

Success Story: Sports Specialists Limited Rapidly Grows New Membership By Leveraging Athena's Business Development Process Model



Client Profile

Sports Specialists Limited (SSL) is a specialty snow sports retailer-owned buying co-operative in the ski and snowboard industry. They have 57 business members representing 140 retail outlets.

Business Situation

Sports Specialists Limited (SSL) had an initiative to expand new membership in its co-operative. In past years, it had been difficult for SSL to recruit new members based upon limited sales and marketing resources. They needed to find a successful and structured process to identify a larger number of qualified, new snow-sports retailers and introduce to them SSL programs and the benefits it could provide.

In addition, SSL was concerned about losing an existing member relationship, which represented 10% of their annual revenue. This was revenue that needed to be quickly replaced.

Historically, SSL had acquired new members through current membership referrals and word of mouth. What was missing was a process to proactively develop and educate a highly qualified list of targeted contacts, create the appropriate awareness for SSL's program, gather market intelligence, and secure and manage increased volumes of highly qualified sales opportunities for new membership conversion.



The Athena Team provided our company with a very cost efficient means of making the first contact with potential new customers. The process itself is fairly simple, but their execution of the process worked exceptionally well for us. The implementation of an effective webcast was just one of the keys to our successful campaign. They are great people to work with; truly professional in all ways."

– Steve Rogers, President, CEO Sports Specialists Limited

Implementing Athena's Process

Sports Specialists Limited (SSL) partnered with Athena SWC, a business improvement consulting firm, to leverage their synchronized Relationship Acquisition and Management Process (RAMP). SSL selected Athena because of its expertise and proven process model of targeting and developing business-to-business

(B2B) sales opportunities and relationships in complex sales environments.

Additionally, Athena provided a consultative approach to understanding, profiling and prioritizing the most viable target market contacts for SSL's unique offer.

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One of the largest barriers was formulating a repeatable approach for making initial contact with a larger, targeted audience and solidifying the first step in SSL's active sales cycle. However, with the success of the RAMP, Athena was able to introduce SSL, educate the market regarding the value of SSL's industry niched program services and allow a SSL subject matter expert to focus on moving new business relationships through an active sales cycle.

An initial rapport was built through offering prospects the opportunity to engage in an individual educational webcast presentation, which provided an efficient and effective medium to articulate the value and benefits of SSL's retail sporting goods co-operative buying group and program.

In addition, Athena's methodology of synchronous flow (multiple marketing medium touches) was critical in creating the appropriate education and awareness regarding SSL's offer within the retail sporting goods market place. The marketing process developed and used highly focused messaging for its direct mail and email pieces in addition to follow-up calls by Athena's highly-trained

sales and marketing subject matter experts.

Athena's ability to gather industry specific intelligence through a detailed discussion, provided SSL with a better understanding of each retailer's specific needs for SSL's services. The fact that each lead was highly qualified, with situational information and identified sales needs, played a significant role in the success of moving opportunities along in the active sales cycle.

Hard Work Pays Off

Athena scheduled over 20 webcast presentations, with 15 of those webcast presentations moving to in-store evaluation meetings. Most importantly, 12 out of 15 targets signed up to become new members, which accounted for over \$36,000 in new membership sales revenue for year one; versus the previous average of two new member accounts annually.

By outsourcing this process, SSL was able to quickly get in front of large volumes of highly qualified opportunities, convert more members in a compressed time frame and improve sales productivity, without adding overhead.

The Results

**Over
\$36K**

**in sales and 12 new
member accounts**

**Nearly
\$1M**

**injected into the
sales pipeline**

**Increased
Brand
Awareness**

**within targeted
markets**

Athena's process injected approximately \$1,000,000 into SSL's sales pipeline and closed 12 new member accounts which generated \$36,000 in sales revenue for year one. The average customer life cycle for SSL is 18 years. Athena also delivered a repeatable, structured process that enabled SSL to quickly expand to new markets and secure additional members in a compressed time frame. In addition, market intelligence extracted from key decision makers gave SSL valuable information to use for future efforts.