

Aerial Direct – Case Study

Looking in the mirror could be transformational – A secret shopping story.

You may want to brace yourself when you learn that a highly specialized professional has secretly assessed every aspect of your company's buyer experience. While getting secret shopped could be nerve-racking, companies like Aerial Direct and their partner **O2 Business** see it as a huge opportunity and competitive gain.

Aerial Direct, a company with a 90%+ customer satisfaction rate, has gone through Alinea Partners' Customer Experience Assessment not once or twice but three times. Looking in the mirror has been transformational for the leading telecommunications provider and the largest direct business partner of **O2 Business** in the UK.

“We believe in investing in our partners,” Jennifer Buchan, Partner Marketing Manager at Virgin Media O2 Business, says. “Aerial Direct is a highly commendable partner. They are a customer experience leader, and their story is our story. That’s why we engaged Alinea Partners, our trusted secret shopper, to ensure that no stone of their buying experience is left unturned.”

The first secret shopping assessment showed that Aerial Direct's buyer experience was solid, but there were several improvement opportunities. A prospect going through the journey was likely to purchase from them. They also had a robust call center and enjoyed high customer trust. Their online presence, while reasonably strong, wasn't as focused on specific elements representing growth opportunities—discovery, proposals, and social media in particular. The offers on their website were clear and written in a familiar and recognizable language, demonstrating an understanding of the buyer's pain points. Still, the content was too short, and there was little supporting documentation relating directly to business issues their prospects faced versus the technical challenges they experienced.

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“Once Alinea Partners finished their methodology-based research, we had a very open consultative conversation tailored specifically to us,” Billy Mahoney, Marketing Manager at Aerial Direct, says. “They gave us ideas, options, and advice based on the benchmark data they have. We received some very positive feedback, but it wasn’t all good news. Alinea Partners uncovered some urgent improvements, and receiving a clear set of recommendations was particularly useful. Like many other companies, we are always busy,” Billy adds. “We knew everything wasn’t exactly as we’d like to have it. This program saved us the time and effort of doing the research ourselves. It made us much more agile and quicker to get better results.”

Secret shopping has delivered plenty of value to Aerial Direct. Winning new business through improvements in proposal documents was a big one for them. By creating and implementing better proposals, looking at how quickly prospects responded to them, and closing faster, the company went from a sub-10% conversion rate to over 15%. “The value comes from someone seeing ways to improve,” Billy says. Overall, Aerial Direct’s conversion rates and total volume improvements have translated into double-digit customer growth. How you talk to people and how quickly you respond to them matters. Aerial Direct has looked at every report from each assessment to evaluate priorities and opportunities. “From the social selling element, I’m seeing a lot more activity and engagement,” Jennifer says. “As recommended, we intertwine our brand narratives, and they stand out from the crowd as they utilize the **O2 Business ethos, flexibility for our customers.**” Aerial Direct will take every chance to improve how they can delight their buyers today more than they did yesterday.

That intertwined brand narrative allows Aerial Direct to be more effective at helping prospects learn about their excellent service, offerings, and all the exclusive benefits that only the biggest partner of **O2 Business** can deliver. “Our passion and focus are built around putting the customer at the heart of everything we do,” Billy says. “Working closely with **O2 Business** allows us to provide them excellent service and all the added benefits of being with **O2 Business.**”

O2 Business knows that very well, which is why they are prepared to invest in their partners and support them to ensure that buyers continue to receive the best possible experience and convert as soon as possible into customers. That’s also why **O2 Business** has incorporated the secret shopper program into its Partner Program as a foundation to optimize prior to heavy investments or demand generation initiatives.

To find out more about Secret Shopping directly or for your channel partners, contact us at Customer.Experience@Alinea-Partners.com