



SMART MARKETER'S GUIDE TO CALL-THRU ANALYTICS

How the new discipline of call-thru analytics is transforming DTC response measurement and campaign optimization.

White Paper
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Abstract

If you're a company with an advertising campaign that directs potential customers to call resellers or sales reps you are faced with a major problem -- it's impossible to accurately gauge whether customers viewing your advertisements pick up the phone and contact a local reseller or sales rep. Without this vital information, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns. This lack of knowledge leads to inflated advertising expenses. This white paper provides details about a powerful new product that enables you to streamline advertising costs and increase customer sales.

The Problem

Thimble River Benefits

- Real-time analysis of which campaigns are making the phone ring
- Compare response rate across multiple channels and campaigns
- Built in support for A/B split testing

If you are a company with an advertising campaign that directs potential customers to call resellers or sales reps, you are in a difficult situation. In order to market your products effectively, you need to know how your advertising messages are being received by customers. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to tell which customers call a reseller or sales rep as a result of your campaigns. Existing mechanisms that try to provide metrics about which customers make calls as a result of your marketing campaign's influence include reseller employee surveys, callback forms for customers to fill out, or click-to-call arrangements. Each mechanism has its own particular flaws.

Reseller surveys usually require sales representatives to query employees at each reseller's place of business. Feedback provided through these surveys is not always accurate as it is likely based on employee opinion and personal experience rather than statistics. There is no good way to be sure resellers are correctly reporting the number of customers they receive from your marketing campaign's various advertising channels. An additional issue is that surveys take time to complete. If your campaign is unsuccessful in driving customers to resellers, there is no way of determining this until the survey results are tallied. Even then you are stuck guessing since you cannot be sure the decreased sales are the result of ineffective campaigns or something the reseller may be doing. Conversely, if a website is successful in driving customers to resellers, there is no way of showing this to resellers, who may lose interest in your marketing campaign if they cannot see its impact on their sales.

Another available mechanism for collecting information about which customers use your company's website is a callback form. In this system, customers are expected to fill out forms with their contact information, then wait for callbacks from assigned resellers. This process is time consuming and irritating for customers who likely want the option to talk to someone right away about a product or service they are interested in. Such a system can result in a loss of sales if the customers are able to find another company that offers an instant connection to an informed sales representative.

To avoid the delay caused by the callback form, some companies implement a click-to-call option. There are disadvantages to both versions of this mechanism. In one arrangement, customers must enter their phone numbers then wait for a callback. Waiting for a callback is an inconve-

Thimble River Benefits

- Can be applied to web, print, broadcast, outdoor, and direct mail
- No software to install or maintain, no long term contracts
- Rapid implementation. You'll be up and running in weeks, not months

nience, even if it does help companies track their customers more efficiently. In another arrangement, customers click a button which places a call using VOIP. The problem in this situation is that customers must have headsets or microphones configured on their computers. If they do not, you can lose sales to frustrated users who will go somewhere that offers an easier contact method, like a phone number they can dial.

In one way or another, each of these feedback mechanisms boils down to one thing, loss of profit. Either you lose sales because customers must do something inconvenient in order to help you generate accurate metrics, or you lose sales because you cannot adjust your direct-to-consumer marketing campaigns real-time and instead must wait for the results of reseller surveys to be tallied before making any informed changes.

If you do not use reseller surveys, then you must judge the success of your campaigns after the fact. One common method is to have your CFO and associated staff look at the total number of sales that occur in the period following your campaign and see how much greater that number is than the seasonal norm. Any increase is attributed to marketing efforts. However, you have no precise way of knowing if the increase is due to your campaign or something else.

Another serious drawback is you are running your marketing campaign based on lagging indicators. If the situation arises where you have an unsuccessful campaign, you cannot make changes to the campaign until after sales are tallied. This leads to wasteful spending – you may find yourself marketing in multiple channels when perhaps only one or two of these is truly lucrative. Worse still, making changes to your campaign is slow and tedious. After each adjustment, you are forced to wait until sales are again tallied and the increase or decrease is attributed to your advertising work.

The Solution

Thimble River Benefits

- Fully HIPAA compliant
- Proven technology from a proven company, already in use by several Fortune 500 companies
- Easy integration with other Business Intelligence systems

Fortunately, there is a solution available. Thimble River Analytics. Thimble River enables you to track when your customers call to make purchases from any marketing campaign segment, online or otherwise. This product solves the call-through metrics gap without requiring users to change their habits, or requiring you to make any changes to your website's architecture or install any software. For each call that is made, Thimble River measures it -- that it took place, how long the conversation lasted, whether the call was unanswered, and even how long it took for the reseller to answer. Best of all, your customers will not notice Thimble River at work. They pick up the phone, dial a phone number with an area code appropriate to their location, and are immediately connected to the reseller's line without delay.

Thimble River also provides a seamless experience for you. Because the Thimble River platform is distributed using the software as a service model, there is no software to buy, install, or maintain. This means you can be up and running with this robust call-through metrics system immediately, regardless of whether your company tracks 10's, 100's or even 1000's of resellers.

