

white paper

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## **Tips for E-Commerce: 4 Steps to Drive Sales with the Phone**



## Introduction

The online retail industry is booming. Today, companies of all sizes are finding success with e-commerce platforms in both B2B and B2C industries.

eMarketer estimates that B2C e-commerce sales across the globe increased 17.1% in 2013, totaling more than \$1.2 trillion. By 2016, that number should surpass \$1.8 trillion with a consistent year-over-year growth rate of more than 10%. The total number of buyers will likely reach 1.03 billion in the next two years, making up 45.1% of the world's online audience.

Currently, the United States is reporting 155.7 million shoppers purchasing off e-commerce platforms, representing nearly three-fourths of the country's population of Internet users. Such a staggering figure explains why so many businesses are depending, and spending, more on digital infrastructure than traditional brick-and-mortar storefronts to generate sales.

But while e-commerce continues to grow, many online retailers are still missing out on significant revenue because they ignore one critical device: the phone. It may seem counterintuitive, but in the world of e-commerce, people want to call you. And by not including a phone number prominently on your web site, you lose not only sales, but also credibility and the trust of online shoppers.

This white paper explains why phone calls have become a critical sales channel in the e-commerce space. It will also identify how online retailers can leverage a technology called voice-based marketing automation to route and manage inbound calls, track and optimize marketing campaigns, reduce shopping cart abandonment, increase sales, and improve customer loyalty.

## Why Phone Calls Are Important to E-Commerce

A forecast from Forrester predicts online retail sales in the United States will hit \$370 billion by 2017, making up 10% of all retail sales nationwide. In fact, an estimated \$262 billion in online sales is expected in 2014, marking a 13% jump from 2013.

The increased use of smartphones and tablets by consumers across the country is one of the top factors driving the growth of e-commerce spending. Smartphone and tablet usage is making it easier for consumers to be online and shopping while on-the-go.

There are times, however, when online shoppers still want to speak to a brand representative to receive the same personalized experience and assistance they would enjoy in a physical store. While it may seem counterintuitive for online retailers to focus on voice-based interactions, studies suggest phone calls directly impact sales:

- IMShopping and Harris Interactive found 77% of online shoppers are interested in getting help from a real person before making a purchase.
- That survey also reported that 52% of those that couldn't speak to a real person say it has impacted their decision to buy.

- An ATG/Oracle study found 67% of online shoppers will call a business directly for purchases greater than \$100.

A 2013 Google study also found 61% believe it's important that businesses give them a phone number to call, and 33% would be less likely to use and refer brands that don't. Consumers see phone numbers as a sign of a trustworthy business. If you don't offer a phone number on your web site, people may stop buying from you or recommending you to others. In other words: it can cost you business.

### The Stats Don't Lie: Online Shoppers Want to Talk

**77%** of online shoppers say they would be interested in getting help from a real person before making an online purchase.

**82%** say there have been times when they have not been able to get help from a real person.

**58%** have a question that cannot be answered by information on the web site.

**52%** of those who have not been able to get help from a real person say it has affected their decision to not purchase the product.

Source: IMShopping and Harris Interactive Survey, August 2009

## The Impact of Mobile on E-Commerce

The mobile revolution is also having a serious impact on e-commerce. Well over half of U.S. consumers own smartphones and turn to mobile devices when researching purchases, locating stores, and comparing prices.

Smartphone and tablet users, however, are also buying goods and services directly from their devices. Forrester Research revealed online sales made from mobile devices exceeded \$8 billion in 2013 in the United States, and is expected to reach \$31 billion by 2017, growing 33% annually (see Figure 1).

Despite the widespread proliferation of smartphones and tablets, just one quarter of users completed a mobile transaction in 2013. Forrester attributes this low figure to brands making it difficult for shoppers to work through a purchasing decision from their device as easily as they would through other mediums. Because it can be challenging to view an item, navigate different webpages, or read through FAQ lists, offering shoppers a phone number for direct calls can support purchasing decisions from mobile devices for a more convenient shopping experience.

