
FULL FUNNEL B2B MARKETING

HOW TO GENERATE QUALIFIED LEADS AND ACCELERATE SALES



More Leads = More Customers

An Introduction

For most business-to-business (B2B) marketers, mastering the complex B2B sales cycle is essential to business success. You need prospects to turn into quality leads, and leads to turn into loyal, long-term customers. The B2B sales process is complicated by the fact that it typically involves a group of decision makers, "The Buying Group", each with different personas and unique needs.

Generating Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) is a real challenge given ever-expanding demand generation channels and the explosion of Marketing Technology (martech) platforms. The key question for B2B marketers: How do you keep target prospects engaged at every step of the customer journey?

The Challenge of Lead Generation

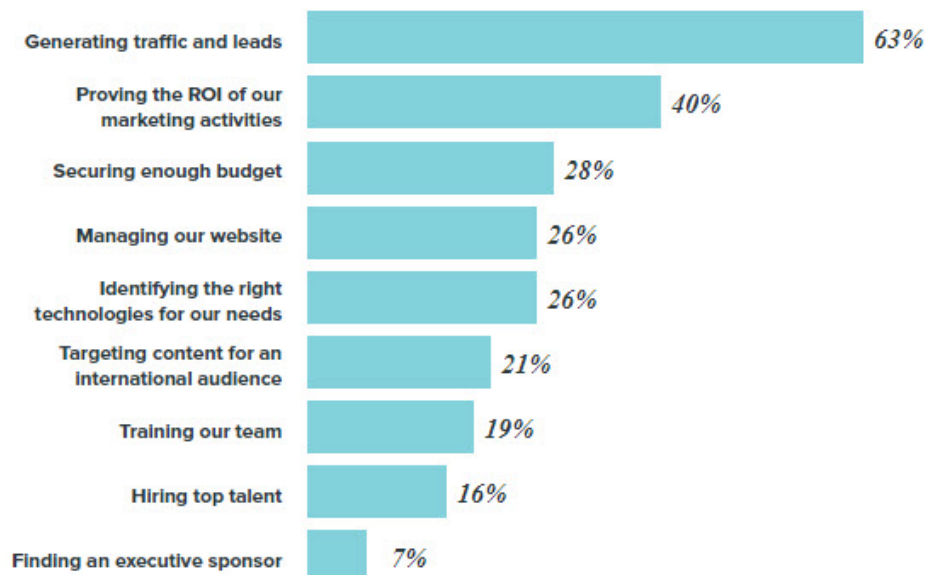
The challenge of sales generation according to Hubspot's 2017 State of Inbound report:

- 63% of companies report their top marketing challenge as generating traffic and leads
- 40% report their second biggest concern is proving the ROI of their marketing activities
- The largest challenge for Sales teams is getting a response from prospects

The below statistics illustrate the common challenge businesses face: how to attract quality leads and engage these leads through the buy-cycle to drive sales from their marketing efforts. By embracing the data-focused approach of lead acquisition and nurture, known as full funnel marketing, businesses can ensure their marketing strategy is a sales driver fueling revenue growth.

Organizations that nurture their leads experience a 45% increase in sales generation compared with organizations that don't.

What are your company's top marketing challenges?



About This Guide

In this guide, we'll provide the tools and tips you need to be successful, and reach your prospects, at every stage of the B2B sales buying cycle — Full Funnel Marketing. We'll show you how to:

- Generate more quality leads via Demand Generation best practices
- Stay engaged with your ideal audience
- Nurture leads through the funnel
- Match content to the buyer
- Determine where to focus your team's efforts

Complex Sales: A Matter of Time

The Characteristics of a B2B Complex Sales Cycle:

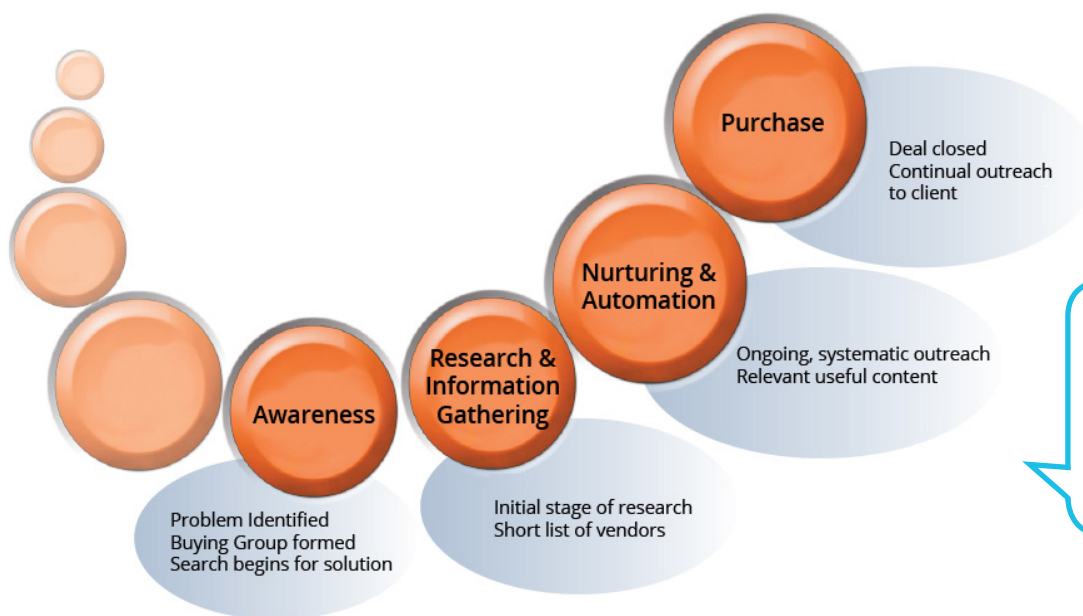
- Complex products or services
- Multiple buyers and influences involved — Buying Group
- High-consideration purchases
- Important emotional or expensive products
- Long research cycle
- Delayed Purchases
- Negotiation and/or purchases occur offline

The B2B sales cycle is long and involves a Buying Group - a group of different individuals formed to research, gather information and reach a buying decision. The Buying Group is doing online research long before they speak to a Sales Rep. This means B2B marketers must remain motivated and engaged throughout the entire buying cycle to ensure they find, nurture, win, and ultimately keep, a customer.

When managed effectively, a lengthy sales cycle can create a predictable and reliable revenue stream.

The Four Stages

As a B2B marketer, you'll need to understand every stage of the sales cycle in order to meet your prospect's Buying Group there, provide relevant content, and stay in front of their needs. Understanding the four stages will help you deliver the right content at the right time, ensuring you're a top contender until the sale is made.



You must communicate at every stage of the sales cycle

Stage 1: Awareness

Reach Prospects As They Begin Their Journey

During Stage 1 (Awareness), the hunt for a new product or service begins. At this stage, your potential customer has a problem and needs a solution.

A Buying Group is formed and the search often begins online by a non-senior employee assigned with finding baseline information about prospective companies that can provide a solution. It is likely a fact-finding mission, including company reviews and reputation, product and services offered, team members, and social media.

Who is Searching and Who is Buying?

The job title and demographic of your searcher is valuable intelligence, as it can help you craft effective calls-to-action and develop marketing tools and content based on the job level, Buying Group role and needs of your searchers. Understanding the B2B searcher and buyer at all stages of your funnel is critical for engagement.

Searcher demographics can vary from within the buying group, so it's a good idea to ask for job title information in your forms

***TIP:** At each stage of the sales cycle, your buyer becomes more sophisticated. In the initial or research phase, non-senior level employees or interns may conduct the online search to compile general information on a product. As the sales cycle progresses, the search is managed by higher-level, more experienced employees in the buying group. Therefore, your late-cycle marketing assets need to be increasingly sophisticated. Ensure your marketing assets match the searcher profile at every stage.

You'll see more website traffic and quickly position your company as a thought leader if you give helpful, expert advice without needing anything in return.