The Thimble River system is HIPAA compliant so all patient data is properly stored and secured. It integrates with any platform and any external systems your company may use such as ERP, CRM, and sales force automation applications. In addition to integrating easily with your existing systems, Thimble River offers a lot of flexibility when it comes to working with the metrics you collect. You can examine metrics by exporting them as an Excel file, or make them accessible by XML feed through a lightweight API. This is especially useful if you want to integrate Thimble River data into a sales portal or data warehouse. You can also examine metrics by reviewing one of Thimble River's three basic reports which include a table view (exportable to Excel), a static map view, and an animated map view that shows how call activity varies over time within a set region.

Real World Application – Manufacturing

Manufacturers of heavy, expensive-to-ship products such as furniture or appliances find themselves in a unique position when it comes to selling their goods – they absolutely must use resellers. Buyers want to visit a store, see the merchandise first-hand, and then arrange for home delivery and installation by the reseller. To advertise their products, manufacturers use a variety of tactics. One method is a website offering a store locator. Another method includes promotion of products in television and radio advertisements.

It would be useful if a manufacturing company could easily tell what advertising customers are responding to. This is simple using Thimble River. A phone number will be assigned to each store locator, and each advertising channel (television, radio, magazine). When customers call, Thimble River automatically registers whether the call is the result of the customer using your store locator, or hearing your radio advertisement, or seeing your television advertisement. You can then use this information to make informed advertising decisions. For example, if no one seems to respond to radio advertisements, you can stop buying them and either invest that money into a more lucrative advertising channel, or save it.

Real World Application – Franchisees

In the event that your company is a franchise, it can sometimes be difficult to motivate franchisees to participate in your co-op marketing campaigns, or acknowledge their benefits. Without a clear cut way to show that a marketing campaign drives customers to franchisees' stores, they may think their efforts are what brings in customers rather than yours. Thimble River can easily solve this problem. Frequently, people search for a local franchise by using a store locator online. With Thimble River, you can track whenever customers call any of the phone numbers listed in your store locator and record details about each call. You can even track customer calls from marketing done in other channels, say print work, or television, so long as a phone number is associated with each advertisement. If customers respond to your website or advertisements by making a call, you can record this information and use it to make a case to franchisees that your campaign is improving their business. It can also save you money. If customers do not respond to advertisements in a specific channel, you can cut funding to advertisements in that channel, design more enticing advertisements, or just save the money.

Real World Application – Medical Device Industry

In the medical device industry, it is common to have a website that offers a physician locator feature. Using Thimble River, you can track which physician a customer chooses. All that happens is the customer calls the phone number assigned by Thimble River, then Thimble River measures details about the call. You can also do this for other marketing channels. Assign a different phone number to radio, print, and television advertisements. When customers call, you will be able to see which advertisement they are responding to from the way Thimble River measures all the calls. You can use Thimble River's metrics real time to make informed decisions about your advertising campaign. Perhaps no one responds to advertisements in your radio segment – you can choose to try another more effective message or cut funding for advertising in this channel all together. In this way you can save yourself time and money while increasing profits with more effective advertising campaigns.

Conclusion:

Thimble River is the best way to track whether your customers are responding to your marketing campaign. With the metrics collected by Thimble River you can streamline your campaign by cutting costs and more closely tailoring your advertising messages to your consumers. The product works for all marketing channels. No other tracking mechanisms (click-to-call, callback forms, reseller surveys) offer both accurate metrics and customer convenience. With reseller surveys, the customer is happy, but your company ends up with potentially inaccurate information about customer calls to resellers. With click-to-call and callback forms, you may end up with accurate metrics, but you inconvenience your customers to the point that they may choose to take their business elsewhere. The idea of waiting by the phone for a call back about a product a customer wants immediately is as enticing as spending a vacation day at the DMV.

Thimble River solves customer inconvenience problems by never requiring your customers to change their existing habits. All they have to do to contact a reseller is pick up the phone. And Thimble River solves your metrics problems by offering you accurate, real-time, detailed information about the calls your customers are making to resellers. With this information you can increase profits by making more informed decisions about your direct-to-consumer marketing campaigns because you will be

able to see how effective they are right away. You will also be able to motivate resellers to participate in your campaigns more easily because you will be able to show them how your website directly impacts their sales. To find out if Thimble River is right for you, go to www.thimblriver.com/try-it.php to sign up for a sandbox account that will allow you to explore the reporting system for yourself. If you want discuss your measurement needs or schedule a web demo, call 1-800-902-6043.

Thimble River vs. Existing Tracking Mechanisms				
Features	Reseller Surveys	Callback Form	Click-to-call	Thimble River
<i>Real-time, continuous information about calls made</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Accurate details about whether call was made as a result of company website, call length, how long it took the reseller to pick up</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Easy to use for the customer</i>	N/A	No	No	Yes
<i>Easy to integrate with existing website</i>	N/A	No	No	Yes



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