

Electronic Call Tracking Systems

One of the Most Powerful Uses of Technology Ever Developed

by Mitch Talenfeld, [MDT Direct](#)

I learned of Electronic Call Tracking Systems several years back in my search to find a better way to track advertising for our clients. I came across the Ztrac Electronic Call Tracking System. There are many fine programs available, but in my opinion, none of the quality of Ztrac, which has been customized for use by schools and colleges. MDT Direct is now the exclusive dealer of Ztrac Call Tracking and Monitoring System for the education sector.

Below are some of the typical issues faced by colleges today. Every story is true, as told to me by our customers, many of whom you know very well. I've created an all-encompassing, fictitious national admissions/marketing director, and condensed and combined the stories I repeatedly hear from our clients into a journal format. The names have been changed to protect the innocent. Whether you realize it or not, your school faces the same kind of issues as mentioned below.

June 3rd

I finally ordered an electronic call tracking system. I've been apprehensive about these online systems, as they seemed too complicated. Admittedly, I've been intimidated by this new

technology. I was finally convinced when I realized the number of schools that are now successfully electronically tracking their advertising and recording their incoming phone calls. I hope this works!



MITCH TALENFELD is president of MDT Direct, a division of Custom Cuts Printing, Inc., and MDT Tracking, Inc., an exclusive dealer of the Ztrac electronic call tracking system. He has been involved in advertising and marketing for over 25 years. Known for his

ability to plan and execute complex marketing programs, he is widely recognized in the business community through his involvement in the direct marketing industry.

Mitch's companies work with over 300 schools and colleges nationwide, helping them to improve their advertising, communications and admissions effectiveness. By combining the use

of traditional direct marketing techniques with some of today's cutting-edge technology, Mitch has raised the bar in the world of traditional school advertising. He received the Florida Direct Marketing Association's highest honor, the Golden Conch Award, for outstanding leadership and achievements in the direct marketing industry. He has conducted numerous advertising seminars and written many articles on this field.

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June 16th

I couldn't sleep last night. (I hate being away from the office on business trips.) I woke up in my hotel room at 3 a.m. worrying about the office. I went onto our school's private advertising tracking Web site to see how we did with the new commercial that launched yesterday.

I couldn't believe my eyes. Our reports showed that we got ten calls

The tracking system electronically captures vital call information and stores it in a database. The number that the prospective customer dialed when he or she called indicates the advertising medium that prompted them to call.

in less than two minutes! But wouldn't you know it—I listened to the calls, which were all recorded and stored on our private Web site, and realized that only four of them got through to our admissions team. How are we

going to make our start if prospects can't get through because our lines are busy, or even worse, get left on hold until they hang up? Prospects can't even make it past the reception area.

So, big deal, we got ten calls from one commercial. But it doesn't really matter because we only ended up with one appointment. My worst fear has just been realized. I hope that those people didn't call another school.

(*Note:* Look into more incoming phone lines and don't forget to speak with Marge about setting up more training for our receptionists.)

This is amazing, though. To think I can actually go onto the Internet at any time, from anywhere, see how well our advertising is doing and listen to our incoming advertising calls. Why didn't I get this service before?

June 18th

I never realized how badly our people need training. Nobody's

following the phone script. A young lady called in today asking how to enroll in our medical program. By the time the call was finished, John in admissions was referring her to another college. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! The lady calls in asking how to enroll in our school and we've managed to talk her into calling someone else. No wonder we're missing starts.

June 21st

I knew it. I just couldn't prove it until now. Advertising inserts really work. Everyone in the industry has told me for years that newspaper inserts were a waste of money. I now know that the problem wasn't with the inserts; the problem was that our leads weren't being logged in properly. I knew that the lead log wasn't perfect, but I never realized that it was this far off. Imagine that—I used to make major advertising decisions on the data we picked up off of the lead log.

I love it when I'm right. Since I began using this system, I've figured out that radio works; direct mail and advertising inserts generate phone calls that we were crediting to other forms of advertising and our television commercials are producing more leads than our front desk and phone system can handle. We just had no way to know it.

June 24th

I thought that Tim and Jane in admissions were slacking off. They were only starting 12 percent of their leads when others on the team were converting as high as 18 percent. Boy was I wrong! It turns out that Tim and Jane were the only admissions people at that campus actually logging in all of their leads.

I began listening to some other calls yesterday and found out that several people at the NOYDB campus weren't even asking for the prospects' names and phone numbers until five or six minutes into the call, after they had already set up appointments. I listened to four calls where we didn't even take down people's names. No wonder their conversion rate was so high. That got me curious and I began comparing my online reports to the lead log on a couple of campuses and found that almost 30 percent of the leads weren't being entered into the system. Here I thought that we had a lead problem; in actuality, it's a training and personnel issue. I was so angry.

June 30th

Finding a call center is now a priority. I tried to save money and hired local answering services for each of our campuses to handle our after-hours calls. I found out that many of the operators in these centers weren't even taking messages. People at the services were actually telling our prospects to call back in the morning. One of the answering services put most of our callers on hold before even answering the phone. No wonder why late night commercials weren't working. Calls weren't getting through!

One Year Later

Things are getting much better. My cost per lead is down, conversions are up and we made our last start. Electronic call tracking and monitoring have dramatically improved the front end of our business. We are much more effective in our training. Staff members are much more disciplined in their approaches and understand that they are accountable for their actions.