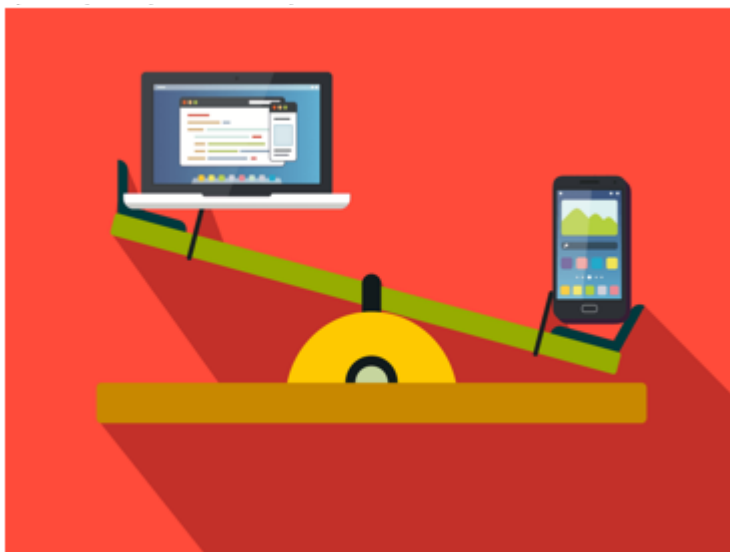
Stage 1 Marketing Tools

Your Website: The Cornerstone of Digital Presence

Your corporate website is most likely the first stop for most B2B buyers. It's the cornerstone of your digital presence, and therefore is vital your website's message and services target your potential audience. Provide your company overview, relevant information, customer testimonials, useable information on a blog, and information about leadership.

Mobile

In this day and age your website must not only be mobile friendly it must be developed from the bottom up for the mobile age. Your SEO strategy, both technical and keyword aspects, must take mobile into consideration. Today the percentage of visitors reaching you via mobile may be small but it is the fastest growing audience segment you have and will quickly eclipse desktop.



CRO: Website Optimization

CRO is Conversion Rate Optimization and is a sales technique that focuses on human behavior in order to improve conversion ratios. It involves testing, customer experience feedback, usability studies and more. It can incorporate landing pages, call to action or subject line variations, banner placement and A/B testing to determine the best methods for getting the attention of today's busy consumers.

SEO: Organic Traffic

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is a technique implemented on your website that optimizes it for search engine traffic. Page loading speeds, keyword utilization, metadata, credibility and backlinks are just a few of the factors in ranking for SEO. Strategies that address multiple factors on both the website's backend and user side must be achieved in order to get first page results in Google, Bing and other search engines. Slower to grow, but longer lasting, organic traffic is complex, yet worth the process.

Paid Digital Traffic

Paid digital traffic is a strategy that can include paid search (Google Adwords), display advertising (paid online ads or banners), retargeting and others. Pay-per-click, or PPC, is buying placement in search engines, according to their algorithms, for the keywords people search. Paid digital traffic is usually based on a keyword strategy, consumer demographic information and/or behaviors, and is paid only when the person takes action, such as clicking on the ad or link.

Because both searchers and their research evolve through the sales cycle, you'll want to create a keyword strategy tailored to each stage. Typically, early stage searches begin with general, short phrases of two or three words. As the cycle progresses, the keywords often change to multi-word, detailed "long tail" keyword phrases to help produce more targeted search results.

Typically, early stage searches begin with general, short phrases of two or three words

Content Marketing: Provide Helpful, Expert Advice

In stage 1, create helpful, expert advice on a regular basis. Establish your presence, consistently and broadly, on multiple websites, particularly in places frequented by potential clients. Think of your marketing efforts literally as providing a valuable service to your prospects: Content Marketing. Brand building and site visits in this early stage often plant the seeds for end sales.

Give away information — both on-site and off-site — without requiring searchers' contact information. Give just enough useful information to position your company as the leading expert in your field, while incenting the searcher to return to your website — at stage 2 — for even more compelling information.

The average person receives more than 7,000 advertising impressions per day — and they don't want more! Keep it simple knowing your searcher will be averse to giving out their contact information at this stage.

Your Corporate Blog: Be a Thought Leader

A corporate blog provides an opportunity for you to establish expertise outside the scope of your main website. Your corporate blog can focus on a meaningful list of topics all designed to position you as a thought leader and trendsetter of your industry.

The more valuable your content is, the more inspiration you'll provide to visitors to return to your blog — and your corporate site — on a regular basis to see what's new, and to discover information to help them do their job better. A great source of content is to reutilize existing content. A simple example is to take an existing article or White Paper and cut it up into several blog posts.

Fresh content is also key to improving search engine rankings. The more often you update and add content, the better you'll do with search engines — and prospects. The content should be aligned with your SEO strategy targeting keywords that prospects are using to find your products and services.

