



The Lead Management Process

Cliff Langston

Sales & marketing working together to deliver improved sales lead generation

Perhaps you've noticed that years of research on demand generation and lead management consistently points to the same thing. A recent report from Aberdeen Group¹ again found that 80% of companies struggle with a lack of synergy between sales and marketing relative to lead management. The number one barrier to successfully managing leads is the "process between marketing and sales"; ahead of automation, best practice knowledge, identifying sales-ready leads, and developing content for lead nurturing.

Source: Aberdeen Group, Lead Lifecycle Management, July, 2009



Lead Management: The Crossroads

Lead management sits at the intersection of sales and marketing, certainly part of the reason for the confusion. While you'll find some variation from company to company, basic B2B best practices for lead management include the steps below.

Though this lack of process furthers the disconnect between marketing and sales, few companies take the time to map out the full lead management process. With a documented process you can identify inefficiencies and best practices within your existing approach. A documented lead management process makes it easier to deliver sales-ready opportunities to the sales force. It also can help you measure the return on your marketing investment. Once clearly defined, metrics can be assigned to each step of the lead management process.

Steps in the Lead Management Process

<u>Capture</u> The physical recording of an inquiry	<u>Qualify</u> Differentiate between responses and leads	<u>Follow Up</u> Contact of some type with the prospect	<u>Nurture</u> What we do when prospects are not ready to buy	<u>Distribute</u> The act of transferring to sales
<u>Feedback</u> Was it a good lead?				

Integrating Sales & Marketing:

The Lead Management Process

Getting Started:

Documenting your company's lead management process involves drilling down into each of these steps. This includes developing a description, definition and process detail for each step, as well as aligning one or more metrics with each. A gap analysis approach will identify opportunities for improvement. Most of the time, these improvements will fall into short-term or long-term project categories.

Creating an implementation plan with a clear Phase I and Phase II will help deliver quick wins while staying focused on the big picture. Once your lead management process has been documented, you can turn your attention to automation and software. Considering automation without a stable process in place is often a recipe for disaster.