CTOsOnTheMove.com

How to leverage sales trigger events in direct sales to senior IT executives.

White Paper

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http://www.ctosonthemove.com/

“It was 10am and Jake was already on his 48th voicemail: “Hi Marc, this is Jake Foster from ABC Company. I am calling to follow up...” With zero call-backs, the dread was setting it. The clock’s arms seemed to have frozen, and the Starbucks run that Jake promised to himself was still an hour away. He felt slight ringing in his head, with déjà-vu flashbacks from the “Office Space” movie, his favorite. “There has to be a better way to do this...”, he thought to himself...“

From unpublished “Death of a Salesperson 2.0”

CTOs On The Move

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Why The Current Direct Sales and Marketing Process is Broken

In a nutshell the problem with the current direct marketing process is the ever diminishing results of the outbound marketing efforts. In other words, a given input of effort (say, number of calls or emails) is generating the ever decreasing amount of output (e.g. call backs or leads); and the vicious cycle kicks in when further increasing the inputs only decreases the outputs.

As sales people, somewhere in our training we were told about the sales funnel: “it is a numbers game, put enough leads in the top of the funnel and you will start getting checks at the bottom”. So far so good.

But let’s first do some simple math here: let’s say your response rate to a marketing email campaign is a respectable 0.5% (and it goes down from here by the way). This means that for every 200 people you pitch one shouts back. Some of them don’t have money, some of the don’t have power, some of them don’t have the urge to buy. But let’s just say that your sales skills are awesome and you close 20% of them (the rest go to “lead nurturing” and die there). So for you to close 1 sale, you need 1,000 leads in the funnel. You get my drift? For 10 sales you need 10,000 leads. Very soon you start running out of people to pitch. THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT here however is that all the while you keep spamming, tracking, logging activity, cleaning, followupping and trying to engage 999 of these people who don’t want to know you and/or don’t want to buy from you. Sounds familiar? What a waste of effort.

And guess what? Everyone else is pitching in exact same way, because they have their own funnels, quotas, automation tools and messages to get across.

The real irony here is all that sales and marketing automation, unfocused social media has led to more efficient mass generation of noise, when everyone is shouting and no one (or very few) is listening. How inefficient.

Total Attention Span Overload

"No, Thursday's out. How about never—is never good for you?"

If you smiled then you probably had your own experience with the TASO (Total Attention Span Overload) syndrome, a condition afflicting most of decision makers at all corporate and government levels. TASO syndrome is primarily caused by:

- **Data Overload.** Exponential increase of the amount of data that needs to be processed and hence increasing demands on executives' time.

- **Easy Access.** Ubiquitousness of contact details coupled with low cost of outbound communication in combination generating an ever increasing amount of solicitations or pitches.

- **Productivity gains can't cope.** Improvements in productivity through technology, multi-tasking and extended working hours are failing to cope with or compensate for the amount of information necessary to be digested, analyzed and acted on.

- **Tempo**. The expectation and demands of important constituents: customers, investors, upper management have shifted to real time – always on, always ready and available. Thank you, Research in Motion!

These factors are causing so much stress and anxiety among decision makers, such filters, barriers and gatekeepers, electronic and live, that as a salesperson you often have a hard time "selling a life vest to the guy who is drowning".

Now, think of all the sales books you read, all the sales training courses and seminars you company has put you through. They all talk about uncovering needs, selling on benefits, not features; positioning against the leader, etc. These are no longer the real challenges we face. THE SINGLE LARGEST CHALLENGE NOWADAYS IS TO SECURE UNINTERRUPTED ATTENTION OF THE DECISION MAKER.

The implication for technology sales people is an ever increased difficulty of closing a sale.

Reliance on Direct Marketing Databases

This difficulty is further exacerbated by reliance on inadequate contact lists and marketing databases. Specific issues with relying on existing Direct Marketing Databases include:

- **Diminishing returns – the more you pitch the less they listen.** The lead information in most databases is a COMMODITY. Everyone has access to it which diminishes available attention span of IT executives allocating budgets and hence the effectiveness of your direct sales efforts. Overabundance of information bites leads to severe scarcity of attention.

- **Data "goes bad" fast.** On average, a contact database goes obsolete at a rate of 20-30%/year, so many leads you are buying/pitching are no longer there or not in the same positions as indicated in your CRM system

- **No urge to buy.** For leads that are correct and for whatever reason are not (yet) over-pitched, they are not in a buying mode – their budgets are allocated, trusted vendor relationships are entrenched – everything is in a steady state and unlikely to be disrupted by a new entrant.