In fact, the spike in mobile device adoption is generating an influx of direct sales calls to businesses. A Google study from 2013 found 70% of mobile searchers called a business from search results pages, as a voice interaction is more efficient than navigating a website for on-the-go shoppers with questions or concerns. And tapping a click-to-call link in your smartphone's web browser to trigger a call to a business is just easier and more natural than zooming and scrolling through webpages or filling out web forms on a tiny mobile screen.



Source: Forrester Research Mobile Commerce Forecast, 2012 To 2017 (US)  
 Note: This figure includes retail and daily deals sales. It excludes travel sales.

Figure 1: While total e-commerce growth is projected to jump 10 percent in 2014, mobile commerce is expected to grow at 40 percent.

## How to Use the Phone to Grow Sales

If you are interested in leveraging the phone to boost sales from your e-commerce site, there are four key steps you can take to do it. There is also a technology called voice-based marketing automation (VBMA) that can assist you in performing these steps and generating more revenue over the phone.

Voice-based marketing automation (VBMA) technology is a type of cloud-based software used by marketing and sales teams to connect, measure, and optimize phone conversations. It is composed of integrated call tracking, call routing, and call management tools that online retailers of all sizes have found make it easy to offer a professional call experience to their shoppers, improve marketing ROI, and facilitate sales over the phone.

### Step 1: Make It Easy for Online Shoppers to Call You

It should not be difficult for consumers to access an e-commerce platform from a computer, smartphone, or tablet. When perusing the website, shoppers should enjoy equal ease of use in locating a phone number to directly call a business with questions, concerns, or interest in completing a purchase (see Figure 2).

Be sure to include a phone number in all emails, Google ads and landing pages, and marketing materials as well. This is especially important for mobile consumers who thanks to click-to-call links can simply tap the phone number on their device to launch a phone call instantly. Consistently enabling shoppers to contact a business through whatever channel is most convenient for them will generate more sales and positively impact customer loyalty.

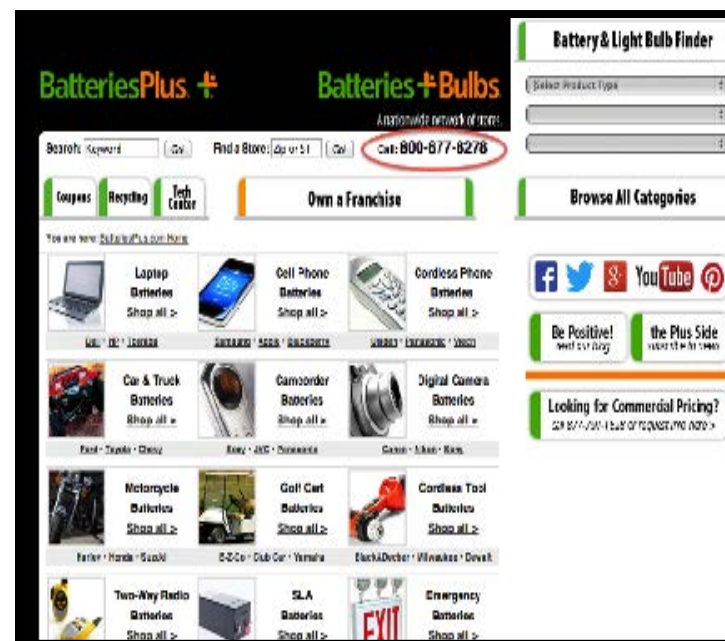


Figure 2: Phone numbers should be easily accessible to online shoppers.

## Step 2: Track Calls from Marketing Sources to Improve ROI

So if you are going to make it easy for shoppers to call you by placing phone numbers on your site and in your marketing, you should use trackable phone numbers to understand exactly which sources are driving inbound calls.

