

From Lead Gen Reps to Quota-Carrying Closers — a Complete Inside Sales Solution for Nexsan

Introduction:

Nexsan, a global data storage company, saw enormous potential to grow their business and generate leads with inside sales. Though Nexsan's existing sales team fit in cold calling and lead generation as time allowed, they didn't have the capacity to do so with much consistency, and they needed a more strategic approach. With a highly targeted, results-driven marketing plan underway, they wanted to build an inside sales team "that does more than just send 1,000 emails in a given time period, which anyone can do," explained Mike McDermott, regional sales manager, East Coast, at Nexsan.

What Nexsan needed was a results-oriented approach to inside sales and a team with a knack for connecting — on a human level — to potential customers. Knowing these skills don't come easily, Nexsan turned to memoryBlue for specialized help.

About Nexsan:

Nexsan is a leading provider of data storage systems, with more than 33,000 systems installed at 11,000 customers worldwide. The company's pioneering Hybrid Storage systems combine solid-state technologies, disk storage, and advanced software to deliver new levels of performance and capacity at a lower cost. With Nexsan's advanced technologies, organizations can optimize traditional, virtual, and cloud computing environments for increased productivity and business agility.

Nexsan delivers its data storage systems through a worldwide network of cloud service providers, value-added resellers, and solution integrators. Based in Thousand Oaks, California, the company was acquired by Imation Corp., a global data storage and information security systems company, in January 2013.

Business Challenge:

With a portfolio of proven, award-winning data storage solutions, Nexsan spotted a high (and growing) demand for its products and developed a new marketing plan to help the company scale up and acquire more customers. The plan involved replacing the company's informal approach to inside sales, in which field sales reps fit in cold calls as they could, with a more focused, strategic effort — and personnel devoted solely to that part of business development.

McDermott came from a cold-calling background dating back to 1982. He knew inside sales required a rare skill set and a go-getter, friendly personality, and that it was more than just a numbers game. He also knew about the traditionally high turnover rate associated with inside sales, and "didn't want to risk training a team, only to have them leave in a matter of time," McDermott explains. Essentially, he needed a highly qualified (and skilled) team trained and generating leads fast, and didn't have the time, staff, or resources to build one in-house at Nexsan.

Solution:

Nexsan knew it needed outside help but didn't want just any inside sales partner. It wanted a solution that could work not just in the short term but also the long term, and it needed a team that could integrate with Nexsan's larger initiatives — and operate in accordance with the goals laid out in its new marketing plan.

A number of factors made memoryBlue the right partner. For one, the company handpicks and hires college graduates who demonstrate a knack for sales and have the personality to go with it. In addition, memoryBlue's intensive training plan, which all new hires take part in, meshed well with McDermott's results-oriented, more nuanced approach to sales. "memoryBlue's approach is not that you're going to sit there making cold calls from the office until you're 65," McDermott explains. "They want to give you a footprint, and then launch you into the world to grow your career."



McDermott and his colleagues also liked that memoryBlue handled the training from the ground up and would build the kind of team Nexsan needed. “We didn’t have the time or bandwidth to do that,” McDermott says, “and pretty quickly saw that they understood our brand of sales. That’s what intrigued me about how memoryBlue conducted it,” he adds.

“They understood how important it is to engage a person and put a personality behind the lead, and they understood sales strategy.”

memoryBlue recruited and trained six inside sales reps, with McDermott and colleagues dropping in from time to time to share vital information about Nexsan and participate in some of the in-house training. “I thought they were an energetic bunch, and I knew right away that this was going to be a great opportunity,” McDermott says.

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— Mike McDermott, regional sales manager, East Coast, at Nexsan

Through memoryBlue’s training, the team learned the ropes of inside sales, from best practices in making outbound prospecting calls and email to demand generation and compiling comprehensive reports on leads. The new sales reps also spent time at Nexsan working with the company’s sales and marketing department, which gave them a real sense of Nexsan’s culture and allowed them to build face-to-face relationships with their new colleagues.



Results:

memoryBlue’s inside sales team learned to do more than just “smile and dial” when making calls and generating leads. “They learned what their lead generation actually meant, and what converts into an ‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C’ lead — ultimately what converts into a closed deal,” McDermott says. Though the team operated primarily from offices at memoryBlue, they took part in Nexsan’s Monday morning sales meetings and worked closely with marketing.

Both Nexsan and memoryBlue agree that a key part of the partnership’s success stemmed from the sales reps’ function as a core part of Nexsan’s team.

The close interaction between the two companies paid off. “memoryBlue was able to deliver on the challenge of helping Nexsan meet target goals for its ‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C’ leads,” McDermott explains. “The number of ‘A’ leads we received increased dramatically while working with memoryBlue. We didn’t have as many ‘B’ and ‘C’ leads as in the past, but we had far more ‘A’ leads, which means we were working more strategically and closing more deals.”

Both Nexsan and memoryBlue agree that a key part of the partnership’s success stemmed from the sales reps’ function as a core part of Nexsan’s team. “By having them as part of the team, we could give them feedback and change what they were doing based on what we were seeing and what we needed,” McDermott says. “That made a real difference.”

“Ultimately, memoryBlue designed and built an inside sales team for Nexsan. It was our first engagement with a client where the partnership evolved to the point where we had memoryBlue reps carrying revenue quotas and closing deals. Seeing the relationship advance to this level was remarkable.”

— Marc Gonya, cofounder and managing partner at memoryBlue

The relationship evolved beyond the initial arrangement of lead generation. In fact, three of the new reps ended up carrying an inside sales quota and taking on the responsibility of closing deals. Nexsan paid the reps a monthly commission. “It’s somewhat unusual for clients to mature to that point,” says Marc Gonya, cofounder and managing partner of memoryBlue. “In reality, companies usually want to bring that type of arrangement in-house.”

Eventually, Nexsan did bring inside sales expertise in-house. Seeing enormous potential (and already a proven track record), Nexsan hired one of memoryBlue’s initial recruits, Ryan Mitchell.



The Future:

When Imation Corp., a global data storage and information security company, acquired Nexsan in January 2013, Ryan Mitchell stayed on board, but Nexsan no longer needed memoryBlue's help because Imation had a team of a dozen or so sales reps in house. Nevertheless, McDermott says, "if I got somewhere and there was not an inside sales team, I would definitely recommend memoryBlue as an outsourced inside sales team."

"We had a perfect working relationship with memoryBlue — the synergies between their team and our team, and the training they did with their staff, directly reflected in a positive way the amount of business Nexsan did over the course of the relationship," he adds. "memoryBlue is a very good breeding ground for teaching the fundamentals of inside sales and sales in general."

Likewise, for memoryBlue, the partnership proved valuable and rewarding — and validated the company's own knack for recruiting and training inside sales reps.

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"Over the course of our partnership with Nexsan, the relationship transformed," explains Gonyea. "It changed from a pure outsourced demand generation effort into designing, building, and ongoing management of a revenue-generating, quota-carrying inside sales team for Nexsan."



About memoryBlue:

memoryBlue is an inside sales consulting firm based outside of Washington, D.C. The company helps high-tech companies grow faster and more profitably by maximizing the effectiveness of inside sales, while at the same time advancing the careers of inside sales professionals. The company has worked with over 400 high-tech companies to provide outsourced inside sales teams, inside sales recruiting solutions, and inside sales management services.

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