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Selling to Laboratories: Business Development and Client Relationship Management in a B2B Diagnostic Services Company

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ABSTRACT

Business-to-business sales are different from selling to individual buyers. The buyer is an organisation, the decision takes longer, and trust is built over many meetings. This is especially true in diagnostic healthcare, where a small laboratory must rely on a partner for testing support, sample transport and accurate reports. This note is a case study of the sales and business development work of Labridge, a business-to-business (B2B) diagnostic services company. The work covered field visits to pathology laboratories in Mumbai and Pune, cold calling, lead follow-up, onboarding of new laboratory partners, reactivation of inactive clients, and coordination of blood sample pick-up. The note explains the sales process that was followed, looks at the industry and the company using well-known business frameworks, and lists the problems that came up in daily work along with the steps taken to handle them. It also sets out a simple questionnaire plan, based on a five-point Likert scale, for studying how laboratory clients view communication, trust, logistics and report accuracy in future research. No survey results are claimed. The main finding is that B2B sales and service delivery cannot be separated: a good sales pitch wins the first order, but timely sample movement, accurate reports and steady follow-up keep the client., accurate reports and steady follow-up keep the client.

I. Introduction

India’s diagnostic market is expanding, with patients increasingly opting for screening and preventive tests, and with pathology becoming accessible in more small towns. At the helm of this growth is an understated ecosystem of small to mid-sized labs. Unable to justify the spend for sophisticated equipment for every test they perform, many of them outsource samples to larger counterparts. Linking these labs to a wider testing network is therefore a matter of one thing: trust of the lab owner. This paper has three objectives. First, to describe how a B2B sales process works in a diagnostic services company, from finding a lead to keeping the client. Second, to examine how field activity, follow-up, and client reactivation help win and hold laboratory partners. Third, to note the practical problems of this kind of selling and to suggest simple ways to reduce them. The paper is a case-based reflection, based on what was done and observed during this period, and on existing public frameworks from the marketing literature. It is not a statistical survey of clients' opinions and makes no representation of the whole industry.

II. Organisation and Training Context

The company. Labridge uses a B2B model. Its customers are pathology laboratories and diagnostic centres – not individual patients. Its services include a variety of pathology tests, molecular and genetic testing, a technology platform and application for managing work, and a logistics operation which includes the collection of samples from patients’ homes. The company describes integrity and transparency as core values, and it asks partner laboratories to complete business and laboratory documents when they register.

simple SWOT view. The company's strengths are its B2B focus, competitive pricing for partner laboratories, a wide test menu and a technology-based platform. Its weaknesses are a newer brand with lower recognition than established chains and a dependence on partner laboratories for consistent quality across locations. Opportunities include expansion into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and a growing demand for special and preventive testing. Threats include strong chains, price cuts by local laboratories, changing rules, cyber-security risks and rising customer expectations on speed and quality.

The fieldwork. The author was part of the sales department. The initial days included an induction about the business, its services, and its sales process, along with guidance on pitching, handling objections, and dealing with rejection. Afterwards, most of the time was spent on field and phone work.

III. The Sales Process Followed

The sales process of the team can be described as a chain of steps: finding prospects, generating leads, checking whether a lead is worth pursuing, understanding the laboratory's needs, presenting the service, following up and negotiating, converting the lead, and then managing the relationship. This follows the standard sales-funnel idea found in marketing textbooks.

Finding and qualifying leads –

The process began by selecting a target area and listing the pathology laboratories there. The seller would then visit or call each laboratory, introduce the company, inquire about their needs, and record the information. A lead was considered worth pursuing if the laboratory demonstrated a genuine testing need and some interest in the service. Visits covered laboratories in Sion, Kurla, Dharavi and Matunga in Mumbai, and in Pune. Each visit followed a similar flow: pick the area, prepare a list, plan the route, visit, present the services, note what the laboratory wanted, update the visit record and follow up later. Planning visits area by area saved time, because travel between locations was one of the biggest time costs.

Cold calling –

We called current and potential partners to find out their concerns and discover opportunities. A sample call: introduce company, identify concern, give appropriate solution, deal with objections, record the response and set follow-up date.

Onboarding –

When a laboratory agreed, the seller explained the services, answered questions, helped complete the paperwork, helped activate the partner account and showed the owner how to use the app. Activation, meaning the laboratory actually sends its first samples, was handled as a separate step from signing up, since a signed laboratory that never sends work adds nothing.

IV. Keeping Clients: Follow-up, Reactivation and Logistics

Follow-up –

Not all owners purchased at the initial visit. Frequent telephone contact and follow-up visits with a lead-tracker maintained the dialogue and eased the owner’s concerns about price, turnaround time and service. In relationship marketing, ongoing dialogue is how a customer’s confidence is established and a one-time sale becomes a long-term relationship.

Reactivation –

Some laboratories had signed up earlier but stopped sending samples. The seller contacted them, asked why they had stopped, tried to solve the reason, explained available services and arranged sample collection again. The steps were: identify the inactive client, call, understand the reason, address it, coordinate the next order and follow up. The experience showed that winning back a known client usually takes less effort than finding a new one, although it still needs patience and a clear answer to the client's earlier complaint.

