

Most commercially successful



O2 Business: Markers, Set, Go!



The
Marketing
Practice

O₂
business

Summary

“Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration” goes the famous quote. So too – on the evidence of this programme – is commercially successful marketing.

In 2018, O2 Business’s market share in the business mobile space was under threat, in part from the acquisition of EE by BT. Although opportunities were being generated, converting them to closed deals was tough.

The marketing team and agency, The Marketing Practice (TMP), set a target for their closed-won conversion rate to hit the Sirius Decisions average of 6.6%. They believed that the answer to their challenge was in data they already held, but which was not being fully exploited.

The database was analysed and data markers added for prioritising accounts against value, propensity to buy and lead time. The data was further enriched over time through marketing and sales activity.

When the highest-priority accounts were identified, the 1% inspiration was added – a couple of creative sparks to convince these prospects to speak to O2.

The result?
Conversion rates soared to

14%

by 2020 and revenue targets were smashed by several million pounds.

For every,

£1

of marketing budget spent, O2 Business generated a staggering

£29

of closed-won revenue.

About

O2 Business is part of Virgin Media O2, and is the business arm of one of the UK's largest and most well-known consumer mobile brands.

Strategy

In 2018, the business mobile space was becoming increasingly competitive, in part due to market consolidation such as BT's purchase of EE. Selling mobile offerings is core to O2 Business and facilitates cross-selling of its broader connectivity solutions.

O2 Business was generating opportunities for its mobile and digital workspace propositions. The problem was unlocking the value by converting them to closed deals. The small sales team wanted to focus their firepower where data could show they were most likely to succeed.

Objectives

When O2 Business and The Marketing Practice began working together on the 'Markers, Set, Go!' programme, they set a target to hit the Sirius Decisions average of 6.6% conversion from opportunity to closed-won in the first year.

In year two, as the programme evolved and the team analysed the data which was being added to the CRM, targets for closed-won business were added: £2.9m in 2019.

This target jumped to £12.8m closed-won in 2020 as the programme shifted up a gear through the refinement of the approach and the richness of the data which had been built up in years one and two.

Target audience

The target audience was IT and procurement decision-makers, across all public - and private-sector companies with more than 500 employees. The key difficulty in engaging with these contacts was reaching them at the right time with the right message, when business mobile deals tend to last several years and are often awarded through complex tendering processes.



Media, channels or techniques

99% perspiration

When O2 and TMP investigated how to improve conversion rates, they discovered that the answer was unlikely to be a piece of new technology or flashy creative. What was required was diligent, detailed, insight-led work – sustained over several years as part of a marketing programme that engaged the audience and helped build strong relationships.

A dedicated data team carried out comprehensive analysis of the database: gathering intelligence and adding markers on information such as contract renewal dates, employee numbers, annual revenue, engagement with O2 marketing communications, historic sector deal sizes and opportunity-to-closed-deal conversion rates by sector. The team were given autonomy to use an agile approach, meaning that as results came in, they focused their efforts where they were seeing the best return; continually optimising their strategy.

The accounts which, based on this analysis, were close to contract renewal and also high propensity and value, were used to define sales targets and set as a priority in outbound marketing campaigning.

Where sales wanted marketing support but had little intelligence to share on their nominated accounts, marketing undertook research and propensity analyses to single out high-priority accounts and assign the best propositions based on lookalike accounts in the database.

1% inspiration

With the groundwork underway to make sure that objectives were realistic and segmentation and targeting were laser-focused, the team needed a final push to hook the attention of their prospects.

For always-on outreach campaigning, inside sales callers were armed with a self-serve email matrix to build personalised, highly relevant 1:1 emails based on the prospect type and conversation stage. This allowed the team to be in control of their own communications, rather than relying on ‘marketing’ emails built en-masse.

In 2020, a new innovation known as Pipeline Acceleration was added to the mix. Working closely with sales and bid teams, the marketing team dug deep into successful deals to understand not what had been proposed, but what had actually sold. The results were intriguing – and exciting. Trojan-horse-style offerings were unearthed and repackaged into marketing assets billed as “The most important thing you didn’t know”.

Target lists of lookalike accounts were drawn up, based on the attributes of the accounts which had bought the offering in the first place. The outreach communications offered a direct connection to that original customer, to go behind the scenes and find out more about the benefits they’d achieved with O2. This approach generated £1.5m pipeline within six months.



Media, channels or techniques

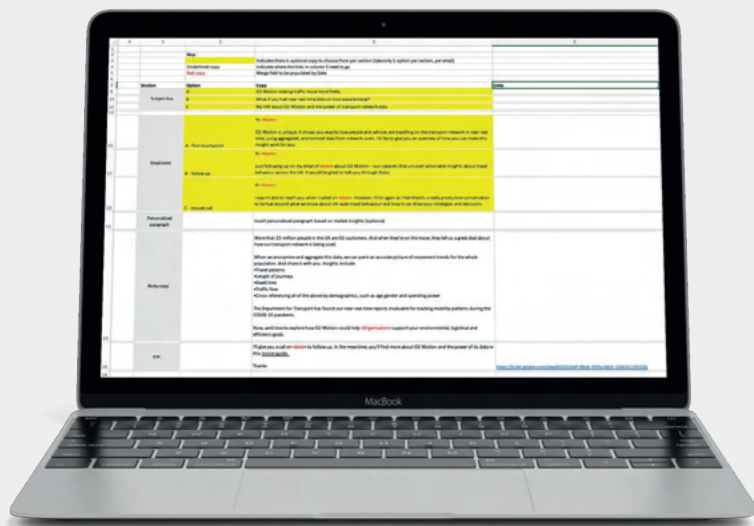
Patience is a virtue

One of the defining characteristics of the 'Markers, Set, Go!' initiative is its longevity.

