

direct

Telemarketing can still ring up sales

BY JON VANZILE

CHRIS CONNOLLY, president of Connolly Financial Services in Quincy, Mass., has tried e-mail marketing to reach his small-business clients. He tried mailers, too, but none of it worked.

"If you're in my business and you're not cold-calling, you're not in this business," Connolly said. Connolly sells multiple financial products to small and midsize businesses, including benefits packages, health care, retirement packages and money-management services.

Despite the rise of inexpensive e-mail marketing, telemarketing remains important for many marketing campaigns—and according to Joe Krisky, president of database

marketing company Massini Group in Hillsboro, Ore., it's more flexible and efficient than ever before.

Krisky said this turn back to telemarketing is driven by several factors, including a softening economy that makes lead generation more important than ever before and increasingly sophisticated telemarketing campaigns that combine the phone and e-mail with highly targeted call lists.

"Large businesses are determining they can use telemarketing to reach small-to-medium businesses," Krisky said. "Instead of pursuing the huge sale, they are pursuing larger numbers of small-to-medium businesses, each of which will contribute a smaller piece to the top line."

Connolly said he uses industry-

specific databases to sort his prospective targets by 401k type and provider, then generates call lists based on the age of the benefit program. Operators of older programs, he said, are often unaware how much they could save by switching to a newer retirement program. Although he hired out the calling, he helps write the scripts himself.

This kind of narrow targeting is vital, Krisky said, because the b-to-b world is much more limited than the consumer telemarketing world.

"You're limited by how many companies you can sell to," Krisky said. "You can't just go faster and faster. You've got to be intelligent in how you approach your targets."

For many marketers, this means

blending e-mail and online marketing efforts with telemarketing campaigns. Maureen Feeley-Woods, president of telemarketing company A Better Call in Reading, Mass., provides the calling manpower for Connolly's campaigns. When her team of dialers makes a connection, they are always prepared to send an e-mail to curious prospects that includes links to Connolly's online presence and information about his services.

"When they ask for information, I think they're saying, 'Prove to me you're real,'" Feeley-Woods said. "About 50% of the prospects want information fast."

The Massini Group goes one step further. The company's agents are able to send "high-level" e-mails that

are tied back to the call center. Agents are able to see immediately which links the prospect has opened, as well as open and click-through rates.

"If they aren't close enough to purchasing to put them in the funnel, we ask if we can send them information periodically in an e-mail newsletter," Krisky said.

According to an internal Massini Group case study, a flexible e-mail component adds as much as a 15% benefit to each telemarketing campaign.

"E-mail allows people to read the information," Krisky said. "It opens up two channels of delivery."

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