



ASCENUM

Sales Development Case Study

PREPARED BY CIENCE TECHNOLOGIES, INC



CIENCE



About Ascenum

Ascenum is a unique FinTech company, giving members access to valuation tools and marketplace solutions for small and medium business (SMB) owners wanting to scale, capitalize, and successfully exit after years of hard work.

Ascenum members can use these tools to get clearer and more accurate valuations of the companies they've built. Alongside valuation tools, members benefit from a marketplace of trusted specialists and service providers to support growth activities. Providers are algorithmically connected to Ascenum members, widening the pool of specialists business owners can turn to for help.



Ken Bariahtaris

Chief Marketplace Officer

Industry

Financial Services

Website

www.ascenum.com

The Story of Ascenum

Following a successful career as CEO at a leading provider of business valuation and sell-side M&A advisory service for small and mid-sized companies, Thomas J. (TJ) Letarte founded Ascenum in 2018.

As founder and CEO with forty years of experience in financial and M&A advisory services, TJ Letarte knew the pain points of small and mid-sized companies all too well. He founded Ascenum to provide accurate valuations—alongside a free-to-access marketplace of trusted advisors that support the growth of SMBs—to help business owners increase and then unlock the value of their hard work.

Until working with CIENCE, sales and marketing efforts were limited to a few outbound activities, some networking, and referrals from the founders' contacts. Ascenum knew it needed to make significant changes to outreach efforts to sign up more members. It wanted to secure new co-marketing partners (CMPs) to reach a much larger audience of SMBs.

Each partner could offer Ascenum services to SMB customers, enhancing client offerings, providing complementary solutions, and supporting strategic objectives. If Ascenum wanted to expand its services, it needed banks and digital platforms, vendors, and other providers with access to broad and deep networks. In the search for new ways to engage prospects, Ascenum looked to CIENCE to solve these outreach challenges.

Ken Bariahtaris, chief marketplace officer of Ascenum said: “We found them through a reference from a trusted friend of our company. We’d worked with this friend on a previous project, and they advised us that we needed to outsource an outreach program and recommended CIENCE for the project.”

“We’re a small company, so we needed someone to help us scale our outreach operations to create alliances with bigger companies,” said Bariahtaris.

Challenges and Scope

Ascenum wanted a highly experienced team that could build and scale an affiliate marketing campaign, establishing new co-marketing partnerships to bring in a larger volume of SMB customers.

Challenges: CIENCE account manager, Matt Jonson said: “One of the main challenges—despite the compelling and unique nature of the Ascenum’s offering—was that they weren’t getting enough ‘at bats.’ There were not enough leads at the top of the funnel, and although they had a pipeline of SMBs, what they really needed were more co-marketing partners.”

Because CMPs aren’t buying anything, the “sell” is risk-free, simply an agreement to offer these services to SMB customers. This outreach campaign was about demonstrating the complementary nature of these services and encouraging CMBs to offer Ascenum’s solutions to their customers.

“That might sound fairly simple from a sales perspective, especially with it being zero risk and no cost for partners,” said Johnson. “However, the challenge of any outreach campaign is establishing trust and brand awareness.”

Need: Although no fixed targets were set, Ascenum needed as many meetings with qualified CMBs as possible, with high expectations from the start. One deal could bring them hundreds or thousands of SMB customers, emphasizing the importance placed on securing qualified meetings. Ascenum made it clear that failing to secure meetings could affect the long-term success of the company.

Opportunity: With that in mind, Ascenum saw the potential in a campaign with CIENCE, starting with a series of onboarding activities. It was crucial to the success of the project to get the positioning, value proposition, and messaging just right.

Why CIENCE

Embarking on a six-month pilot together, Ascenum recognized from the onset that CIENCE was the right choice by being able to build an omnichannel outreach campaign, identifying qualified prospects, reaching out, and booking appointments directly with the CEO.

At the top of the funnel, educating potential clients was essential. A discovery phase got the ball rolling, with the Ascenum team sharing as much information as possible about their business, services, target ideal co-marketing prospects, and other details.

With CIENCE's expertise, Ascenum was able to strategically implement an outreach campaign through phone calls, email, and LinkedIn, with scripts and messages crafted for each channel. CIENCE also worked with Ascenum to create a landing page and pre-targeting ads specifically for the campaign.

Results

The campaign ran from September 2021 until January 2022, an energetic and collaborative partnership from the start. Both teams were in constant contact, through email, phone, Zoom, and Slack.

"At the end of the day, this constant interaction made the campaign more successful," said Carrie Bailey, campaign strategist at CIENCE. "It was intense and collaborative—a true partnership—that paid off with the results it achieved."

The goal of every message, phone call, and email sent out was to secure a qualified meeting with the CEO, TJ Letarte. Co-marketing partners were contacted under his name, making outreach more personal.



“We could tailor our messaging more closely with what the client needed,” said Bailey. “That extra feedback and input from the client improved click-through and response rates, helping us to secure more CEO-to-CEO meetings and bring more leads into the pipeline for Ascenum.”

The integration of their services was efficient. CIENCE worked remotely and conducted biweekly Zoom meetings, staying within budget and adhering to a tight schedule. Throughout the engagement, the CIENCE team was able to book more than thirty appointments for Ascenum in four months—an average of around eight meetings per month.

The collaborative nature of this campaign made the outreach more authentic, improving every aspect of the campaign to generate positive results: “Since the start of this project, I’ve learned more about the extent of learning required for this kind of outreach campaign,” said Bariahtaris. “Looking back at our goals when the project started, we’re now ninety percent there. They now know more about our company than anyone, besides us.”

Success in Partnership

Both teams worked well together. It was intense, but that paid off, making the partnership more successful. CIENCE was able to integrate into the Ascenum team and processes, and they could see that the campaign was moving forward in the right way because of this transparent and proactive integration.

“I appreciated that CIENCE’s sales team was accurate and honest, and they delivered the services they promised,” said Bariahtaris. “CIENCE’s transparency was a strength compared to projects of other types I’ve worked on. Their team had a mature view of feedback. When we asked them to change or refine something, they worked at it with a quick turnaround time.”

CIENCE secured top meetings, with partners coming on board, making a big difference to Ascenum's continued growth: "We have two new partners thanks to CIENCE's efforts, and we have at least three other potential partners in our pipeline," said Bariahtaris. "A partner is not a small unit for us; each new partner helps our business grow."

In every way, CIENCE delivered what Ascenum needed, exceeding its expectations. This collaborative effort ensured a close alignment between both teams that ultimately contributed to the remarkable success of the campaign.

Key Takeaways

- Collaborative partnerships produce better results. When it comes to sales campaigns, sharing and feedback are critical. This is a prime example of how crucial communication is during an outbound sales campaign.
- Setting clear expectations and maintaining an honest approach is equally important. Campaigns are more successful when both parties know what to expect and maintain transparency throughout.
- CIENCE works through an onboarding and discovery process that primes the sales team ready to implement an outbound campaign. Having materials and assets ready to support this process, and a clear idea of your target customers, makes the whole campaign run smoother, and ultimately, generates better results.



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