- **Existing business relationships.** Direct marketing, however brilliant, is not effective at dislodging incumbent competitors; therefore an existing business relationship that is marginally effective trumps an superior product that is an unknown. It is the devil you know rule that people always seem to go with.

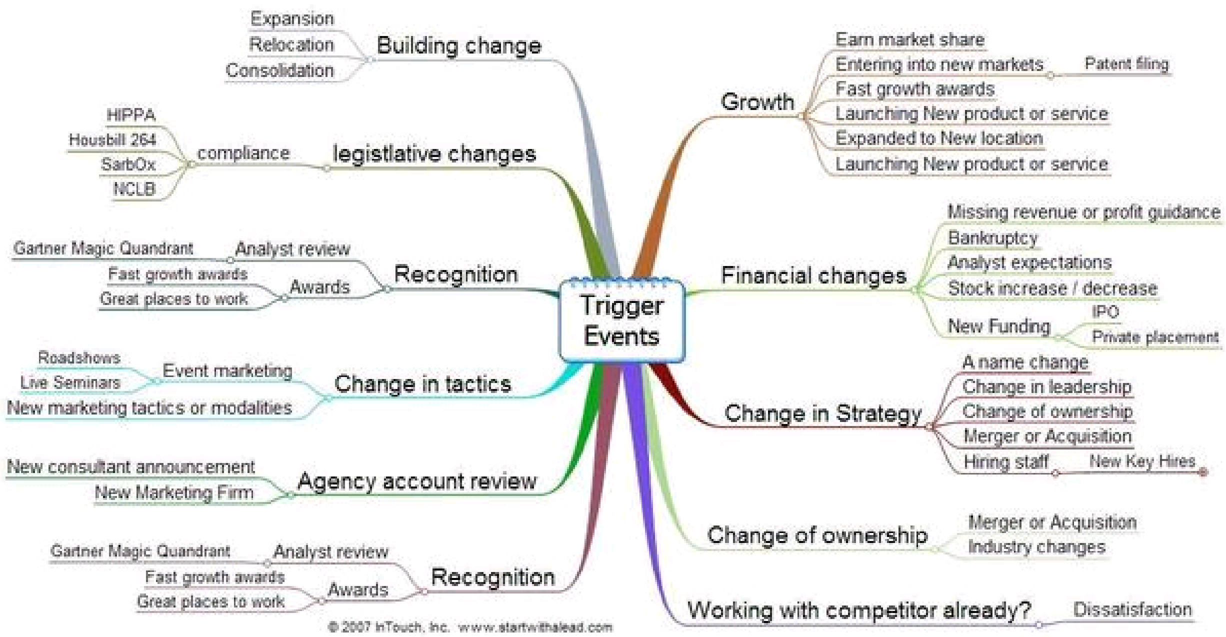
All this results in a drastically low response rate from outbound marketing campaigns, whether it is email, print or telemarketing. And what would every "intelligent" company do when a certain technique stops working? It doubles the effort, of course – more calls, more emails, etc., etc., etc. thus further decreasing the efficacy of the outbound direct marketing and sales efforts.

What is a salesperson to do?

Enter Sales Triggers

Disrupting the Steady State

A sales trigger is an event that disrupts a steady state of events at the target organization. Such event could be a merger, a capital raise, opening or closing of new offices, but the most effective andeasily identified one is the management change. The blog startwithalead.com posted this rather exhaustive summary of sales triggers:



As you see there are great many various sales triggers, however for the purposes of this white paper we are only concentrating on one trigger – management change. We like management change for the following reasons:

- **Weakened Existing Client-Vendor Relationships.** When a new executives comes on board, the existing client-vendor relationships are usually not as strong.
- **New Executives are in Information Gathering Mode.** The new executive takes time to get their bearings, to audit what they inherited and chart the course for the future – this is perfect "information gathering state" that makes them much more open to contact.
- **New Executives Often Serive Agents of Change.** New executives are often hired with a mandate to accomplish certain milestones. Fast. In other words, often new executives are agents of change, that works well for sales people trying to break into a new account.
- **Ego Trip.** High level executives certainly have agenda of their own. And that is probably caused by the fact that they want to make a name for themselves

- **Not in other databases.** It takes time to most databases to pick up on the careers moves which creates a window of opportunity of 2-4 months.

