



How to Create a Successful Managed Services Marketing Plan

Blueprint For Success

Introduction

In this document, you will find information to help you build a successful Managed Services marketing plan, which is a key component of an effective direct marketing campaign.

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Why create a marketing plan for selling Managed Services?

Creating and executing a direct marketing plan produces consistent, dependable lead generation results allowing the ability to forecast ROI and revenue over time, enabling steady, consistent business growth.

The downside of referral marketing

Although it is possible to receive leads solely through referrals, it is impossible to predict when these leads will come in or how frequently. In some cases it may be smarter NOT to take on business from every referral that comes the provider's way.

Consider the following:

- It is difficult to effectively and profitably address the challenges and pain points of a specific industry or vertical without any experience serving it
- It is even more difficult to keep up with the challenges and changes of numerous verticals concurrently

All too often, these are the realities of accepting referral opportunities that span multiple verticals and industries, and why the concept of vertical-specific marketing should strongly be considered when developing a marketing plan.

Business growth through direct marketing

Only direct marketing to cold prospects will determine how rapidly the provider can consistently engage new prospects, and the ability to grow their business is directly related to how effective they are at closing these prospect opportunities.

When direct marketing let prospects know the provider can address their pain, they become interested and open to discussion, allowing the salesperson to qualify them. It is said that the first two things a salesperson must do to close an opportunity is grab the prospect's attention and get them interested.

The provider's marketing efforts can simplify that task for the salesperson and shorten the sales cycle if they are able to inform their prospects how they can address their pain through effective marketing. Marketing to a vertical that the provider can specialize in will allow their message to be much more effective and expedite their results as they approach the cold market.

How difficult is direct response marketing?

Many providers find it very difficult to execute direct response marketing with any consistency, simply because they are too busy to follow a consistent and proper process. Many times business gets in the way as they struggle to support their customers, order equipment, address customer service challenges, create proposals, or deal with internal office challenges.

Unfortunately, none of those things helps the provider insure the mailing campaign gets out, or the email marketing piece is complete. In most cases, the provider simply does not know where to start.



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Where to start

The first thing the provider must do is to identify their target audience – who they will be marketing to. Once that has been determined, they must understand their prospect's vertical-specific pain points. This requires knowledge of the prospect's line of business applications, workflows and vendors, along with any regulatory policies they must comply with. The next step is to identify the service offerings the prospect may find valuable, such as proactive patching and maintenance, managed security, helpdesk services, remote backup and disaster recovery or vendor management services and determine which to lead with during the marketing campaign.

It is important that the provider choose the core offerings that best meet their prospect's needs and plan how to best message their value in a manner they can understand easily. Sending too much information to a prospect on all of the services the provider offers can hurt their opportunities and yield a poor return on a marketing investment.

The next step the provider must accomplish is to create a powerful marketing message and compelling marketing collateral. Finally, a marketing schedule of activity must be created and executed.

Creating the marketing plan



Create compelling messaging and collateral

When creating powerful messaging it is important to understand that prospects make buying decisions for emotional reasons – emotion is the primary reason most prospects purchase any product or service, with need a close second.

Pain creates the emotional response that compels prospects to pick up the phone and call for help. Words and images that illustrate the unpleasantness they are forced to experience each time they must execute a task that presents difficulty or inconvenience allows the prospect to relive those uncomfortable moments.

Using words and images in the provider's collateral that illustrate their ability to eliminate this pain creates the emotion that ultimately leads to an interested, qualified prospect. Choosing the correct verbiage that introduces a positive perspective regarding this capability will significantly help the provider's sales efforts and can shorten the sales cycle.



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Lastly, it is very important to understand who the message is targeted to. The provider is not selling services to technical people. In fact, not only are most of the decision makers the provider will deal with non-technical, some are actually afraid of technology.

Understanding this, the compelling messaging must be simple, with the technology left out of it. Prospects engage in services for practical reasons, so the provider must be able to demonstrate practical value to their prospects in a simple and easy to understand manner.

Distribution

Once the provider has identified the prospects they will approach, what services will be marketed to them and has created their marketing message, they must now develop their plan to distribute that message and determine which marketing vehicles they will utilize to do so.

Some delivery vehicles include direct mail through letters, postcards, flyers, newsletters, brochures email, and telemarketing. The best success will be achieved by using a combination of these and utilizing a sales CRM solution to manage the distribution schedule and track results.

Automation

A challenge many providers face is the time it takes to manage marketing campaigns, so the ability to automate as much of the process as possible is a huge benefit. Utilizing a sales CRM solution to schedule and distribute email and electronic newsletters, and launch reminders for physical mailing and telemarketing and follow-up activity will yield the benefit of a steadily growing pipeline of new opportunities.

The goal of managing scheduled marketing distribution through automation is to insure consistency and to touch prospects regularly with some specific message and service offering.

Marketing delivery vehicles

There exist multiple mediums to deliver compelling messaging to prospects with and keep marketing touches fresh during the marketing schedule. The use of direct mail and email in a consistent manner, and alternating these with other vehicles such as monthly newsletters to let prospects and clients know about new business you've acquired and new solution and service offerings is a good example of this philosophy.

Newsletters are a perfect means to illustrate the provider's expertise and involvement in a specific vertical, their community, events and other relevant information that can be used to build familiarity and trust with their prospects.

You also want to be sure use win wires to update your prospective and current clients about new business opportunities won and solutions implemented. A win-wire is the briefest of case studies, and fits on a postcard. The influence of a win-wire is huge. Not only do win-wires create good PR around your company and service offerings, allowing you to leverage



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the herd theory as you inform the world of the new clients you are gaining, but it also insures that your prospects are informed of all of the services that they are delivering to satisfied customers.

Case studies are the number one means of marketing utilized in the industry. They create good PR for the provider and their service offerings, and insure that prospects are informed of all of the services that they are delivering to satisfied customers. Case studies can be posted to the provider's website and used as leave-behinds after prospect appointments.

Call-downs are the most important activity to execute to follow-up on direct marketing efforts. There are some prospects that will call in as a result of regular direct marketing touches; however, most will still need the emotional incentive brought forth by a professional salesperson's calling efforts.

Marketing vehicles



Example marketing plan forecast

Once the provider has completed determined their marketing vehicles for the campaign, they next will need to set a sales goal and create their marketing schedule to support reaching it. For instance, if the provider set a sales goal of increasing their Managed Services revenue by \$7,500 per month in the next quarter, and the average value of their Managed Services Agreements is \$1,500, they would need to sell 5 new Managed Services Agreements in order to reach that goal.

If the provider is able to generate proposals for better than half of the prospects they conduct appointments with, and half of those proposals generate business, then it is possible to develop a mathematical formula to forecast the results of marketing activity in reverse. This would mean that for the prospect to close 5 new Managed Services Agreements, they would need to generate 10 proposals. In turn, this would mean that the provider would need to conduct 15 to 20 initial





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appointments. The question for the prospect now becomes how much marketing activity must be conducted to set between 15 and 20 appointments.

In this example, and basing their strategy on generating a 3% response rate from a campaign comprised of a combination of direct mail postcards, email marketing and call-downs delivered in a scheduled manner, the provider determines that they will need to market to 600 targeted prospects.

Marketing plan to close 5 new Managed Services sales = \$7,500/month



Conclusion

An effective Managed Services marketing plan will:

- Create a consistent, repeatable process for successful marketing
- Allow the provider to forecast ROI and revenue
- Fill the provider’s sales pipeline
- Create the capability for consistent, controllable business growth
- Shorten sales cycles

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