Sample logistics –

In diagnostics, the sale doesn’t stop at signing. Samples need to be booked, collected, labelled, carefully transferred, transported, processed and the report delivered. The sales team coordinated sample pick-up through labs and the logistics team and followed-up if pick-up was overdue. Delay in sample pick-up was a principal source of clients’ frustration.

Report accuracy and service quality –

Laboratory owners judge a partner by more than the sales visit. Accurate reports and timely delivery determine whether they stay. Even a well-run sales and logistics process can lose trust if the reports are doubted. The overall B2B experience is therefore the sum of relationship, logistics, timeliness, reliability and report accuracy.

Recorded activity –

Over the period, activity covered new laboratory onboardings, activations, reactivations, and a recorded business value. Exact numbers are not disclosed as these are company internal figures. In broad terms, the largest share of effort went to new client acquisition, with smaller but meaningful effort in activation and reactivation, and recorded business came from new, existing and reactivated clients alike.

V. Tools and a Proposed Research Design

The main tools used in daily work were the company app, which laboratories used to book and track work, phone calls and messaging, lead trackers, and daily reports. The app was also a selling point, as it allowed laboratories to manage orders without paperwork. A customer relationship management (CRM) habit—keeping client details, past conversations, needs, and the next follow-up date in one place—was encouraged throughout.

Why a client study is needed. The training provided only the seller's perspective on the relationship. It did not assess how laboratory clients perceive the service. A brief study could address this gap. Proposed research design. The research will be descriptive. Target group: laboratory owners, managers and senior staff who already work with the company.

Proposed sample: Approximately 30 respondents chosen by availability. A structured questionnaire would use a five point Likert scale, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, containing some profile questions and three open questions on what clients like, what problems they face and what

they want improved. The questions will be divided into five categories: relationship management, logistics and service quality, report accuracy and reliability, overall satisfaction, and intention to continue or recommend.

Research questions –

(1) What role do communication and trust play in the client relationship? (2) How do clients perceive sample logistics and timeliness? (3) To what extent do report accuracy and reliability influence client confidence? (4) How satisfied are clients overall? (5) Which service areas need attention first?

Planned analysis. For each statement, frequencies, percentages and average scores would be compared to see which service areas are stronger, and which are weaker.

VI. Challenges, Observations and Learning

Logistics delays. At times the sample collection and transport was delayed. Maintaining constant communication with the logistics team and the client proved helpful but the problem was partly due to reasons beyond the control of the sales team.

Clients that were not available. Some owners did not answer the phone or were busy. Calls and visits were made at better times.

Price concerns. Some laboratories were happy with their current provider or worried about cost. The team explained pricing, quality, services and turnaround time clearly.

Slow conversion. With a long sales cycle; this lead took a number of touches to convert into an active account. Recognising the genuine need and following up on the schedule was the best answer.

Reactivation effort. Inactive clients needed extra effort. Finding the earlier complaint and solving it came first.

Record keeping. Calls, visits and follow-ups were easy to lose track of. Daily reports and trackers were updated regularly.

Observations. First, field work gave a clearer picture of client behaviour than phone work alone. Second, sales and operations are tied together: business development creates the relationship, and service delivery keeps it. Third, in smaller towns and remote areas, planning and local communication matter more because distance makes logistics harder. Fourth, client satisfaction should be measured regularly and not guessed from sales numbers.

VII. Practical Recommendations

• Follow up in a fixed system.

Keep a lead tracker with the client's details, needs, lead status and the next follow-up date, so that no interested laboratory is forgotten.

• Watch logistics closely.

Keep daily pick-up schedules, record delays, and set up quick communication between the client, sales and logistics teams. Tell clients the expected time and update them if it changes.

• Make reactivation routine.

Keep a list of inactive clients, note the reason each one stopped, fix the cause and follow up.

• Plan field sales by territory.

Divide areas, plan visits, record results and return to interested laboratories. In villages and small towns, plan around local conditions.

• Ask clients for feedback.

Use a short, regular questionnaire like the one proposed here, and record complaints with a clear route for escalation and resolution.

• Protect report quality.

Keep stressing accuracy, because report confidence is what keeps a laboratory partner. If followed, these steps are expected to reduce delays, improve conversion of leads, bring back lapsed clients and strengthen repeat business.

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VIII. Conclusion

This paper examined how a B2B diagnostic services company wins, activates and keeps laboratory clients, based on ten weeks of field observation in Mumbai and Pune. Three conclusions stand out. First, client acquisition is not a single event but a chain of steps: finding a lead, understanding its needs, following up, onboarding, activation and long-term relationship care. A laboratory that signs up but never sends samples adds no value, so activation deserves as much attention as the first sale. Second, in diagnostic services, sales and service delivery depend on each other. A strong pitch opens the door,

but trust is built through steady communication, on-time sample pick-up and accurate reports. Third, winning back inactive clients is an under-used source of business, because it costs less than finding new ones when the reason for leaving is understood and resolved.

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