WHITE PAPER

The Ultimate Guide to B2B Lead Generation

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B2B sales processes are complex, there's no doubt about that. B2B sales reps have to deal with a myriad of stakeholders, so lead conversion rates are going to be much lower than other B2C companies.In fact, within the B2B space, **anything from 5% to 10% can be considered an average conversion rate**.

So what are the **common pain points** of lead generation?

- Data quality
- Lead quality
- Measuring lead generation success

Let's see how to leverage them.

Sommaire

Optimize Your Lead Generation Process

#1 Identify your target audience – Think about who's in your market and if they're interested in your product or service.

#2 Create an ideal customer profile (ICP) and buyer personas – Your ICP is exactly the type of lead to becoming one of your clients, and your buyer personas describe the personalities of those potential customers.

#3 Identify the decision-makers and stakeholders of target accounts – Finding contacts who make the purchasing decisions can expedite the sales process.

#4 Develop email marketing campaigns – A one-size-fits-all approach to emailing leads is inefficient. Email marketing campaigns require more thought into the different personas and audiences your team is targeting.

#5 Construct a lead scoring and qualification system – Filtering unfit leads saves time later in the sales process, and consider that 79% of B2B marketers have not established a system for lead scoring.

#6 Build a lead nurture campaign – Not every lead that shows up on your radar will engage with your sales and marketing teams. A lead nurture campaign sends them reminders and content to gain more of their interest.

#7 Expand your content by channel and medium – There are many mediums of content, such as blogs, eBooks, and case studies, which can reach more audiences when expanded into different channels.

#8 Increase search engine optimization (SEO) for your website – Getting your webpage closer to the first of a search engine result attracts more visitors and possibly more business.

#9 Host webinars and events – In a recent study conducted, 42% of respondents said tradeshows and events were the biggest sources of marketing and sales leads.

#10 Collect referrals from current customers – Referrals serve as great sources for social proof.

#11 Track analytics from all campaigns and strategy efforts – For your lead generation strategy to be successful, you have to know exactly what's working by seeing it in numbers and analytics.

3 Types Of B2B Lead Generation Strategies

It may be a cliché, but **content is king**—and the lifeblood of any lead generation effort. While an incredibly broad term, content marketing encompasses every type of format imaginable. The key to a sound content marketing strategy is mapping messaging to a sales funnel. For instance, even though interaction with **case studies** and **product sheets** may be indicative of a sales-ready lead, that doesn't mean a marketing team should lead with this type of content, as these types of assets are usually introduced further down the sales process.

So, where does content marketing earn its reputation as a lead generation magnet?

#1 Email Nurturing

As previously mentioned, oftentimes a **marketing engaged lead** is not ready for sales intervention at the point they enter the funnel. Emails are great for reaching people who are already familiar with a brand, product, or service. **Nurturing prospects** with an array of content that creates trust, authority and, of course, a more behavioral engagement that (hopefully) accumulates to qualification.

#2 Company Blog

SEO's best friend: the **blog post**. Company blogs take commitment but pay dividends in a variety of ways. First and foremost, blog posts are great ways to fit a lot of keywords and popular questions into one piece of content, and so they give companies a **better chance of ranking high on SERPs** without spending advertising dollars.

💡 Additionally, it provides an organic platform for a company to further establish itself as a subject-matter expert in its domain.

#3 Social Media

Social media platforms make it incredibly easy for visitors to interact with a brand. Similar to email nurturing and blogging, a company's social media presence provides a unique opportunity to promote a variety of initiatives, in a variety of ways. The **interactive nature of the channel**—it's called SOCIAL media, after all—offers a chance to foster two-way conversations with current employees, customers, industry leads, and yes, potential leads, too. Above everything else, a strong social presence keeps a company top of mind.

4 B2B Lead Generation Sources to consider

Customer Referrals

A **customer referral** program is a great way to bridge the gap between wanting to find new leads and leveraging the ones you already have. The main benefit of adopting a referral program is that leads who were referred typically have a faster sales cycle because there's already a level of built-in trust.

☝️ **Think about it**: wouldn't you be more likely to buy something if a good friend highly recommended it?

Outbound Prospecting

Outbound prospecting is a direct marketing channel where salespeople identify target customers and then directly reach out to them in order to introduce them to their company or product. Identifying **target customers** involves compiling lists of companies or individuals that sales reps believe would be the most likely to need their product/service.

📞 Examples of outbound prospecting include **email outreach, social selling, and cold calling.**

Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing is slightly more complex than outbound prospecting. As a business methodology, it is the process of attracting customers by creating and **distributing relevant content and valuable experiences** personalized to their specific needs. Think of inbound marketing as building a relationship with customers—a consultative relationship that continues even after they decide to make a purchase.

🎯 The point is to engage them with content that will bring them to owned marketing channels, most commonly a company website, and in turn, evolve awareness into validated interest about a particular product or service.

Marketing Campaigns

Campaigns are **what make companies memorable**. Marketing campaigns aim to promote a highly focused effort that encourages customers towards a desired action.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

75% of searchers don't go beyond the first page of their search results. SEM strategies help to ensure that your content makes the cut by strategically bidding on branded and non-branded keywords to give a company's brand valuable real estate atop of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP) associated with the aforementioned terms.