How Call Tracking Systems Work

Although each system available can be very different, the concept is simple. Schools are given different toll-free phone numbers for each ad or media they would like to track. For example, they may want to use one phone number for their newspaper advertising, another for their advertising insert program, a third for their direct mail campaigns and so on. The quantity of phone numbers they need is dependent on the depth in which they want to track their advertising. Each time someone calls on one of these toll-free numbers their call is seamlessly routed through the tracking system to their designated location within a second. (*Note:* There is no equipment or software necessary to run most of these systems. As a matter of fact, several smaller businesses are routing their incoming calls directly to their salespeople's mobile phones.)

The tracking system electronically captures vital call information and stores it in a database. The number that the prospective customer dialed when he or she called indicates the advertising medium that prompted them to call. Most systems record information such as phone number, date and time the person called and how long they were on the phone.

Some tracking systems give customers instant access on their own secure, private Internet Web site with a myriad of reports, helping them determine which of their advertising is working well and which is not. If the school's phone lines are busy with other callers or not answered for one reason or another, some systems will also send an immediate e-mail to a pre-designated person, informing the school of the call. Going one step further, the Ztrac Call Tracking and Monitoring System

can be programmed to divert the phone call to a call center or an alternate phone number so the prospect gets immediate attention.

Each college has the option to record incoming phone calls, then listen to them at their leisure. The system can also be set up to automatically do a reverse lookup and give the school the name and address registered on the phone that the person used to call the school. All of this information is available to the

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One of the most interesting and useful features incorporated in Ztrac is what is called the "Short Call Notifier." One of the problems that a lot of schools have is that many prospects get through to their schools, then hang up before the representative captures their name and phone number. This most often occurs within the first minute or minute and a half of the phone call. Prospects hang up for a variety of reasons, including being left on hold too long, reaching an answering machine or IVR system and not wanting to leave a message, or having a misinformed receptionist answer a question that should have been handled by an admissions representative. Until recently, schools had no way to recapture these lost leads.

Now, instead of having to constantly monitor the system, the program can be set up to send the school's designee an immediate email (based on the length of time that the caller spent on the call) with a copy of the recording

embedded within the email. This way, as soon as the designee receives the missed call notifier, they can listen to the recording and find out if there was a problem with the call, and determine whether there is an opportunity there to call the prospect back and turn a lost lead into a potential enrollment.

Each School Uses the System Differently

Below are some real-life testimonials from industry professionals. Since they have been using the Ztrac System, they have been able to more effectively manage their lead flow and monitor their admissions staff.

Brian Woods – Vice President of Advertising and Admissions for Keiser College

"The timing of a call is very revealing," says Mr. Woods. "You know that any call lasting over two to three minutes is problematic. Either the admissions representative went off script and began the interview over the phone, or someone was left on hold too long. I like the system as it helps me understand areas that we can improve through additional coaching and training efforts."

Joe Phillips – Director of Marketing, ATI

"In my analysis, the cost of not putting separate Ztrac numbers on each commercial is much riskier and flat out short-sighted. Without separate numbers, we are actually relying on call centers, receptionists and TV agencies to know if the commercials are successful...all three of who contribute to human error. With Ztrac, there is no human error factor. Not only is my data empirical, I know the results long before those who I depended upon before Ztrac."

Bibbie McLaughlin – Senior Vice President of Admissions, Virginia College

Ms. McLaughlin was very enlightened by the way their reception and admissions team handled incoming calls. “I use our system to monitor calls and train staff on the best ways to handle advertising inquiries. Initially when we implemented the system, admissions were ‘trying to sell the store over the phone’ instead of focusing on bringing prospective students on campus for an interview.”

Craig Wood – Senior Vice President of Marketing & Development, IEC

“There are two major areas that call tracking and recording has helped us with. The first was identifying a bottleneck that we had when capturing leads. As an example, we discovered that many of the PennySaver leads were being attributed to one of the leading newspapers. The most striking thing that we noticed was the number of leads we had been losing. We immediately put additional phone lines in place and increased staffing during our peak hours, just to handle the calls that were lost after being put on hold. The second area is training. Training – training – training – you could say it 15 times.”

Ron Lohrmann – Vice President of City Advertising

When referring to City College’s electronic call tracking system, Mr. Lohrmann likes to use the phrase “the DNA of Admissions.” He says the system gives them the ability to manage their schools 7 days a week, 24 hours a day; you know everything about your advertising, reception area and admissions. “I couldn’t hire an

assistant that would give you this much information...and besides, our system doesn’t call in sick, it doesn’t come in late or have to leave early to take its pet to the veterinarian,” says Lohrmann. “What does the system cost us, \$7,000 or \$8,000 per year? A good assistant’s salary (who couldn’t give me nearly as much information anyway) would be at least \$32,000 a year. The money that City College invested on electronic call tracking and recording actually saved us money. I look at it this way: if your average cost per lead is \$150 and you capture 10 extra leads that would have otherwise been lost without the system, the system pays for itself.”

Conclusion

When I first saw these electronic call tracking systems in action, I was amazed how technology has really progressed. My advice to any businessperson that relies on their advertising to generate phone calls is to incorporate an electronic lead tracking and call recording system into their business. These programs are seamless. They require no human intervention. And they work...better than you can ever imagine. I guarantee that if you make the small monthly commitment required to set up a tracking and monitoring system, whichever system you may choose, the return on your investment will increase your enrollment base significantly!