

# Call Tracking: Opportunity Calls for the True Growth Hacker



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Whether you're a growth hacker with coding skills or a developer with growth hacking ambitions, you're ignoring a whole world of digital marketing possibilities if you're not using phone numbers as a channel. And it's not because it's too hard, too expensive or ineffective. It's probably because you've assumed they aren't hackable. But it turns out phone numbers are completely programmable with call tracking. And your competitors are quickly waking up to that fact, too.



You can collect and measure inbound call campaign data just like you do online campaigns—and help drive that hockey stick growth you're working so hard to achieve.

## Nexmo Call Tracking: Digital Marketing Meets Inbound Calls



## When Hacking Met Marketing

First, let's consider how the disciplines of marketing and programming merged into growth hacking and quickly spawned practitioners with specialized skillsets.

Marketing used to be all about long-term planning. So did software. Marketing and software managers would think months and even years ahead. They had big business expectations weighing on them and big budgets to spend. In those circumstances, carefully crafted plans promising big returns seemed like the right thing to do.

Then agile recast what it meant to plan a software project. Agile turned software development into a series of experiments. Developers learned the intricacies of the problem they were solving as they wrote code. The revelation was that it was possible to really understand the problem only if you broke it into manageable pieces.

Growth hacking did the same thing for digital marketing: small, manageable experiments that test hypotheses about the best ways to drive growth. It's no accident that the name *growth hacking* draws on both software development and marketing; in growth hacking, marketers have become software developers and software developers have become marketers.

## Instrument everything, offline included

Now with online user-tracking tools such as UTMs, cookies and pixels, a growth hacker can follow an individual's path right down the funnel from initial awareness to purchase. A/B testing and other simple experimentation techniques make it easy to tune campaigns until they're at their most effective.

That is, so long as you're willing to ignore anything but online channels.

While growth hackers fight their competitors in CPC auctions, traditional marketers continue to invest billions in non-digital advertising. Don't believe the hype: digital hasn't killed traditional media. They co-exist, and traditional advertising is filled with opportunities for growth hackers.

That's because they can now use digital tracking techniques to measure non-digital marketing. Maybe that's out of the growth hacker's typical focus area, but don't dismiss offline advertising too quickly.

## Buyers Call, Bots Click

It's also important to remember that those measurable online actions aren't always trustworthy. Clicking a link is easy. Too easy. According to the World Federation of Advertisers—the industry body for huge ad spenders, such as Coca-Cola and Nike—as much as 30% of ad clicks could be fraudulent.

And that's the problem with online advertising. For all the available online measurement tools, it's still impossible to predict intention when the cost of participation is nothing more than a click.

Measurement of non-digital advertising may not be perfect, but it can be easier to infer intent in those channels. A person calling the number they saw on a billboard is more motivated than a person, or bot, idly clicking a link.

For better or worse, non-digital advertising is in almost every part of our lives. Radios play in waiting rooms. The face of a local realtor smiles out from the backrest of a city bench. Americans, during their 29.6 billion hours commuting each year, crawl past a national total of two million billboards.

If digital marketing were enough, then the businesses that exist entirely online would surely be the first to abandon all else. But here's the thing: in the UK, online businesses are now the biggest TV advertising spenders.

In growth hacking, though, you aren't typically looking to build long-term brand awareness or change perceptions. You want to sell. Growth hacking is about getting as close as possible to the perfect correlation between ad spend going out and revenue dollars coming in.

To do that with traditional inbound call-based advertising, you can now instrument phone calls in the same way they instrument their digital channels.

## Call Tracking: Instrumenting Phone Calls

If you can't measure it precisely, you can't iterate. If you can't iterate, then you can't call it a growth hack.

Non-digital measurement used to be an art masquerading as science. It could be as directly attributable as mailed-in coupons or as vague as hoping that an uptick in sales was due to a particular campaign. When it came to telephone-based sales, you paid the phone company a small fortune for a toll-free number and promoted it wherever you could. That was way back in the 20th century thinking, though.

The 21st century has brought about virtual phone numbers and call tracking, making inbound calls just another measurable channel. Virtual numbers are an elastic resource that can be changed, routed and measured at will. Here are just some of the ways you can use them in your growth hacks:

- Assign different phone numbers to each campaign, each metro area, even to individual advertisements.
- Record and monitor calls to experiment with script changes, and use sentiment analysis to understand where things go well or badly.

- Route numbers according to whom you expect to be calling: route your Montreal targeted ad callers to bilingual operators, for example.

The most obvious and easiest way to use phone numbers in growth hacking, though, is to treat them like UTM's.

## Phone numbers as UTM's

Let's take a simple example: say you are part of the growth team for a SaaS product that helps run dental surgeries. Most of your outbound has been through Google and Facebook advertising.

Your CMO comes to you and says that she's booked two ad placements in a magazine for medical practice managers for the next six months. She wants you to measure performance and tweak as necessary.

So, you work with the design team to create two versions of your ad. You add a unique discount code to each version so you have some ability to track how many signups each one is driving. However, you know that the magazine audience is pretty conservative and they're unlikely to sign up without talking to a human first. Without a completed signup, you don't get the discount code and without the discount code you won't know which ad or which magazine issue generated the inquiry.

You decide to apply your knowledge of the audience; you place a phone number in both versions of the advertisement. To track which version generated each inquiry, you put a different number in each.

Now, this is where the marketing and the software development come together.

## Tracking Calls to a Number with a Cloud Communications API

Cloud communication providers, such as Nexmo, give you an API-based call tracking solution to assign, route and measure telephone numbers. You can also acquire your virtual numbers from Nexmo at a low cost and have them commissioned in a matter of seconds.

Now, you may not be the world's greatest developer but as a true growth *hacker* you know your way around programming languages (say, Ruby) well enough to build at least a minimum viable product:

1. You use the Nexmo Ruby client library to commission two phone numbers and route them both to your general sales number.
2. You set up a cron-job that pulls the call data from both numbers every 10 minutes.
3. You feed that data into the same visualization tool you use to measure digital ad performance.
4. You wait for the magazines to hit the readers' mailboxes.

In a week or so, calls start coming in and they're captured in your dashboard. You can see not only which of the ads is performing better but you can see where calls are coming from and their distribution throughout the day. By feeding that data into your CRM, you can then track the full customer journey, just like you would if they'd clicked an online ad. There's no messy manual work: it's all just as automated as any of your other digital advertising channels.

For the subsequent months' ads, you use new numbers each time. Now you can track not just the performance of the ad placements but also how each issue of the magazine performed.

Using the data gathered, you're able to iterate the ad designs over the course of its run and you learn which positions generated the most interest from potential customers.

Now imagine there is no CMO, because you’re the CMO—and the CEO, COO and every other executive title an entrepreneur could claim. You need to bootstrap your fledgling business—growth hack it, if you will—on a shoestring budget. How much more valuable does call tracking become in the pursuit to tightly correlating ad spend and revenue?

And even if you’re working at a thriving company, why wait for the CMO to assign a project before exploring this new channel? You can blaze this new growth hacking trail on your own initiative over a weekend and walk into work as a marketing innovator on Monday.

## Measure, Iterate, Improve

That’s a pretty simple example, and it might not feel all that much like growth hacking. But remember those 2 million billboards in the US? Remember how callers have greater intention to buy?

Using individual phone numbers for each campaign and each location lets you take advantage of all the benefits of traditional media without having to lose your inbound data and the optimization opportunities it provides.

With call tracking, you get all the data you need along with the ability to make rapid changes—the essentials for a growth hacker to be able to measure, iterate and improve.

Please fill out the form and we will be in touch with you shortly.

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