It's the same principle as tracking online page views and clicks in Google Analytics or PPC ad conversions in Google AdWords. Knowing what campaigns are generating calls and business is critical in optimizing programs and improving ROI.

To do it, you can use call tracking technology found in voice-based marketing automation software. Call tracking is a form of lead attribution and marketing analytics technology. Marketers and lead gen agencies use it to track inbound phone calls back to the specific online, mobile, and offline marketing sources that originated them (see Figure 3), and then follow those leads through the sales cycle.

Call tracking technology works by giving you trackable phone numbers that you insert in your marketing materials and display on your web pages. When someone calls that number, the software knows exactly what source they are calling from and pins that source information to the lead information. If that lead goes on to become an

opportunity or a customer, you can tie those events back to the original source, so you can understand and prove how your marketing is generating phone calls, impacting lead generation, and driving sales.

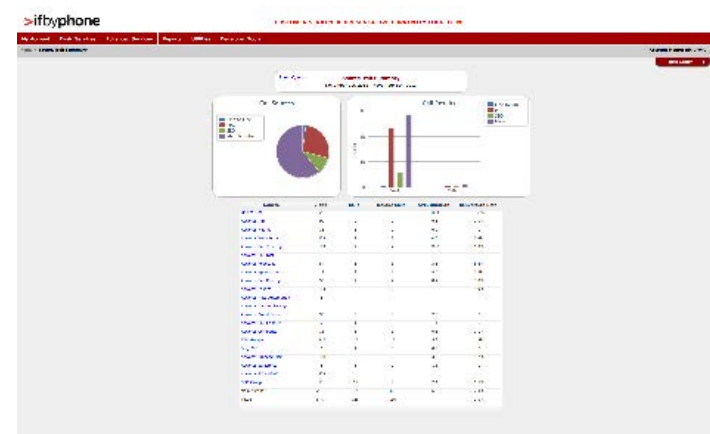


Figure 3: Generate reports that track phone leads to their source.

Call tracking works for any marketing source, including Google and Bing PPC ads, SEO, email and direct mail blasts, mobile banner ads, brochures and catalogs, print ads, web pages, trade shows, and social media. You can generate your own web-based reports on how each source is generating calls. This data can also be included in Google AdWords, Google Analytics, and Universal Analytics reports to gain meaningful insights into PPC ad conversion rates and customer behavior on your site.

Plus, you can integrate this data in CRM systems like Salesforce to track each call through the sales cycle to revenue to better measure ROI from each lead source.

For more information on call tracking for Google SEO and PPC, visit the Ifbyphone web site and download the white paper: [“Marketer’s Guide to Call Tracking for Google SEO and PPC”](#).

### Beacon Technologies Sees Over 400% Higher ROI with Call Tracking

Beacon Technologies is a web technology and marketing agency. For one client, Beacon used Ifbyphone to track call activity from sites like Lawyers.com, FindLaw.com, Google Local, and social media outlets.

They now understood which channels were working and adjusted spending accordingly. The end result was a 400% increase in ROI, which they could prove definitively to their client.

“A lot of companies don’t just get leads that take place on the web. Consumers often pick up the phone and call,” said Brad Henry, Director of Web Marketing at Beacon. “It’s important to know where that lead originated, particularly if the web is involved, in order to optimize marketing initiatives moving forward.”



## Step 3: Set Up a Cost-Effective Call Center that Fits Your Resources

Now that you will be driving more inbound calls to your business, you should make sure you are offering them a professional call center experience 24/7. But don't panic: VBMA makes it easy for online retailers of every size to cost-effectively deploy a professional virtual call center in little time. Because it is a cloud-based solution, you don't need to purchase and install expensive hardware. In fact, you don't need any programmer assistance at all. Your virtual call center can be up and running in minutes, and changes can be made on the fly by sales personnel without any technical background.

VBMA virtual call centers are extremely flexible, so your agents can work from home, the road, or any office location using any phone or device they wish while still operating seamlessly as one team.