Guest Articles: Third Party Validation

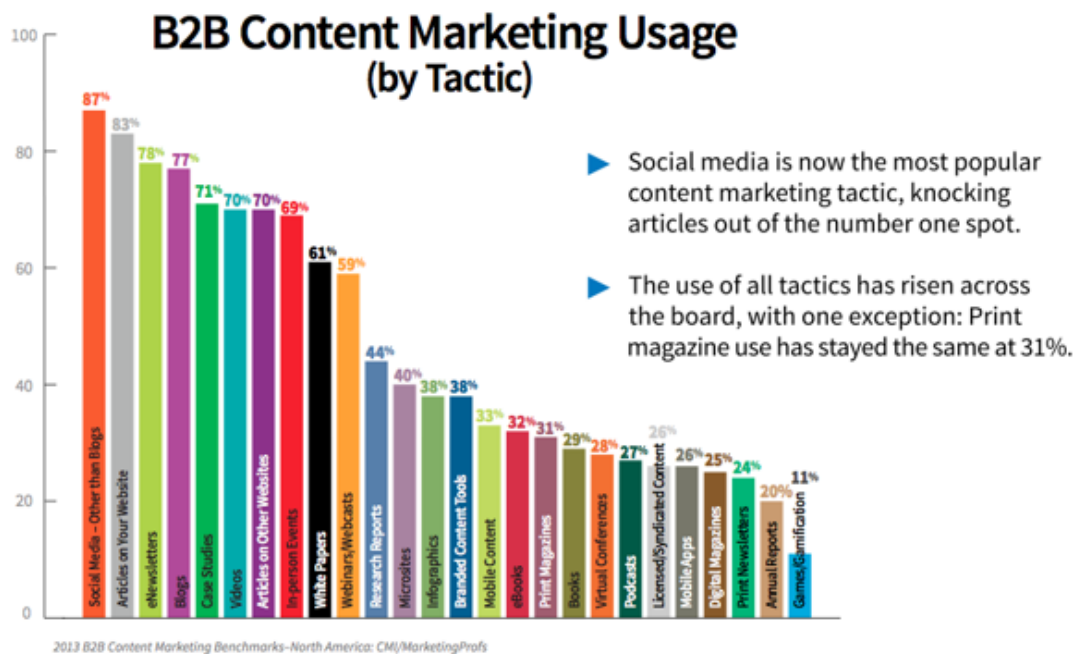
Consider publishing articles written about your industry by experts in your field, rather than your staff. Offer content that's similar to that on your corporate website or blog, but host the articles off-site to create third-party credibility for your product or service. Ideally, your guest articles should be hosted on authoritative sites that link back to your site — which helps improve SEO rankings.

News Release: Brand Presence

The news release is one of the most effective ways to drive brand awareness and thought leadership. Your news release can announce almost anything about your company including a new product launch, an award your company has won, events you attend or speak at, and new industry experts you've added to your staff.

Your news release will be distributed across the web, increase your SEO rankings, and provide journalists and analysts with information about your company. It shows perspective buyers you're vibrant, engaged, and an expert in your industry, making you a serious contender for their business.

Track your results to see what's working and where to make improvements to better reach your target audience — and make the sale!



Social Media: More Than Just Friends

In the past, marketing was brand-to-consumer, but today it's increasingly peer-to-peer. People want social proof, meaning they want to hear from their peers about why they should, or shouldn't, buy a particular brand. In the last 12 months, use of social media by B2B companies has increased an average of 20%.

Position your company as an influencer with an intelligent, professional strategy for social media to influence your rankings among search engines. Each platform has a unique value proposition, so don't treat them all the same.

LinkedIn

The foremost social media platform for B2Bers is LinkedIn. With more than 500 million members as of April 2017, it is being called the world's largest professional network. Make sure your company is capitalizing on this audience by being present. Share ideas, post links to blogs and articles, join LinkedIn groups frequented by customers and potential prospects (or create one of your own), and promote your business.

On LinkedIn, focus on posting in groups frequented by potential customers rather than your industry.

Facebook

Over one billion users log into Facebook daily, 2.1 billion people use it overall. Personally, and socially, Facebook is a regular staple for many people. While advertising in Facebook has increased, including demographic targeting, a million-dollar B2B purchase is unlikely.

