



*In the News*

*Sandra Steen & Associates, Inc.*

## When the Telephone is Your Greatest Ally

*American Expert Teaches the Strategies of Winning Customers Through Telemarketing*

Tuesday, March 25, 1997 by Luiza Bastos, São Paulo, Brazil

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Telesales in the United States today accounts for about \$120 billion in yearly sales, a 500% increase from about 15 years ago. In the year 2000, telemarketing is destined to become one of the largest industries of the world economy and one of those which, in the American market alone, will be above the \$150 billion mark. The estimates were made by the American telemarketing expert Sandra Steen, who came to Brazil, where we have no related statistic, only Credicard estimates that telemarketing sales have grown significantly since 1994.

“In 1994, only 2% of the total Credicard sales were made through telemarketing, while last year it reached 15% of the total sales,” says Marcelo Epstejn, Credicard General Manager. “The invitation to Sandra Steen,” -he adds- “is investing \$500,000 in telemarketing training and we have increased the number of our operators from 28 in 1994 to 210 today.” He adds that Credicard is spending more than \$240,000 per year in motivational campaigns alone.

In fact, the days when telesales were carried out by a young lady hired to place enticing calls to a number of people on a list and offer them a variety of products are long gone. Today, in order to be effective, a telemarketing operator undergoes careful training that starts with improving his/her enunciation, and then a study of the prospective client’s profile from available data files and his/her receptivity in answering the phone.

“We try to explain to the operators how the different personality types can be identified through the voice and intonation of the party at the other end of the lines and how everyone must be approached differently,” says Sandra. She emphasizes how important it is for the operator to notice whether his/her call is annoying the person, thus avoiding “an invasive call,” one in which the operator keeps insisting when the prospective client is making it clear that the time is not right.

“Certain basic rules,” adds Sandra, “must be followed in order to obtain better results. One of the rules used by American Companies, for example, is never to make calls before 8 am or after 9 pm. Another is not to bother those persons whose names are on the list at hand, but who have made it clear they do not wish to be bothered by this kind of call.”

Sandra reveals that in the US, the Association of Telemarketing Companies makes available to the public a telephone number which anyone can call to request that his/her name and address be taken off each and every list. “In Brazil, this would be theoretically possible,” -adds Epstejn- “and we comply absolutely whenever a caller requests the removal of his/her name. The big obstacle is, however, to find cross lists.” He notes that the errors on the lists usually sold in the market, with addresses, have prompted Credicard to try to create its own list.

Interestingly, Sandra asserts that, even though in some American cities, an operator’s accent can make a difference in whether or not a telephone sale is made, in Brazil this does not seem to be the case. She was able to conclude this fact from the results of the survey she requested from Credicard before she arrived in the country.