SevenAtoms

Attract Leads. Grow Your Business

ACCELERATE SALES-QUALIFIED LEAD GENERATION

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INTRODUCTION

Through years of working on client campaigns, we've identified a recurring problem. Perhaps this sounds familiar: You've managed to generate a lot of leads but most of them are either low quality leads or top of the funnel leads that are not ready to buy just yet. You're wondering what you can do to target leads closer to the bottom of the funnel, those who are more ready to make a purchase decision.

In this eBook, we provide you with actionable strategies that will help your business generate more sales-qualified leads (SQLs). We share insights on optimizing your website to target SQLs, setting up paid campaigns to attract more SQLs, and creating email campaigns that convert early stage leads into sales opportunities.

MQL vs. SQL

The first step to generating more SQLs for your business is to understand the difference between them and *marketing* qualified leads (MQLs).

An **MQL** is a prospect that has engaged or shown some level of interest that signals to your marketing team that they are a genuine lead that should be nurtured.

An **SQL** is a lead that has been deemed qualified by your marketing team and is ready to be handed over to your sales team for more aggressive engagement.

Your marketing and sales teams need to develop an agreed-upon set of qualities that they can use to determine which category newly generated leads belong to. Keep in mind, though, that your definitions of MQL and SQL may vary from those of other businesses, and that's perfectly ok.

It's important that the parameters you choose to define an MQL aren't too narrow or you'll be stuck with your marketing team being unable to deliver enough leads to sales.

When determining the criteria for categorizing each type of lead, you might consider the following factors:

Website Behaviors

Your marketing and sales teams might choose to categorize leads as MQLs or SQLs based on the number of times they've visited your website or product pages, or the length of time they stayed. Other categorizing behaviors can include specific actions taken while on your site, or whether the lead has liked your website on social media.

Lead Source

Have you found that leads generated from one source tend to be more valuable than those generated from others? For example, you might find that leads generated from downloading a specific white paper or coming from a PPC campaign are more inclined to become customers. You can use lead source to differentiate an SQL from an MQL.

In the following chapters, we'll show you strategies your business can use to start generating more SQLs and grow its bottom line.

From Keyword To Customer:

GENERATING MORE SQL'S USING KEYWORD TARGETING

Your prospects typically find solutions by typing keywords into search engines, and they'll find your company only if you rank highly for those specific keywords. To attract more SQLs, you should reassess the keywords you are targeting on your website.

We recommend implementing the following keyword targeting strategies to help your business get found online by more sales-ready leads.

Target "Bottom Of The Funnel" (BOFU) Keywords

Many of our clients have struggled with generating SQLs because they were targeting too many "Top Of The Funnel" (TOFU) keywords, which are high level, informational and non-specific.

But consider this: only a lead who is in the early stages of researching a product or solution uses such general keywords in their online searches, simply because they aren't yet educated enough about what they're looking for.

Did you know that 75% of users never scroll past the first page of results? It's critical to rank highly in search engines, and ensuring that you're targeting the right keywords is the way to start.

The keyword buying funnel typically has 5 stages as depicted in the figure below. To target BOFU keywords, you have to focus on the bottom two stages.

Say, for example, that a lead is searching for a solution that protects their website from common cyber attacks such as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS).

Because they're only at the start of their buyer's journey and aren't aware about cyber security, the lead may use general search terms, such as "Website Security" or "Cyber Security Companies" to start with.

Only after they research the topic and become more informed will they begin to search for product, industry and service-specific keywords, such as "DDoS Protection Service", or something even more focused like "Cloud DDoS Protection Service". Using such highly targeted keywords in their online searches is a signal that a lead has done their research, determined a solution, and is ready to buy.

Through the **Google Keyword Planner**, you can enter a search term and receive recommended keywords that you can add to your own campaign. For example, if you search for "DDoS Protection", the tool will provide other suggestions based on that keyword. It will also list monthly search volume and competition for each keyword. The best keywords are those that have higher volumes and lower competition.