Twitter

B2B marketers should think of Twitter as a headline generator. Your goal should be to publish compelling, intriguing headlines that drive visitors to your website to read your content. Using Twitter in an informed, professional manner will help build the value of your brand.

Stage 2: Research

Stage 2: Research & Information Gathering

Discover who you are engaging and meet them there
In Stage 2, Research and Information Gathering, you'll offer more valuable content in exchange for a prospect's contact information – gaining quality leads. The more compelling the information you provide, the more likely prospects will offer their contact information to you.

Content: Be More Compelling

Your potential customers need a solution, and they're seeking information on what to look for, and what to avoid, in a product or service. During Stage 2, you should provide more detailed and more valuable information to your potential customers such as a White Paper solving a specific issue, a webcast featuring your staff expert, or a customer case study demonstrating a client's challenge and success.

Information Gathering

It's essential that you ask for as much information as necessary to move the prospect to the next stage, but as little as possible to ensure the prospect feels he/she has the time needed to complete the form. Studies show that asking for less information, such as only name and email address, leads to higher conversion rates and therefore increased leads. The key to web marketing is building trust, so live up to your promise, and provide an asset filled with unique, valuable, expert information.

Landing Pages

Once your prospect has come to your website they need to be directed to specific sales-focused landing pages. Every landing page should have a conspicuous and specific call to action. Know what you want your visitor to do next, and escalate them to the next level of engagement. Landing pages should be tested on a regular and iterative basis to continually improve results.

When a visitor gets to your landing page they must instantly know:

- Where they are—your company and what you do is instantly identified
- What they are supposed to do—click-here, call, fill out form, etc.
- Why they should do it (what's in it for them)—what will they get or learn

The more compelling the information you provide, the more likely prospects will offer their contact information to you.

Stage 2 Marketing Tools

White Paper

Invest time and resources to create a useful guide that solves a common problem your customers have. Act as if you're publishing a book, aspiring to create something so valuable that you could charge money for it – but you give it away in exchange for contact information.

Make your White Paper easy to read and include graphics, peer insights, comments and quotes, as well as a clear, and repeated, call to action. Make sure you deliver a quality product: your free download will reflect the quality of your brand and your product.

Case Study

Case Studies should provide information on generalities and best practices. Rather than pitching your brand, explain one of your client's problems and how you best solved it using facts, data, and quotes. Remember, the visitor is still in the research phase, so if your case study is a heavy-handed sales pitch for your brand, the value is lost and the potential customer will move on.

Webcast

In the Research stage, the great value of Webcast is that potential clients can ask and receive expert answers that will help with their research. It's essential that a) your presenters are industry experts, and b) the Webcast is interactive and allows plenty of opportunity to ask questions. An authority who is knowledgeable, eloquent, and who cheerfully provides expert answers will go a long way toward building trust and a personal connection to your brand.

Knowledge Center

Knowledge Centers are powerful tools for creating stickiness on your website. Boost traffic, and SEO with tips, tutorials, best practices, and more. The more visitors you have, and the longer their average site visit, the more likely you'll convert them to leads. Use videos, such as those on YouTube, to increase engagement. Informational videos are low-cost and easy to produce, and could give you a powerful marketing advantage.

With nearly 5 billion videos being accessed every day, it's clear people are hungry for this medium.

e-News

Publish a regular news email to be delivered on a subscription basis to both prospects and customers. By publishing tips and advice on topics in which you are the expert that matter to the readers, your company gains followers and a reputation as a thought leader. Make your e-News more successful through:

- Tracking open and click through rates over time
- Using short, dynamic, attention-grabbing subject lines
- A/B testing subject lines for higher open rates
- Giving reasons for readers to go to your website (such as more info)
- Offering a clear call to action
- Learning through continual testing

Stage 3: Nurturing & Marketing Automation

At this stage your prospects, in general, fall into one of two categories:

- Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL)
- Sales Qualified Leads (SQL)



MQL's are higher up in the funnel and not ready to buy; SQL's are further down the funnel showing more inclination to buy. Since this paper is focused on marketing, not sales, we will focus on MQL's.

