with the vendor to this residing with the buyer.
- We have gone from the web being seen as a “channel” to it needing to be fundamental to any and all marketing and sales activities.

## The Right Place—The Right Time?

Much is being considered and written regarding the tactics B2B marketers need to use to be most effective in generating demand these days. With respect to calling, the word timing is often used. A well timed call is still the most powerful form of communication, but timing can also be looked at as luck. While I’d rather be lucky than good, relying on luck is not a winning approach.

Malcolm Gladwell’s most recent offering *Outliers* discusses why certain individuals are outstanding, and lie outside of the usual framework of life. Gladwell attributes some of this to timing – nothing more than the old saying of “right place, right time.” He asks the question of whether certain individuals like Bill Gates (or even himself) would have enjoyed their scale of success had they been born two years earlier or later.

In B2B marketing the use of calling maintains a role. It certainly is not the only tactic, but remains an important part of the mix. The challenge is WHERE AND WHEN to deploy this activity in order for it to be most fruitful and cost effective. In other words what’s the best “timing” and how can we influence it?

B2B marketing has gone from single threaded tactics over the years to multi threaded. In the early days of B2B marketing (particularly in technology marketing) this was characterized by the use of one main tactic. The main tactic went from trade shows, to direct mail, to telemarketing, to e-mail. Then onto a mix of tactics such as webcasts, podcasts, whitepaper publication, etc. Through today to the use of multiple content forms via various internet platforms (web placement, search engine, web based interest groups, and of course the current imponderable around social media).

## Teleprospecting:

Highest conversion rate of demand generation tactics

Can turn 3% or more of target lists into qualified opportunities

Multi-touch campaigns deploying a teleprospecting component produce returns upwards of 5% within targeted lists

Harte-Hanks, Marketing Intelligence, Dec 29 2009.

### Prospect Acquisition Services



Using this blend, Covente is delivering higher lead yields, and greater conversion to pipeline

## Characterizing these two conclusions:

Cold calls (as described in this report) are defined as acceptable as long as some relevant information is delivered during that call. This challenges us to deliver relevant information and more so today requires that we do that in a convenient, engaging even entertaining fashion. The opportunity also exists for us take advantage as to “how” we deliver it in our multi threaded world.

Companies can no longer adopt a single threaded approach by trying to secure the “lead” in one phone call. Recent research shows that a prospect has to be touched 6-12 times before they can be meaningfully engaged as an opportunity. This means that the prospect has to be communicated with (or communicate with you) in various ways over a period of time. With the right processes and systems in place, intelligent decisions can be made as to when it is appropriate for the prospect to receive a call in order that it more most impactful and useful to all parties concerned, especially the prospect.

It may take several phone interactions with the prospect as they are then delivered more information acknowledging the change in buyer behavior. Buyers want (and are able) to digest information and draw some of their own conclusions (self qualify) throughout the process. You can no longer “shoe horn” a prospect into a BANT qualified lead just because it fits “your” sales process.

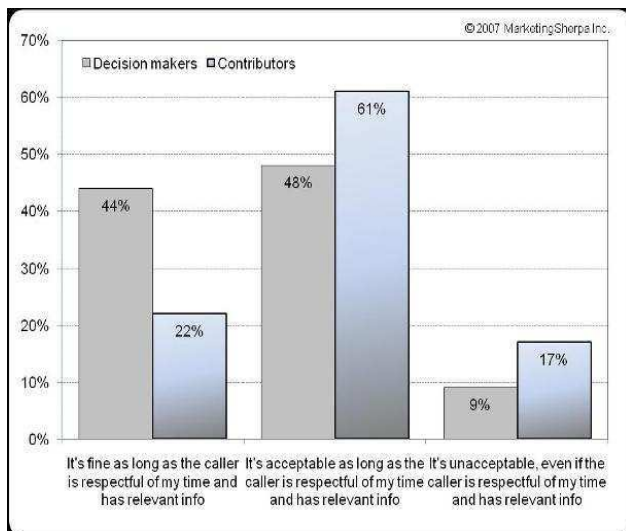
## Building Consensus:

With respect to what Marketing Sherpa here refer to as “contributors” or “influencers”, attention has to be paid this group. Many companies are convinced that the only place they can sell to is the C Level Suite. Covente has produced a VisByte™ - The Use of BANT in Lead Generation that discusses this and leverages the still valid conclusions of the Sirius Decisions Whitepaper “So What’s Your Demand Type?”.

Again times they are a changing. Executives rely on information and recommendation from their direct reports. We ignore influencers at our peril. By including this community in our efforts we are acknowledging an approach that seeks to create “groundswell”, bubbling compelling propositions up to the C Suite via the influencers. The use of relevant, convenient, meaningful content only aids this approach, and viral potential can be leveraged and spreads the word within a target organization.



*Here’s a tip with respect to the role of the contact a tele professional is engaged with.....  
Don’t ask them if they are “the decision maker”. Surely we can be more discreet than this. Clumsily handled questions like this are a major turn off to the prospect!*



In the 2009 Marketing Sherpa research paper entitled “Technology Buyers’ Feelings Toward Cold Calling” 92% of respondents characterized a cold call as “fine or acceptable” assuming it demonstrated 2 things:

Respect for the contact’s time

It had relevant information to communicate.

The second compelling conclusion from this research was the distinction between contacting a “decision maker” and a “contributor” or influencer. Influencers had a less positive view (but still 83% as described above) of cold calls. They felt that they were being used simply as a stepping stone for the caller to get to the ultimate decision maker – or to use an over used phrase from today – there was no respect!!!

## Conclusion—the Covente Call:

Calling still plays a key role in Demand Generation. There is still nothing more powerful than a well timed, professionally handled sales call to a prospect.

Determining how and when calling activities are deployed within the overall mix is the challenge.

We need to be adhering to a process that tells us (based on prospect activity) when those calls are timed.