

5 STEPS TO Better Leads



DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

- **Define your prospect universe**
- **Understand your value proposition**
- **Align value proposition with prospect's needs**
- **Map customer buy cycle**
- **Qualified lead definition**

Lead generation is hard enough, why make it harder by doing it without a strategy? The first step to building a pipeline of new business is to take the time to document your strategy. It shouldn't take more than a half-day to create a solid lead generation strategy. Start by defining exactly who your target customers are, and understand what's important to them. Then look at your organization and how you compare to your competitors in delivering what's important to your customers. This creates your value proposition that will be consistent throughout your lead generation efforts. Next shift your focus back to your prospects and understand how they go about buying the stuff you sell. Who's involved? How long does it take? What are they concerned with at each stage? The final step of the strategy phase is to create a qualified lead definition. This definition should be explicit, and most importantly, agreed upon by both sales and marketing.

CHOOSE YOUR TACTICS

There are a lot of great online and offline lead generation tactics. Try them, and find out which work best for you. Vary the sequence, test and learn. Here's a combination that's been tested, and can deliver great results in a lot of B2B markets.

Phone: Whether you are following up to an initial marketing activity (webinar, tradeshow attendance, white-paper download, etc), or calling first, there are a few things to keep in mind when using the phone in business. Understand you are interrupting the person on the other end of the line. Any phone call is an interruption, unless it's a scheduled teleconference. Being aware of this, you can determine reasonably quickly whether it makes sense to continue the conversation. ***"Hello, John, I know you weren't expecting my call today, but if you do this you might be interested in some information about that."*** If they are, great – you've earned the right to continue the conversation. If they aren't, you have invested under a minute to figure that out. Finding better sales leads isn't easy, but it also isn't magic. Focusing some energy on the following five areas can result in better leads and more closed sales.

Email: If the person you're talking with is interested in what you're talking about, one way to continue the dialogue is to send some additional information via email. Be sure they're really interested and agreeable to a follow up conversation once they've checked the info out. Assure them you will only use their email address for this conversation. Keep your message short and to the point, share your own contact information, and ideally reference something you talked about on the phone. Send a link to a single landing page that includes valuable content. Don't send files that will get



CHOOSE YOUR TACTICS (Continued)

hung up in spam filters. Track your open rates and click-through rates, and prioritize phone follow up accordingly. It's not uncommon to see open rates of **>50% and click-through rates above 85%** with this approach.

Phone: When you make your scheduled follow up call, have these two things to talk about. 1) Check out their website. Take ten minutes to learn something about their company or a recent news release that you can reference in your conversation. 2) A second offer. Your first offer was the information you promised them in the email. If they thought that was interesting, there's a chance they might want to try your company's products or services. Make it easy for them.

Contact management: After the second conversation, you'll have a group of well-qualified opportunities to pass along to sales. You'll also have a database of people who are interested, but not ready to talk to a sales rep. And you'll have people who weren't interested, but do use your company's products/services. Staying in touch with these prospects until they are ready to resume the conversation can be done by scheduling phone calls and/or email messages. Use your laptop contact manager or a big-time CRM solution. It doesn't matter as long as it gets done. Whether you call it lead nurturing, lead recycling, or whatever, it just makes sense.

GET A LIST

Any good direct marketer will tell you lead generation success starts with the list. And the list starts with inbound inquiries. Emails, phone calls, web registrants, and event attendees are great examples. If you need to supplement this, you can build, borrow or buy a list. Building a list is the most effective, but takes the most time. Social media, the Internet and the phone can (and should) all be used. Borrowing a list refers to list rental. There are too many data providers to mention, but a couple of well-conceived Google searches should uncover a few. Prices range depending on how specific you want to get and how much information you need (address, phone, email, etc.). Finally, buying a list is probably the least advisable – unless you are talking to a respected data provider. It's probably worth a mention here that there's a difference between a list and a lead. You don't buy a list of leads; you buy a list of names. You start with a list of names, and a name becomes lead when two human beings think it makes sense to continue a conversation.

CREATE OFFERS

Second only to the list in driving lead generation success, offers are the tools for continuing conversations with your prospects. In this approach, you'll want to have an offer aligned with each interaction that is appropriate for that stage of the conversation. On the first phone call, your offer is information – **"if you're doing this, you might be interested in that"**. "That" is a link to valuable content on a landing page, information that helps the prospect. It's not a sales pitch. Consider how-to guides, white papers, etc., aligned with your value proposition and strategy. The next time you talk, you'll want to have your second offer handy. Depending on your product/service and the customer's needs, it might be appropriate to offer a discounted or free trial. Or you may need an additional step – a no-obligation diagnostic perhaps. Come up with as many ideas as you can. Test them. See what works best for your company and your prospects.

GOOD CONTENT

As you build a pipeline of new business, content is the quiet constant. We're talking about the information you share with your prospects from the first conversation to the last. The information they find on your website when they do research, receive in your emails, access in social media circles, etc. Developing and managing content can be pretty complex. But you can also start very simply when it comes to lead generation. Take a look at your website and find a paper, case study, or article, and think about it from your prospect's perspective – what problem would this information help them solve? Companies often find existing content that can be re-purposed to support their lead generation campaigns.

By following these steps consistently, a lot of companies have had success growing their business. There are a lot of great ways to build a pipeline of new business, and not every approach works for every company. A model like this provides a framework, executing consistently is what delivers the results.