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What NOT to Do When You're Marketing to Hispanics – 10 Useful Tips

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The Direct Marketing Association recently selected Influent's Colón, Panama contact center as an exemplary "best in class" facility. Each year, the DMA's Teleservices Council Programming Advisory Committee identifies outstanding facilities which embody industry best practices and demonstrate leadership in teleservices performance. As a result, the Colón contact center was featured in a virtual tour presentation at the 22nd Annual DMA Teleservices Conference.

1. Assume all Hispanics are the same.

There are many factors that influence Hispanic behavior and response to marketing efforts, including country of origin and level of American acculturation. Hispanics are culturally diverse and taking a "one size fits all" approach probably won't work.

2. Ask a Hispanic consumer or business what language they prefer and then don't communicate with them in their language of preference.

I can't tell you how many times a client has wanted to acquire Spanish speaking customers using outsourced Spanish speaking resources but has no internal infrastructure in place to send fulfillment material in Spanish or provide Spanish speaking customer service representatives. This is the easiest way to set an expectation, disappoint, and then lose a customer.

3. Translate your English script, offer or copy word for word.

You should be "transliterating" your script, offer or copy by adjusting the language and meaning to fit the culture. For example, Hispanics in general are family-oriented and put family first. Minimizing or ignoring this cultural norm by opening an insurance offer with "pennies per day" rather than focusing on family security will literally, be lost in the translation.

4. Think you have to speak with Hispanics only in Spanish.

Marketers need to use both languages in order to establish cultural and personal relevancy with Hispanic consumers. Not having fully bilingual representatives in the call center is foolish because 20% of all "Spanish-speaking" customers prefer to speak English. For direct mail or fulfillment packages, printing English on one side and Spanish on the other side is the safest way not to choose wrong.

5. Put out a script, offer or copy without first consulting an expert.

Many everyday Spanish words used in one country are actually insults in another. Take the time to get advice first before taking the risk of alienating your target audience.

6. Think you can always identify a Spanish-speaking individual by their last name.

This is why inferred lists don't always work. Lopez and Martinez are not always Hispanic surnames and making a general assumption about what language someone speaks just by their last name is a risky proposition.

7. Call a Brazilian a Hispanic.

People from Brazil want to be referred to as Brazilians. They speak Portuguese, not Spanish, so this country needs to be approached differently than others in Latin America.

8. Choose not to market to Hispanics consumers.

According to the 2004 U.S. Census report, there are 40 million documented Hispanics in the United States or 14.2% of the population; that's more than the entire population of Canada! Plus, the number of prosperous Hispanic households, those with incomes of at least \$100,000, rose 137 percent between 1990 and 2000. U.S. Hispanic purchasing power has surged to nearly \$700 billion and is projected to reach \$1 trillion by 2010, nearly three times the overall national rate of consumer purchasing power over the past decade. Hispanic employment has grown more than 16 percent since 2000 while overall U.S. employment has barely grown 2 percent.

9. Choose not to market to Hispanic businesses.

There are approximately 2 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States that generate almost \$300 billion in annual gross receipts. By 2010, there will be 3.2 million Hispanic firms generating \$465 billion. The number of Hispanic-owned companies grew 82 percent since 1997, making them among the fastest-growing business segments in the nation. One out of every ten small businesses will be Hispanic-owned by 2007.

10. Bypass Hispanic women and speak with Hispanic businessmen instead because they make the decisions.

More than one-third, or 34.9% of all Hispanic-owned firms are owned by women. Hispanic women-owned firms employ 18.5% of the workers in all

Hispanic-owned firms and generate 16.3% of the sales. Four in ten minority women-owned firms are owned by Hispanic women.