### 10 Questions to Ask Any Virtual Call Center Provider

1. Can I customize the on-hold experience?
2. Can my agents receive calls at any location on any type of phone? Even softphones and Skype?
3. Can I set up schedules based on my individual agents?
4. How can my agents receive caller information before answering?
5. Can I access call reports and records online?
6. Does your service offer call recording and transcription?
7. Are there any setup fees or contracts?
8. Am I able to transfer callers to another agent, department, or IVR?
9. Do you charge per-agent or per-seat fees?
10. Does it integrate with applications like Salesforce and Zendesk?



## Automatically Route Calls to the Right Sales Agent Wherever

VBMA virtual call centers have advanced call routing technology that enables your business to route calls based on your own customizable rules. Rules can be easily set up and updated on the fly as needed. Call routing options include:

- **Route by schedule:** Create custom routing based on your office hours, the time zones of your customers, weekends, holidays, and more.
- **Route by agent:** Ensure that your best performing sales reps receive the most calls by routing a certain percentage to specific agents.
- **Route by geography:** If your business has multiple locations or assigns leads based on territory, set up incoming phone calls to be routed based on the caller's location.
- **Route by number:** Screen incoming calls and set up custom routing and queuing rules for specific phone numbers.
- **Route by product interest or marketing source:** Because VBMA can tell which product, ad, marketing campaign, or other source a person is calling about or from (more on this later), you can set up rules to route those calls to the best place based on that source.

You can also minimize the risk of important calls going unanswered by using VBMA to implement conditional and selective call routing. Forward incoming calls to different types of phones or devices (cell phone, work phone, home phone, Skype, etc.) and agents based on various schedules, including:

- **Simultaneous ringing:** Ring an agent's home, work, and cell phone simultaneously to ensure that the call is answered, whether the agent is working from home or travelling.
- **Specific ring order:** Ring agent phones in a specific order, such as work phone first, cell phone second, home phone third, etc.
- **Multi-agent ringing:** Ring several agent phone numbers at the same time; the first agent who answers gets the call, even if they are working from home.
- **Office schedule:** Forward calls to various agents based on your office schedule.

### Use an IVR as Your Auto-Attendant

IVR stands for interactive voice response. It is a telephone technology that people interact with using their voice or phone keypad to answer questions or acquire data. Voice-based marketing automation makes it easy for marketers and salespeople to build and modify your own IVRs in minutes without having to hire or wait for help from a programmer.

Sales teams use IVR as auto-attendants that help manage call volume. IVRs answer incoming calls with professionally recorded greetings and route callers using interactive phone menus. Auto-attendants can replace live receptionists, helping your business cut costs and increase efficiency while giving your callers professional around-the-clock service.

### Control Your Call Queuing Experience

When callers are placed on hold, you want full control over their experience. VBMA lets you select the music or promotional messages they hear, the maximum amount of time they'll have to wait, the number of callers in your queue, and much more. You can also set up priority queuing to speed VIP customers to the front of the line.

To learn more about the benefits of virtual call centers, you can visit the Ifbyphone web site and download the white paper [“How Sales Teams Use Integrated Virtual Call Centers to Close More Business”](#).

## Step 4: Reduce Shopping Cart Abandonment by Triggering Calls

While e-commerce platforms provide significant benefits to shoppers and businesses in the form of reduced costs and increased convenience, there can be some drawbacks. Allowing shoppers to browse items, read reviews, and build up shopping carts wherever, whenever, tends to reduce the urgency to make a purchasing decision that is more likely to occur in a physical store.

As a result, many shoppers may spend time on a website, fill up a shopping cart with items, and then exit the webpage to compare prices on another site or to think over the decision before completing the transaction. This is known as shopping cart abandonment and is a persistent problem for online retailers.