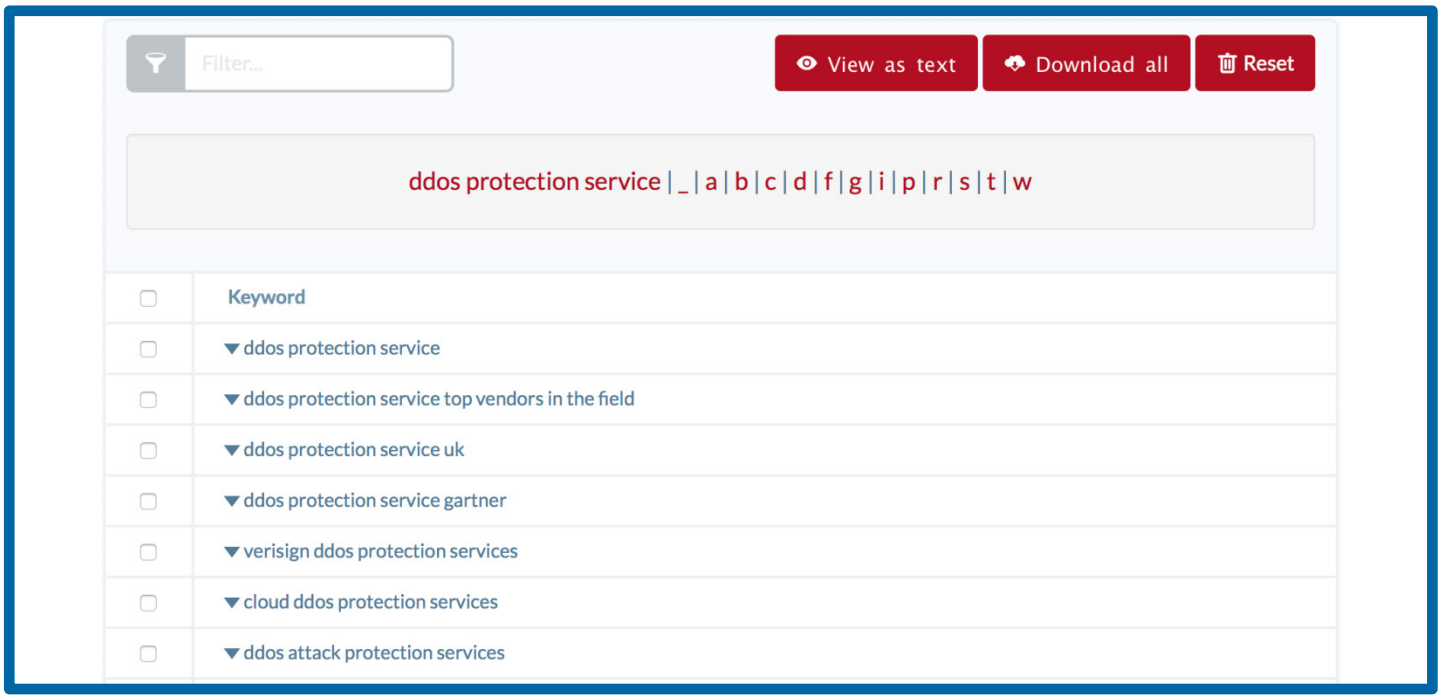
Using these types of BOFU keywords on your website and blog will help you rank more highly in search results, and will attract more SQLs.

Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Add to plan
ddos attack protection	70	High	»
ddos protection service	50	High	»
anti ddos protection	1,300	Medium	»
best ddos protection	110	High	»
vps ddos protection	30	High	»
server ddos protection	20	High	»
minecraft ddos protection	50	Medium	»
cloud ddos protection	30	High	»

Target Long-Tail Keywords

"Long-tail" keywords refer to searches that are typically four or more words in length. A lead searching for a long-tail keyword is being a lot more specific in describing the information they're looking for, meaning they've already done their research and are a better quality lead. Targeting these types of keywords can turn out to be a gold mine for your business as it is easier to rank highly for them in search engines because of lower competition.