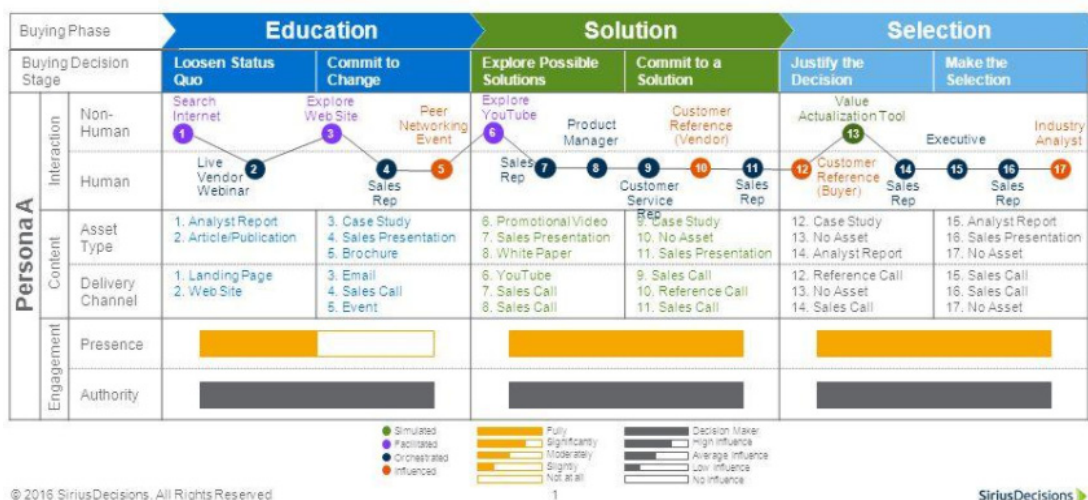
MQL's need to be nurtured, meaning they need continual engagement with a systematic, relevant and meaningful cadence to move them down the funnel to become SQL's.

According to Marketo, companies who excel at lead nurturing generate 50% more sales ready leads at a 33% lower cost. And, nurtured leads make 47% larger purchases than non-nurtured leads based on a study by the Annuitas Group.

Studies show most prospects need 30-90 touches before they make a buying decision.

To achieve this cadence typically requires a Marketing Automation tool to manage this complex and lengthy process. Today's prospects and customers need responsive engagement that is relevant to their persona, and timely with what stage of the funnel they are in. Marketing automation and lead nurturing focuses on your prospect to keep them engaged and moving through the funnel to become customers.

The SiriusDecisions Buyer's Journey Map Framework: Sample Data



During Stage 3, via your Marketing Automation tool, you need to provide fresh, relevant and meaningful content to guide a buyer to a final decision to purchase your product. You should provide content that helps to close a deal by answering all questions and removing all ambiguity, and competitors, from the equation, leaving your company, products, and services as the sole contender.

Bottom line: Nurturing Leads Pays Off

Stage 3 Marketing Tools

Display Advertising

Reach prospects in your sales funnel across the web via programmatic media buys. Buying display media for lead nurture allows you to reach specific customers on sites in which they are most likely to engage. These buys are highly targeted, optimized for ideal engagement, and since it requires no pre-negotiation, allows for flexibility of your media budget to scale where you see success.

With dynamic ad creation and automatic list syncs from your marketing automation platform, the ad messaging and audience targeting can update in real-time to serve the most relevant message, to the right user, at the right time.

This results in highly efficient media dollars, an engaged prospect, and smart alignment with your other lead nurture efforts.

Social Media

Ad targeting on social media networks is robust and makes for another effective way to reach your prospects. Like programmatic media buys, most marketing automation tools can automatically sync with social media platforms to upload your lead nurture audiences. With the ability to target the right users and know exactly where they are in the sales funnel, messaging can be optimized to drive the highest level of engagement and move the prospect further down the funnel.

Your marketing automation tool should bi-directionally sync with various media platforms, allowing you to optimize the ideal ad cadence and messaging to find the right combination of platforms in order to drive maximized sales.

Paid Search Advertising

Just because the prospect is in the sales funnel does not mean they are done researching. Consider the buying phase they are in and the kinds of questions or information they may be seeking. Utilize the knowledge your Sales team brings to the table and ask them the frequent questions, concerns, and feedback they get from prospects in the sales funnel. Then, ensure you are bidding on those terms and serving ads.