All these factors increase the probability of engagement by IT executives within this window of opportunity of 2-4 months within the date of the management change.

Selling Umbrellas When it Rains

Have you noticed that street vendors in Manhattan pop up selling umbrellas when is starts raining? You don't see them when the sun shines. Here it is the same basic idea: when it "rains" at the organization of your potential client, then and only then you have a higher chance of selling them "an umbrella" (your solution). The beauty of leveraging sales triggers for continuous selling success is that these sales triggers, these little "rains", are not easily trackable or obvious to your competition so there is a good chance you will be the only one or one of very few selling umbrellas there. This further improves your chances of success.

And here is another important point: as a business professional, I imagine you must be reading blogs, newspaper, and trade rags. Most of the information that you consume is either:

- Not relevant
- Not timely
- Not contextual
- Not actionable
- Not unique

If you filter this information, or get someone to filter the information for you, and focus only on sales trigger events concerning your potential clients then this information becomes an insight that is:

- **Relevant**: it concerns your client and if properly used can result in incremental sales

- **Timely**: sales trigger is an event in point in time, it is impact and implications are strongest shortly after the event. It is important therefore to track sales triggers as close to real time as possible.

- **Contextual**: a sales trigger event – e.g. a new appointment – becomes contextual once the data is appended with industry taxonomy, company background and personal background.

- **Unique**: generating and acting on real-time enhanced sales triggers for a specific vertical, industry or executive function can be a unique secret sauce of your sales and marketing team.

This is a key point: most of our attention span is wasted on consuming waste – unfocused, irrelevant information. Imagine now the leverage you'd get if you only consumed insights – relevant, timely, contextual and unique. Imagine how much more you'd accomplish in the same amount of time.

Now that we've made the transition from Information > Insight, we only have one remaining piece: how to make an insight actionable? In the conversation regarding management change it means:

- **Actionable**: an insight appended with an email address, a phone number and a physical address of a key decision maker, that you can immediately act on it – place a call or send an email.

The important point to make here is that the corollary to "Timely" component of an insight is that by definition insights are "perishable" – if you do not act on an insight in a timely manner it loses its value over time as new events pile up that take it place.

How to use sales triggers

Two Letters

The applications are many, from congratulatory letters to invitations to private events, however here is just one example we'd like to provide here:

If you put yourself in the shoes of CIOs or CTOs, would you rather respond to the letter #1 or #2?:

Letter #1:

Dear IT Executive,

Would you allow us to waste some of your oversubscribed time with yet another webinar/white paper that is too broad and unfocused to address your needs?

Sincerely,

Mass Direct Marketer

Letter #2:

Hi John,

I've noticed that you recently joined XYZ Corp. as the Chief Information Officer. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on this achievement and wish you success in your new position, this an impressive milestone in your career and I am genuinely excited for you.

As you may know, we work extensively with companies in your sector in helping them address "insert biz issue here". Specifically, companies ABC, DFG and HJK have used our services and achieved ROI in 2 months (click here for a case study).

I know you are probably busy settling in your new role, so I would only ask for 10min of your time next week for a consultation that we offer compliments of "insert business partner here". Please let me know what date/time works best for your schedule.

Regards,

Smart Direct Marketer

How to Integrate Acting on Insight into Your Sales & Marketing strategy

All companies' sales strategies and tactics vary in use of technology, distribution channels (VARs, consultants, direct), preferred communication method (emai, voice, face-to-face), length of sales cycles, etc.,etc.,etc.

Therefore a cookie-cutter plug-n-play approach in integrating sales triggers into your sales and marketing may not be as effective as an individualized approach.

Step 1.
Recognize that not all sales tactics are created equal. You probably need more than one in your toolbox, so that you could deploy several of them for most effect – e.g. you can combine mass undeferentiated email campaign ("carpet bombing") with precision communication and follow up over email/phone ("shorp shooting"). The truth is that you probably need both.

Step 2.
Dedicate resources necessary resources, most importantly – time and people – to tracking and leveraging sales triggers.

Step 3.
Measure success, learn what works and what doesn't, and scale the usage of sales triggers.

What to do next

If…

- You find this topic interesting…
- You are ready to see how sales triggers can change the quality of your sales pipeline and reduce the sales cycle…
- You sell to corporate and government Chief Information Officers and Chief Technology Officers…

then contact us about a free trial or a complimentary consultation email info@ctosonthemove.com or visit http://ctosonthemove.com/

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