

## De Telefoongids – **CASE DE TELEFOONGIDS** – **SYSTEMATIC MI SUPPORT FOR THE** **MARKETING AND SALES STRATEGY**

De Telefoongids is the market leader in telephone directories in The Netherlands. The company's database is the most complete in the market, covering more than 40 telecom operators and 6,1 million phone numbers. De Telefoongids employs 800 people, and its website attracts 5,5 million unique visitors in a month.

Interviewed for this case article was **Eric Knibbe, Manager Marketing Intelligence and Research** at De Telefoongids. The case discusses how emerging business models and industry players require new MI measures from an established market player. In the midst of industry change, sales and marketing need new tools and insights, and it is the challenge for MI to produce them.

### **Sales and Marketing Intelligence for an industry under change**

“Our business is changing, and we will have to do the same if we want to stay competitive”, begins our interview Eric Knibbe, manager of marketing intelligence and research at De Telefoongids, Netherlands' largest telephone directory company. Knibbe is responsible for developing Market Intelligence activities at DTG, and says that there is a completely new battlefield out there for phone directory service providers these days. “Traditionally, paper was our product, but now there is a whole group of new services, markets and channels that our MI needs to focus on. Examples are SMS, the internet, Google Earth, Dect and mobile phones from suppliers such as Siemens and Nokia that have services from DTG included”.

Knibbe describes the challenge for MI: “At DTG we have had to change the way we do Market Intelligence. We now need to build an understanding of a much, much larger set of business drivers and competitive scenarios than before. Based on that understanding our marketing and sales people should be equipped to maintain and increase market share even though the traditional cash cow, paper directories, is being challenged by new types of services.”

### **Focus on supporting concrete sales efforts and the marketing strategy**

“Sales managers, account managers, sales representatives and management are the primary users of intelligence in our company and therefore our primary customers”, says Knibbe about the users of MI at DTG. “These people need arguments to back up their message to customers, and our responsibility is to provide “the ammunition” through an optimized MI operation that serves the right information to the right people at the right time”, Knibbe continues.

**The sales people at DTG receive information from MI on a number of topic areas:**

- Number of clicks on each heading in the online directory
- Industry segment information
- Direct ads system results
- Call tracking that shows trends and the response to advertising
- Ad-hoc research in response to specific issues or problems

The main purpose of all this information is to demonstrate the ROI of DTG's advertising efforts towards the customers.

The management in turn receives input to support the marketing strategy. "Just recently we have taken on the initiative of making the development of our strategy a highly integrated process as opposed to the ad-hoc type of process it used to be", Knibbe says. "Continuous input of market information is vital in order for us to realize this objective", he continues. "We are working to provide an overview of the different customer segments, competitor strategies, and the growth projections of the internet-based business, just to name a few examples."

The case below will illustrate how DTG has organized for an increasingly systematic support for the marketing strategy and sales.

## Case example

### Case

#### Improving current market awareness at DTG

"Because of the added complexity in our operating environment with regards to technological trends, market segments, partners, new competition, and so forth, our traditional, only partially structured ways of managing market information did not suffice anymore", Knibbe explains. "We needed a solution for collecting and sharing information within the organization, and ended up implementing an IT tool and outsourcing the daily market monitoring that we did not have internal resources for."

The response in our organization was overwhelming, once we got to pilot the common MI system", Knibbe describes. "Fortunately we did not have to engage in any cumbersome IT projects, but instead our sales people started seeing the benefits immediately, when the daily market updates started to populate our new MI tool", Knibbe continues.

The aim at DTG was to make it easier than before for the sales and marketing people to get on top of what is relevant to know on an everyday basis in the marketplace, and they have also encouraged people to start leveraging the common platform for shared internal signals.

The pilot with the new system was a success, so the next step is to add 50 users that focus on different levels of sales. In total DTG has 400 persons in its sales department selling to four different channels. The intention is to expand the user base little by little when the information content has been tailored to the needs of the different groups.

#### Sales channels at DTG

1. National accounts
2. Field accounts
3. Direct marketing
4. Call centers

## **Communicating Market Intelligence in the organization**

In addition to rolling out the common technical MI platform, we of course need to give MI presentations at sales team meetings, sales conferences, marketing planning meetings and other events where people focus on the customer processes”, Knibbe reminds. “Pure facts are very necessary to back up good business, but typically the real intelligence is only generated when the facts are discussed and evaluated in a group of people”, he continues.

## **Next steps: Towards a Corporate Intelligence Solution**

Knibbe describes the future plans for increased support to the sales and marketing efforts at DTG: “In the future, we will be considering ways of linking our CRM system with the Market Intelligence solution in order to have a single source for information related to customers and market segments. But we will need to take one step at a time, to focus on the right things for the right purposes. We hope to be able to integrate pretty much everything in the future, who wouldn’t, but we also need to scope things so that they can be managed today”, Knibbe analyzes the path forward.

## **Key Success Factors for MI at DTG**

Finally, when asked about the Key Success Factors of Market Intelligence so far at DTG, Eric Knibbe raises four things:

- “The R4” - Right information to the right people at the right time, using the right sources
- Contribution - Making people aware of the ways in which they can contribute to improving shared customer knowledge
- The information pyramid – Demonstrating how important the human component is at all stages of information processing
- The value of being different – When introducing a new MI solution one needs to stand out from the crowd and make a difference. The new MI organization needs to rise above the traditional MI tools: Emails, newsletters and random reports.

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