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How to Avoid the 7 Deadly Sins of Inbound Telesales



When was the last time you bought over the phone?

Was it a great experience or did it leave a lot to be desired?

According to Contact Babel, over 42 billion inbound call minutes were racked up in 2014 in the UK alone, many of them from customers looking to buy products and services ranging from car insurance to theatre tickets.

That's a lot of opportunity to satisfy both new and existing customers, so why is it that so many people dread making *that call*?

The chances are that contact centres are still committing one or more of the 7 deadly sins of inbound sales.

The good news is that they can all be avoided, turning customer dread into customer delight.

Here's how:

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Smart Solutions Delivered With Integrity



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Sin No 1 – Lack of empathy



The best advisors greet the caller in a warm and friendly way, use their name appropriately and actively seek to build rapport and trust.

Hiring employees with a naturally empathetic manner is an absolute pre-requisite for telephone sales. Treating callers as individuals to be served rather than people to sell to sets the agenda for a positive two-way interaction.

Sin No 2 – Not establishing customer needs



Too many contact centre managers still place their teams under enormous pressure to keep talk time to a minimum. This forces sales advisors to launch into a counter-productive one-size fits all sales pitch after a perfunctory gathering of basic customer details.

Sales teams need to be given the lee-way to ask enough questions to establish the customer's particular needs in order to be able to present the correct product in the right way.

Fact finding is the crucial first step on any call. Allowing the customer enough time to explain his/her needs actually saves time wasted later in the call re-presenting alternative offers or objection handling.



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Sin No 3 – Talking too much and listening too little



So much call centre training focusses on controlling the selling process rather than opening up the call to the buying journey.

By taking the time to ask questions and actively listen to the customer, the advisor gains a position of trust guiding the caller through their options and leading them towards the almost inevitable decision to buy.

Training advisors to listen more and talk less allows them to uncover hidden customer needs and pick up on buying signals that would otherwise go unheeded.

Sin No 4 – Presenting features not benefits



Fast talking sales advisors will often list as many features of the product or service that come to mind in the hope that one of these will resonate with the customer. “Spray and pray” rarely does anything other than confuse.

Successful sales people zero in on those key benefits which deliver the solution that the customer is seeking. They can only do this by understanding the buyer’s needs and targeting their recommendations accordingly.



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Having a systematic process such as a script, a flow chart or a check list can often help an advisor to navigate to the heart of the customer's need and pitch the product or service that best meets that need.

Sin No 5 – Overselling or selling too hard



Many contact centre sales teams are driven purely on sales targets such as sales per hour or conversion rate. Such is their need to hit their sales quotas that they rush the caller into potentially buying products/services that do not fully meet his/her needs or match price or value expectations. The result is often product returns or cancellations of services.

Changing the focus to a “service first, sales second approach” and adopting a balanced scorecard that rewards the quality of the sale as much as the quantity of sales leads to a more rewarding customer experience and repeat business further down the line.

Sin No 6 – Pushing for the close too early



People know when they are being sold and they resent sales advisors who try to sell before they are ready to buy.



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Contact centre trainers spend a lot of time on objection handling, much of which would be unnecessary if advisors were taught more about helping their customers to buy when the time is right rather than asking for the sale at the first opportunity.

Unless the caller is ready to buy, pushing for the sale builds resistance. “Pitch early and often” is an outdated technique that ultimately drags the call out and rarely leads to a satisfactory outcome.

A better solution is to patiently build rapport and trust whilst guiding the customer to right buying decision.

Sin No 7 – Forcing the sale



No matter how well the call has progressed, sometimes the customer is just not willing or able to buy there and then. Perhaps, he/she wants to compare other suppliers or may be talk things over with his/her partner.

This is often when a sales advisor will attempt to force the sale, sometimes by hinting that the product will soon sell out or that prices are set to rise or the service call won't take place before the weekend. Customers rarely respond favourably to this sort of pressure, even if some are eventually manipulating by these tactics into saying “yes”.

Instead it is preferable for an advisor to check that the customer has all of the information that they need to make a buying decision and then offering to call the customer back at an agreed time to answer any further queries and take the order.

If the advisor has avoided the 7 deadly sins, there is a good chance that not only will they make a sale, but importantly they will make a customer.