

Successful inbound selling for self-storage businesses.

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www.selfstoragestrategies.com

Self-storage is a needs-based business where people often need self-storage in a pinch or in a relative hurry. Most self-storage renters do not spend more than a week planning for and shopping for a storage unit. Most self-storage renters will not contact more than one or two self-storage properties before choosing to rent a unit or choosing to find another solution for their problem that does not involve a storage unit.

Renters often spend time looking at self-storage websites they find on Google or looking at websites of self-storage facilities they see in their normal travels near their home or workplace.

If a company has a good website that is informational, attractive, easy to use, in close proximity to the potential tenant, and allows for frictionless online rentals, many consumers will choose to rent the unit online without making a phone call or traveling to the site.

Since the start of the COVID age, the number of people choosing to visit a storage site in person has been drastically reduced. In some localities, this is not even possible.

Many consumers still call a self-storage facility before deciding how to handle their situation. This type of interaction is the focus of this report.

Many self-storage operators are using contact-less self-service check-ins to allow new tenants to access their units and move in without ever seeing a staff person. Other operators continue to offer personal service for check-ins while maintaining safe social distancing.

Some operators choose to use an app or an on-site kiosk to aid in the rental and customer service experience. These tools can be used as a part of any inbound strategy, or an operator can choose not to use them.

How does a self-storage operator maximize selling opportunities for new renters, offer good customer service for current tenants, and control the costs of running the property?

Here are several strategies one can deploy. All can be successful for the right operator in the right market with the right type of property. These strategies can be used whether an operator has office hours at the storage site or not.

These strategies can be mixed and matched and melded together so that the possibilities for finding creative ways to handle inbound sales are extensive.

Technology and integration tools make it possible to mix these strategies in a way that is seamless to the operator, the operator's employees, third-party services, and the self-storage consumer.

Each strategy comes with a set of pros and cons that will vary depending on the operator's situation, needs, and preferences. The assumption is that each strategy is done in conjunction with a highly functional website. Each option can be implemented with or without an app, as well as with or without a kiosk.

Operators typically continue to deploy a voicemail system to capture missed calls. This is optional. Some of the strategies eliminate voicemail as a component. It does not need to be a part of a strategy.

The inbound strategies:

1. No live person answers the telephone.
2. A caretaker or agent answers on a cell phone.
3. A store staff person answers the phone.
4. Employees of the operator field the calls in a call tree or round-robin (in-house call center).
5. A third party contact center handles all the calls.
6. A third party contact center handles the rollover calls that the caretaker, agent, store staff, or in-house call center does not answer.

1. No live person answers the telephone.

In this scenario, the operator can take one of two approaches. In one approach the operator uses a voicemail message to instruct people how to pay and how to rent a unit using the company's self-service options. In another approach, an operator can use phone bots to give the appropriate instructions based on what the caller says, and to text the appropriate links to the caller's cell phone for rentals, billpaying, and logging a customer service issue.

2. A caretaker or agent answers on a cell phone.

Here the main number for the site is forwarded to a cell phone for an agent to answer. This agent may be the owner or the caretaker or another employee who then talks live with callers when available.

3. A store staff person answers the phone.

This has been the typical model for years in the self-storage business. When the employee is in the office and available, the employee fields phone calls and handles them as needed.

4. Employees of the operator field the calls in a call tree or round-robin (in-house call center).

In this scenario, phones are routed either by call forwarding or by using a call center software to a team of store staff people or company employees who answer as available. Calls can ring a group where the first person available answers or calls can be directed to the person who has been available the longest, or by skillset. Some operators use their store staff to act as contact center agents when they are not busy with other duties. Some operators hire people specifically as phone agents to work in the call queue. There are many ways to route calls and prioritize calls that can make using a call center software very helpful.

5. A third party contact center handles all the calls.

Some operators choose to have an off-site sales force provider be the first point of contact or the only point of contact. In this scenario, the third-party call center provider is basically running the inbound program and the customer service program for the operator. Call routing options make it possible to offer a variety of methods of meeting the operator's goals in this manner.

This setup can be done with sites that have no office hours, or with sites that do have on-site staff people.

6. A third party contact center handles the rollover calls that the caretaker, agent, store staff, or in-house call center does not answer.

In this setup, the third-party call center acts as a backup or a backstop for the operator's employees. This strategy allows the operator to choose how and when to have in-house employees answering the phones. This option can also be fine-tuned in many ways to make it suite the operator's goals.

Self-storage operators now have an array of strategies to deploy in the never-ending effort to balance costs, effectiveness, business models, conveniences, customer preferences, and creating returns through their inbound selling efforts.

Tron Jordheim

About Self Storage Strategies.

Self Storage Strategies is a consulting service that helps self-storage owners make good decisions about everything from site selection to operations, marketing, and disposition. Tron Jordheim, the managing partner, has over 27 years of experience managing inbound call center and contact center enterprises. 20 years of that have been in the self-storage industry. Tron Jordheim also manages the Call Here boutique self-storage call center, which can be used by operators to successfully manage inbound sales. He has consulted on call center setup and operations inside and outside of the self-storage industry in five countries. Contact Tron Jordheim for guidance on how to set up your inbound strategies.

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