

**D**ESPITE ALL the compelling reasons to have telemarketing feature prominently in every organization's marketing plan, if your organization has not conducted telemarketing before, there is often an overriding concern that the customer base will react negatively to such an approach. This often stems from the negative image telemarketing has inherited from the boiler-room tactics of telemarketing operations that will do anything to get a sale. These tactics are far removed from the tactics employed by Sfz.

### **Consumers become supporters**

Many subscribers and single ticket buyers view themselves not only as discerning and knowledgeable consumers, but also as supporters of your organization. Sfz understands this relationship and seeks to enhance it. It understands that to succeed with this consumer base it must create a balance between a strong sales-orientated approach and quality customer service.

### **The negative and the positive**

While a small percentage of people will always react negatively to any kind of unsolicited call, experience has taught us that the longer and more established the relationship, the more receptive the customer is to receiving a personal contact from the organization that they support. In many cases, where telemarketing has been a core component of the organization's marketing plan, many subscribers come to both expect and appreciate the call. It serves as a useful reminder to them, and it provides them with an opportunity to give some feedback about what they like and don't like about the season. Some subscribers also find it to be the most convenient way to renew their subscription. After all, it saves them having to fill in a form, find a stamp and make the trip to

the post box. It is also worth bearing in mind that the small percentage of individuals that react negatively are as likely to react negatively to receiving unsolicited publicity materials in the mail.

### **Customer service is the key**

Sfz does not view itself as a remote third party, simply contracted by your organization to aggressively pitch your season. We understand that we may be your patron's initial and only direct contact with your organization. We view ourselves as an extension of your front line box office or subscription sales operations, where customer service is the key to retention of subscribers. Sfz measures its success not only by its impressive sales results, but when every contact with a customer leaves them with the perception that they just talked with a knowledgeable representative of your organization, anxious to assist them in any way possible. That may involve explaining the season's offerings in detail, determining where the patron's interests lie, discussing seating options and pricing intelligently, outlining subscriber benefits and policies accurately or directing patrons to the best parking locations.

### **Enhancing relationships**

Telemarketing conducted in this fashion sends a strong, unified message where the focus is customer service. Sfz works very closely with the marketing departments and box office departments to make sure that the message is unified. All scripts and training materials are carefully prepared and customized for every campaign Sfz conducts and telemarketers are constantly monitored and coached during the course of your campaign. Far from damaging relationships with your core audience, it will enhance them.