Because there is no sales associate roaming the floor able to assist a customer online as they are in physical stores, providing other means of customer service is extremely important. A shopper may have questions about an item, concerns with shipping or checkout, or may prefer to place an order over the phone rather than online.

### Shopping Cart Abandonment Stats Every E-Commerce Business Should Know

- **65.23%** The average shopping cart abandonment rate
- **2.13%** Average online conversion rate

### Popular Reasons People Abandon Shopping Carts

- **44%** High shipping costs
- **41%** Not ready to purchase
- **25%** High product price
- **24%** Save and consider it later
- **22%** Did not clearly mention shipping costs
- **14%** No guest checkout option
- **11%** Complex checkout process
- **7%** Do not have enough payment options

Source: Invesp, 2013

Email support and live chat can be useful at times, but access to direct phone numbers allows for personal interaction to enhance the shopping experience. Not only will shoppers appreciate having their questions or concerns answered promptly by a live representative, but businesses will see their sales numbers increase and loyalty boosted.

The phone number should be made available to shoppers throughout their experience from first searching for the product or brand into checkout. This will allow for all questions or concerns to be addressed quickly and efficiently to expedite the checkout process. Shoppers are more likely to become repeat buyers from brands that make all efforts to remove obstacles in the way of purchases.

### **Call Shoppers Immediately When They Abandon a Cart**

Another tool that can be deployed to reduce shopping cart abandonment rates is a voice-based alert system. Using VBMA, you can improve sales by triggering calls to online shoppers the moment they abandon their carts, connecting them in conversations with one of your agents. This is important since the sooner a sales or customer support agent speaks with the shopper regarding their shopping cart, the more likely any issues will be resolved and a transaction completed. If you wait to reach out to the customer, engagement and the sale may be lost.

Here's how it works: When a cart is abandoned online, VBMA will trigger a call immediately to the designated sales rep or group of reps of your choice. The reps will be notified about who the shopper is and what was abandoned. If the reps chose to accept the call, VBMA will then call the shopper using the number from a site profile or one submitted during checkout, and connect the two in conversation. The sales or customer support representative can then assist the shopper with any questions or concerns they may have to encourage a purchase and demonstrate the shopper's value to the business.

## Summary

Even in the world of e-commerce, shoppers want to call you. By failing to include a phone number prominently on your web site, you lose not only sales, but also credibility and the trust of online shoppers. That's why online retailers are leveraging a phone-based technology called voice-based marketing automation that can route and manage inbound calls, track and optimize marketing campaigns, reduce shopping cart abandonment, increase sales, and improve customer loyalty.

### Sources:

1. BIA/Kelsey report on Call-Based Ads, May 29, 2012
2. MShopping and Harris Interactive Survey, August 2009
3. Forrester Research Online Retail Forecast, 2012 to 2017 (US)
4. Harris Interactive IM Shopping Poll (August 2009)
5. eMarketer Forecast of Digital Sales of Retail and Travel Products and Services, June 2013
6. investopedia infographic, September 2013

## Next Steps

Call Ifbyphone today at (866) 275-3446 to learn how Ifbyphone can help you grow your e-commerce business. You can also request a demo of Ifbyphone's VBMA solutions at [www.ifbyphone.com](http://www.ifbyphone.com).



## About Ifbyphone

Ifbyphone, the leader in voice-based marketing automation (VBMA), connects, measures and optimizes sales and service calls for businesses and organizations. Ifbyphone's VBMA solutions capture and manage phone leads and information that often slip through the cracks of traditional marketing automation and CRM software solutions.

The Ifbyphone product suite is a set of software-as-a-service applications including call tracking, hosted IVR (interactive voice response), call routing, virtual call center and voice broadcasting. Organizations of all sizes in all industries use Ifbyphone, including marketing agencies, lead generation, e-commerce, direct response, financial services and insurance, health care, retail and logistics, and SaaS and technology. For more information, visit [www.ifbyphone.com](http://www.ifbyphone.com)

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