For further granularity, upload your prospect list into AdWords and target this audience via Remarketing Lists for Search Ads (RLSA) for prime use of your marketing dollars.

Email Communication

With your marketing automation tool able to easily segment your audience, email targeting and messaging can be incredibly precise. Constant testing of messaging, the regularity of email sends, and pairing with other digital efforts, will ensure the best use of this tactic to move prospects down the funnel. As with all segmentation, it is important that your data is clean, business rules are agreed upon and accurate, and results are properly credited where they are due.

Sales Outreach

Sales outreach allows you to introduce your company to the prospective client in a non-threatening way. Top ways to implement this are: audits, product demos, and free trials. Sales Outreach tools allow you to meet your prospects and better understand their unique challenges.

Audit

Complimentary audits performed to analyze a prospect's problem or challenge. If a prospect can see your team in action, what you offer, and understand what it will be like working with you, then the business may be yours. Make sure you are highly responsive during this phase, as prospects are likely requesting audits from your competitors as well.

Deliver with a few 'teaser' techniques on how to solve each — may land you the deal.

Product Demo

Offer free product demos to ensure your prospects have a grasp on what you offer. Demos allow you to meet your prospects in person, understand their unique challenges, and answer all remaining product and company questions. You'll also better understand where your prospects are in the decision-making process and how near they are to closing the deal.

Free Trial

Although not applicable to all products and services, free product trials can help automatically create a sale. A thirty-day free trial can convince a buyer to convert into a paid subscription with a monthly or yearly contract. Using the product allows them to experience the features and benefits you've been touting. Also, if the customer starts a project or enters data as part of the free trial, they are most likely hooked and do not want to re-enter the data, or start the project again, on a competitor's product.

Stage 4: Purchase

Congratulations, the prospect purchased your product! Don't pat yourself on the back for too long, as the real work has just begun. First, you'll want to ensure you retain your new customer. Second, customer retention provides increased opportunities to continue to sell additional products and services to your customer.

Stage 4 Marketing Tools

Many of the assets we've explored can be useful in staying front and center with your clients. These include, but are not limited to, e-News, events, in-person meetings, monthly reports, and social media.

e-News

Segmented lists are important now in your e-Newsletter in order to maintain relevance and engagement. Deliver the most important information and call-to-action based on the buyer's needs and opportunities for upsell, cross-sell, and cross-promotion. You can also include a summary of current events at your company, such as a list of events, new customers, new employees, and more.

Events

Invite your customers to meet you at industry events — provide complimentary passes as an incentive. It's a great way to catch up, gain social traction, and discuss topics key to your customers' success. If you have the right fit, you can even ask key customers to co-present at important industry conferences.

Social Media Posting

Continue your company's social media strategy to influence your rankings among search engines, and to ensure your customers know you are active. Make sure you're connected with your customers on LinkedIn, share articles and blog posts often, and keep your account profiles up to date.

Digital Advertising

Use advertising and communication methods such as social media and display advertising to offer upsell opportunities, to keep brand awareness front and center, and to build relationships with clients and prospective clients. Use review sites to foster your good reputation and generate more leads.

Stay front and center to create more opportunities

For most (B2B) marketers, understanding the long sales cycle is essential to business success.

Final Thoughts

At every stage of the buyer's search, your company must be present, offering quality content tailored to each stage of the sales cycle. Understanding the cycle, nurturing your leads, and maintaining customer relationships are the keys to success — and the secret to generating more profitable B2B leads.



SMARTSEARCH
marketing

ABOUT SMARTSEARCH MARKETING



SmartSearch Marketing is a full-funnel digital marketing agency. We help B2B companies generate qualified leads and accelerate leads through the sales funnel, increasing revenue and improving marketing ROI.

Our comprehensive digital marketing solutions integrate the following services:

- Strategic planning
- SEO/SEM
- Paid media optimization
- Content marketing
- Usability & conversion improvement
- Landing page development & testing
- ABM implementation & management
- Marketing analytics
- Performance dashboards
- Marketing automation
- Lead nurture & sales acceleration

YOU'LL FIND ADDITIONAL B2B DIGITAL MARKETING RESOURCES
AND INFORMATION AT
www.smartsearchmarketing.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Dale Hursh

SmartSearch Marketing

dale@smartsearchmarketing.com

866-644-3134 x 703