



# New Face of Lead Generation

*Technology takes the pain—at least some of it—out of finding and contacting potential customers*

By Lisa Dowling

Cold calling has been the bane of existence for prospecting sales professionals—until now. Technological advances have revolutionized lead generation, and successful ISOs are getting in on the action.

Forward-thinking companies are utilizing resources that didn't exist when the electronic payments industry started. For example, when Certegy Check Services Inc. explored different ways to obtain prospecting information, it turned to an existing relationship with Dun & Bradstreet for guidance. The company, which previously provided Certegy with credit scores for its merchants, helped it create an innovative product called Private Data Portal.

"Through our relationship with D&B, we developed a portal that any of our agents can access to create a comprehensive list of prospects based on parameters of their choice," says Will Hazama, vice president of professional services for Certegy. "We introduced it in February of 2004, and the results have been outstanding. It's the next evolution of an old style that is much fresher and more accurate."

## Dialed 'Ins'

Certegy's Private Data Portal takes the criteria selected by an agent, searches D&B's list of more than 50 million businesses nationwide, and links the results to an automated system that dials thousands of business numbers. When a call is answered, a predicted dialer routes it to a live specialist armed with a preset script. If the specialist can't close the deal over the phone, the system generates a lead that's sent to another Certegy product called Gold Mine. This CRM tool enables the originating sales agent to track prospecting activities from the initial contact.

"Private Data Portal allows our agents to stop waiting for the phone to ring," says Hazama. "We're creating lists daily and generating 20 to 30 percent more leads than we did using old methodology."



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Certegy pays a monthly subscription fee that allows its sales force to access D&B's business lists. The company's risk management department and account management groups also take advantage of this service because D&B's lists are constantly updated with relevant data such as revenue figures, management changes, employee numbers, and acquisitions.

Updated lists are paramount to the success of this type of lead generation, as is acting quickly on the data obtained through systems like Private Data Portal. Hazama says that these leads should be treated as a commodity with a limited shelf life.

"If we generate a lead today and act on it today, we have a higher rate of return," he says. "If we lose time between the generation of the lead and acting on it, the close rate degrades quickly."

It's important to note that purchasing these electronic business lists does not grant exclusivity. In fact, all that is required to access the data is a contractual relationship with a provider like D&B and a monthly subscription fee. Consequently, ISOs must have a solid plan for using the information because it's possible that the competition has it, too.

"We send our leads to someone who can close them," says Hazama. "Our scripts are strong, and we understand value propositions and superior follow-up."

## Net Connections

One fast-growing acquirer has found success by embracing Internet applications to generate leads. Total Merchant Services works with Info USA to access more than 14 million businesses across the country through the company's subscription-based service called Sales Genie.

Total Merchant Services buys the license for each agent and then charges them a portion of that fee, based on the number of deals they sign each month. Agents who secure 10 or more deals per month receive the service for free.

"If we just gave them \$300 a month for their marketing efforts, it'd be a lot less helpful," says Total Merchant Services COO Matt Freedman. "Our salespeople are independent professionals and need a framework like Sales Genie to make calls that will turn into solid deals."

Customization is critical for Total Merchant Services because the company's target market is existing businesses. Its core offerings are its free terminal program and value-added upgrades for businesses with established transactional processing. Sales Genie enables Total Merchant Services agents to find thousands of established businesses and generate leads that are compatible with the company's products and services model.

While Internet-based services have changed how the payments industry generates leads, they won't solve an ISO's marketing problems, notes Freedman.

"Sales is a contact sport, and these systems will help you get in front of merchants more efficiently and make the most of your field trips." The rest is up to the ISO. **TT**

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