

SWCCF: CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT NOMINATION 2016

Telemarketing - Imperial Tobacco UK

About: Imperial Tobacco Limited is the largest tobacco manufacturer in the United Kingdom currently employing over 500 staff, headquartered in Bristol with a manufacturing base in Nottingham, England. Our product portfolio includes leading tobacco brands Lambert & Butler, JPS, Player's, Golden Virginia and Gold Leaf.

Imperial Tobacco Limited is part of Imperial Brands PLC, a multi-national tobacco company with international strength in cigarettes and world leadership in fine cut tobacco, premium cigars, rolling papers and tubes. The Group currently has 44 manufacturing sites and around 35,000 employees and its brands are available in over 160 markets.

The Customer Relationship Centre based in Bristol, was launched in August 2013 as an exclusive resource for Imperial Tobacco's trade partners is made up of 17 telemarketing agents. The service offers 11,000 smaller independent retailers an improved level of service as well as offering category expertise and knowledge.

SUMMARY

This business is over 100 years old but it doesn't mean our operation is behind the times. Our team is a great example of this. No other tobacco company offers this service within the UK. Taking the plunge into advocacy based sales was a gamble, but one that's paid off. Everyone wins with this. It's great for Imperial, growing on shelf availability and great for our customers who aren't left alone to face the daunting task of selling tobacco in today's restricted environment.

SUPPORTING OUR CUSTOMERS

Every one of our actions focuses on engaging with our customers helping them to improve their business and creating brand advocates. We start at the beginning.....

CUSTOMER OWNERSHIP

Each of us is responsible for looking after a geographical area of the UK. This remains static meaning we can build up a relationship with our customers over time. It allows us to learn about their business, their needs and wants as well as them personally. I know that Derek Thambo of Derek's news in Oprington is a massive cricket fan so it gives us somewhere to start a conversation. It's old fashioned relationship building. Finding a common ground. We are then able to use this knowledge to create individualised calls.

CAMPAIGN PREPERATION

Getting our calls right is imperative. We have to make sure we are providing the customer with the right knowledge and support, accurately relaying complex legislation changes, new product facts, localised business information and following up with any support requirements from previous calls.

To do this, we are given an entire day away from the phone every campaign. During this day, we review the previous campaign, learn about industry, legislation and product

updates and prepare our call structure for the coming sprint. We aren't given scripts here, we're told to do it our way. The way the customer needs us to do it.

THE CALL

Customer and colleague individualisation is paramount to what we are trying to achieve so we take all of the information and build our own call. We also don't have handling time targets, in fact it's the opposite. 50% of our KPI is determined around how the call felt for the customer. Did we engage? Did we show empathy? Did we build rapport? We are targeted on whether the call was the right length for the customer - **Appendix 1 shows our quality scoring matrix**. Doing it this way means we can react to our customer's needs and move the call onto any areas they need support with. As an example, I'm talking to a customer about Player's Red, a new rolling tobacco when the customer asks questions about Player's cigarettes (different product, same brand family). As there is no script or time restraints I'm able to have that conversation making sure I provide the customer with every bit of knowledge they need.

LEGISLATION SUPPORT

Tobacco is the most regulated & legislated against product in the world. This legislation and regulation is also constantly changing. Our customers are small individual retailers who don't have access to large legal teams who can brief them on these changes. A major part of what we do, is exactly that. We hold their hands through the minefield of legislation. We make sure they understand what they need to do to stay compliant. A £5,000 fine or even imprisonment would be catastrophic for one of our customers. During 2015 we supported 11,000 customers through the display ban, ensuring they fully understood the requirements of this legislation and also providing information and support on how to make the necessary shop fitting adjustments. The real winning point though was the small nuances where we could give hints and tips, i.e making sure tobacco was covered up even when just moving it from van to shop after visiting the cash and carry.

Another example of complex and changing legislation, is our current campaign. From May 2016 we will be forced to package tobacco in standardised packing, meaning the removal of brand colouring, images and references. It also means we will no longer be allowed to produce price marked packs, a staple product of our independent customers. Our current campaign is aimed at helping our customers understand the most effective way of moving to a market where there are no price marked packs. The temptation with some inexperienced retailers will be to bump the price up to maximise margin. However, we know from our experience in Australia, that this will have long term implications for their business, losing customers over a period of time. We will be passing this knowledge to our customers enabling them to make educated decisions around tobacco pricing. I think the point I'm trying to make is, that we aren't just pushing products, our team is more akin to business managers offering total industry and business support to our customers, something which they greatly appreciate.

Appendix 2 is a case study with Alisha from Scotland and demonstrates how valuable our customers find the service that we offer.

CUSTOMER CONVENIENT

One of the other advantages of our operating model, is that customers can request a call when they want. We have the ability to make our calls on the customers preferred day and time. We're also willing to sit on hold while they deal with consumers or other reps in store, making sure we get the right amount of time to have a quality business conversation.

DEDICATED TRADE WEBSITE

All of our customers have exclusive access to a dedicated trade website which provides in depth industry and category information from new product launches to the specifications of each cigarette. It also gives customers the ability to create and download customised price lists that are fully compliant with display restriction legislation.

NO SALE! BUT SUCCESSFUL!

There is a core belief within Imperial that our customers will advocate our products if we support them with product and category knowledge through a no pressure call. There is no transaction! No pressure to buy! We create brand advocates by engaging and supporting. We determine success by measuring the overall availability of our products on shelf. The proof is in the pudding as the saying goes.... The on shelf availability of core range of products increased by over 10% points in the last 12 months. That equates to over 1,000 more outlets stocking our entire core range.