The reason it has been so successful is that leads have been nurtured the entire length of the sales cycle, which can be four years in some instances. In the case of one particular account, in November 2016 the team discovered that a contract had been signed within the year with a competitor. This intelligence was entered into the CRM and shared with the outreach team.

The account was nurtured with scheduled quarterly call backs and personalised emails (for instance, linking out to articles the team thought might be of interest).

The end result? A direct relationship and invitation to tender in 2020, leading to a deal worth over a million pounds.



LEFT: The self-serve personalised email builder for the inside sales team



ABOVE: Example analysis from the markers added to the database



ABOVE: Example creative from the Pipeline Acceleration initiative – front cover and inside page

Timescales

The programme kicked off in 2018 and is still running.

Results

Against a closed-won target of £2.9m in 2019 they achieved £6.6m, and against 2020's target of £12.8m

they achieved

£15.9m

On top of the initial deals, a subsequent £24m of business was generated within those accounts and attributed to marketing.

Against the Sirius Decisions benchmark of 6.6% converted from opportunity to closed won, they achieved:

2018:

9%

2019:

9%

2020:

14%

Since the programme began,

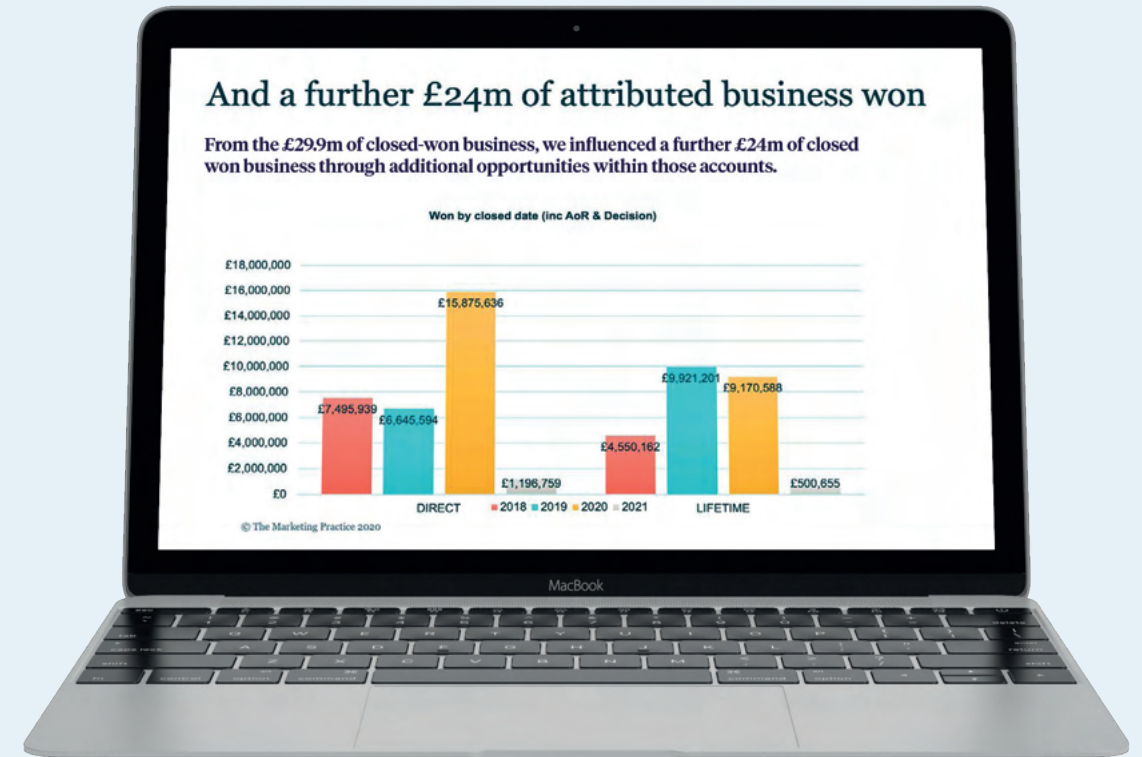
for every

£1

of marketing budget spent, the team has generated a staggering

£29

of closed-won revenue.



ABOVE: Breakdown of direct and lifetime closed won business generated

Client testimonial

“As marketers, the ultimate test of everything we do is: is it generating revenue for our business?”

And in the case of this programme, we've built an engine that delivers outstanding conversion rates and target-beating closed-won business year after year. That's marketing nirvana in my book!”

Alysha Spencer

Head of Enterprise Acquisition & Upsell Marketing, O2 Business



The
Marketing
Practice

O₂
business