Display Campaigns

Similar to SEM campaigns, display campaigns can either be deployed to a specific list of companies a go-to-market team is trying to engage or retarget companies in real-time by **leveraging IP addresses associated** with visitors who visit owned web properties. What's more, display campaigns have very low CTR (only 0.17%)

Content Syndication

Placing content, usually to generate awareness about a company's value proposition, across trade publications. The content can be anything from eBooks and sponsored research to upcoming webinars and virtual events a company is participating in. Marketing teams can work with these publications to ensure the leads a vendor passes back as a conversion match a predetermined set of firmographic and demographic filters. Republishing blog posts on just **two different sites can lead to a 34%** increase in page views.

Trade Shows

Investing sponsorship of industry events or even producing an event using internal resources. Usually leads are obtained through networking that occurs either at a company's booth and any breakout sessions internal employees may be leading. Trade shows are incredibly conducive to lead generation because **81% of trade show attendees have buying authority**.

📖 **True Story: ConnectWise**

Like most organizations, ConnectWise was dealing with a constant **influx of data flowing into its CRM** from different campaigns and webforms. ConnectWise was in search of a data provider that could **append its inbound leads with accurate and complete information in real-time**, as well as aid in on-going data hygiene efforts and support its sales team with accurate and complete account and contact information.

💡 **The solution?**

Initially, ConnectWise had planned to use ZoomInfo Enrich to **update and append inbound lead** records from webforms supporting its eCommerce product.

However, after noticing an immediate uptick in quality leads, the team decided to expand ZoomInfo Enrich across their entire portfolio of products, including their premium and enterprise solutions.

*"**We're qualifying leads faster than ever**. We have all the information we need up front, including fields like job titles and company size which are not included on our webforms."*

You've Generated Leads - now score them!

Lead Scoring: What Is It And Why Is It Important?

For optimal sales and marketing alignment, the two must embrace the following tenant: Opportunity lives at the intersection of fit and timing.

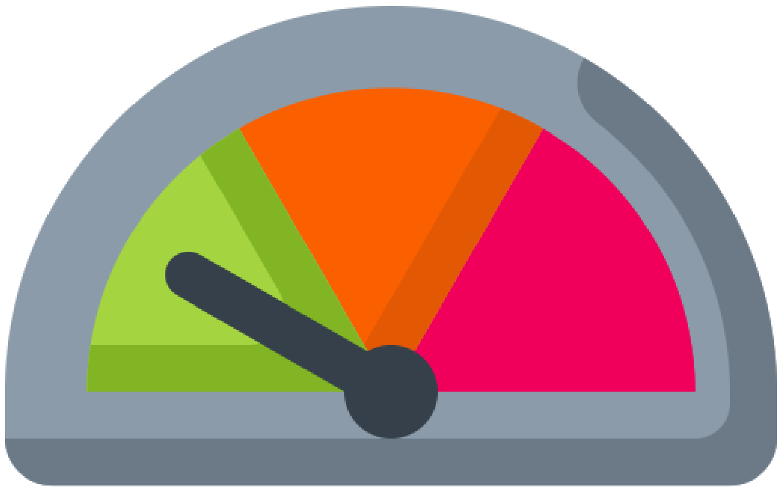
What, exactly, are we getting at?

Certain prospects may demonstrate buying behavior but NEVER be a good fit; whereas, other prospects could be ideal buyers that simply are not engaging with your marketing campaigns. **Bad leads are pretty easily identifiable**: they consist of any contact with a low probability of converting into a sale. This means they might have:

- Lack a use case for your product
- Unrealistic expectations/budgets.
- An unspecified timeline.
- Unclear understanding of what they need/want.

This is where lead scoring comes in.

You can score leads based on a breadth of weighted attributes. Assigning these values helps marketing and sales prioritize leads, respond accordingly, and increase the likelihood of those leads becoming actual customers.



How To Calculate A Lead Score

While lead scoring may look different for each company, the common thread will always be data. A good place to start when **developing a lead scoring strategy** is to look at your list of current customers, and identify what they have in common. Don't forget to look at those who didn't become customers, and identify what characteristics they share.

Below are some key steps to building out a lead scoring strategy:

#1 Build Multiple Buyer Personas

By now you probably know about buyer personas and how to use them to develop content and sales strategies. And truthfully, that's the hardest part of lead scoring! Once you have these established, you can begin to use them to identify ideal leads.

The more buyer personas you have, the more well-rounded your lead scoring system will be. When you **understand your wider audience,** you can begin to identify the multiple attributes that contribute to a lead becoming a customer.

#2 Identify Data Points

As always, data is important here. And when it comes to lead scoring criteria, we can break it down into two main categories: demographic and behavioral. Think of demographic data as who the person is, and behavioral data as what that person does.

For example, demographic data consists of things like

- Location
- Industry
- Job function
- Company size
- Job title

Behavioral data, on the other hand, includes

- Email opens
- Subscriptions
- Web page visits
- Content downloads.

You can then use this data to look back at past and current customers, see what they have in common, and target people with those same attributes.

#3 Assign Point Values

There are a host of ways that you can assign value to rank your leads, but the most common way to do it is on a 0-100 point scale. You can then weigh the points in relation to how indicative they are about a lead's readiness to contact a sales rep.

For example, maybe your **ICP (ideal customer profile)** is a stakeholder at a large-sized company. Your data also shows that in the past, leads typically download at least two top-of-funnel pieces of content. That is, they've done their research.

Through your **MQL (marketing qualified lead) analysis**, you can then weigh each of these qualifications. Each lead can get points for respective characteristics. You then add up the points, and calculate their lead score.

#4 Decide what constitutes a sales qualified lead (SQL)

Again, quantity when it comes to leads does not equal quality. It's useful at this point to turn to (you guessed it!) data.

Look at some of your best sales, and identify the common characteristics all of those buyers had. This can help you set a benchmark for high scores.

It is also important to keep in mind that lead activity is always changing, and so should their scores. Lead management software can help you keep track of lead activity, and make sure that scoring is updated accordingly.

The 5 Stages of Lead Qualification

- **Marketing Engaged Lead:** Prospect who interacts with a company via a marketing channel.
- **Marketing Qualified Lead:** Prospect who has demonstrated enough behavior to be considered qualified and ready for sales intervention.
- **Sales Generated Lead:** Prospect from sales-sourced activity usually via outbound prospecting activity.
- **Sales Accepted Lead:** A prospect qualified either through a Sales Development Representative (SDR) or via a marketing campaign that an Account Executive is working.
- **Sales Qualified Lead:** Any qualified lead who was accepted, worked and then associated with a business opportunity.

Go one step further with Lead-to-Revenue Management (L2RM)

Lead-to-Revenue Management, otherwise known as L2RM, is the process of integrating **metrics, processes and goals** that correspond to a marketing strategy **throughout the sales funnel**. The end game? Understand the entire buying process and align engagement with results (revenue).

Key Components of L2RM

Sales funnel

A stage-based approach to turning prospective leads into buyers, usually broken out into three phases:

- **Awareness**: potential customers have diagnosed pain points and are beginning to conduct preliminary research about available solutions in the marketplace. As the widest section of the funnel, the main purpose of this stage is to improve the visibility of a brand and demonstrate expertise by accommodating prospects value-centric, top of funnel resources.
- **Interest**: the prospect is actively looking for solutions to improve business outcomes.
- **Consideration**: leads are officially converted to sales qualified opportunities and are viewed as prospective customers. They have a

clear understanding of what their problem is, the solutions that could solve it, and what their budgets are.

- **Decision**: the qualified leads know everything there is to know about their pain point, the best solution for the problem, and are ready to select the provider to buy from.

Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Service Level Agreement (SLA) *is a formal contract between Marketing and Sales that outlines exactly what each department is responsible for at each stage of the lead qualification process.*

Using the goals and definitions mentioned in the previous section, a SLA helps set clear expectations for each team at each stage of the funnel. If diligently followed, a SLA should provide relative metrics go-to-market teams can use to measure success. Marketing is able to better understand its contributions by analyzing key performance indicators (KPIs) such as leads generated, qualified leads generated, sourced pipeline, and revenue. Sales goals should include follow-up time, follow-up frequency, and the percentage of leads sales is expected to follow-up with.

Just how effective can a SLA be if each party adheres to guidelines established? In fact, research shows that companies who have an active SLA are (source):

- 34% more likely to experience greater year-over-year ROI than companies who don't have an SLA.
- 21% more likely to get greater budget allocations than companies who don't have an SLA.
- And, 31% more likely to be hiring additional sales reps to meet demand.

3 Common Tools for L2RM

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

As businesses grow, leadership needs to understand historical trends, current projections, and capture everything that happens in between.

CRMs help marketers and salespeople track sales from the very first touchpoint with a prospect, all the way to the final sale. It's the foundation that houses much, if not all, of the data you can use to guide prospects through the sales funnel. Using that data, salespeople can easily segment prospects, making the entire sales process more streamlined.

Marketing Automation Platform (MAP)

You know all those little tasks that don't take up too much time individually, but collectively eat up your day? Just like **sales automation, marketing**

automation software can do those repetitive tasks for you, freeing marketers to focus on creation, rather than distribution. Marketing automation is great for managing things like email marketing, social media marketing, and ad campaigns in a way that makes it incredibly easy to personalize messaging.

Sales Automation

In terms of productivity, sales automation software is the sales team's holy grail. All of those annoying tasks that sales development reps and managers have to take time out of their days to perform can be made a part of sales automation — leaving more time for prospecting and lead nurturing.

The core components commonly included in a sales automation solution include:

- Dialer capabilities
- Email service (personalized templates, automated A/B testing)
- Activity management (automatic task creation, communication logging and more)
- Multi-touch, multi-channel sales sequence builder with the following capabilities:
    - Triggered based on custom needs
    - Create cadences across phone and email channels
    - Measure performance of sales activity

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