In addition to the Google Keyword Planner, you can find long-tail keywords using UberSuggest. This tool uses Google's auto suggest data to identify all related long-tail opportunities. You can export these keywords and upload them to the Keyword Planner to get monthly traffic volume and competition data which will help you select the best keywords to target.



Attract ‘Em With Ads:

USING LINKEDIN AND GOOGLE PAID ADVERTISING TO GENERATE SQL’S

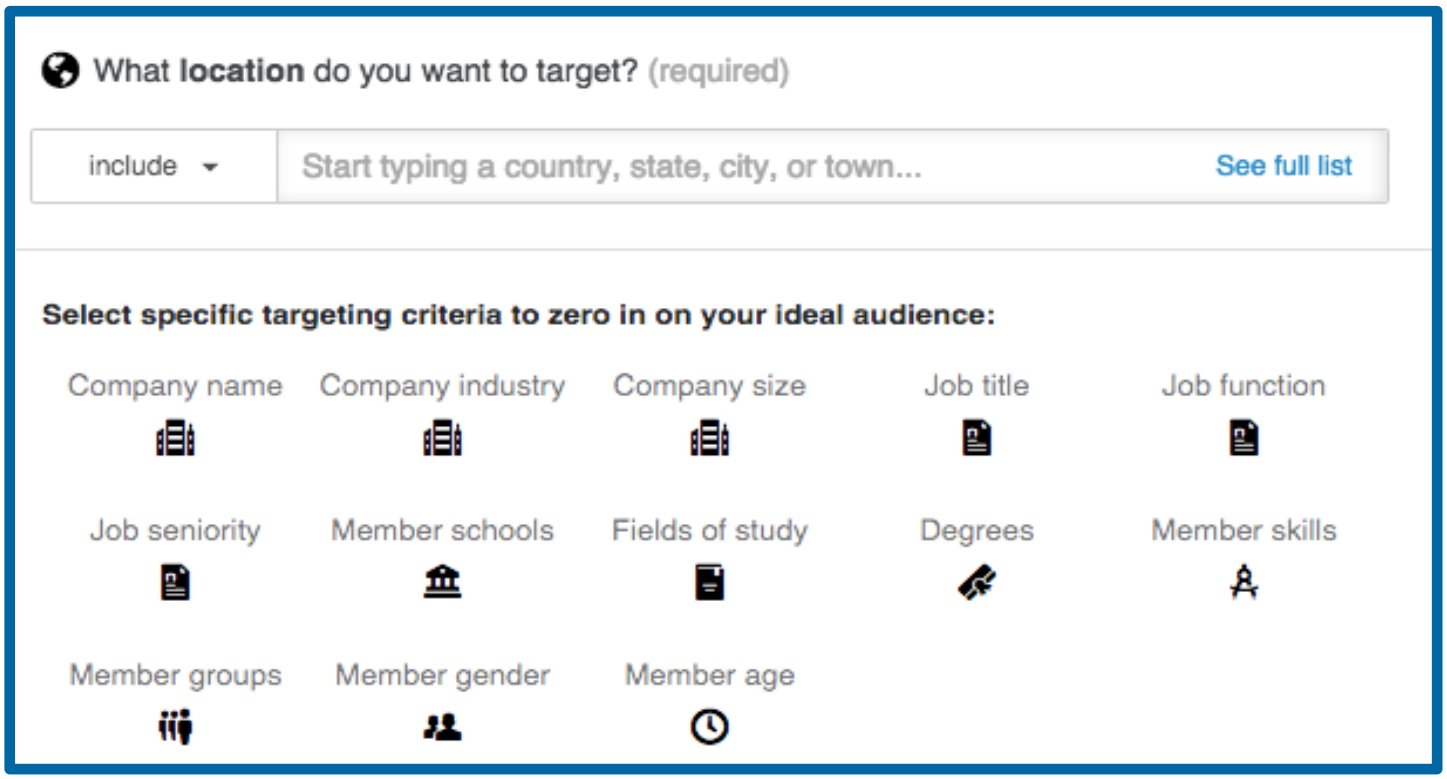
Paid advertising is another effective channel through which you can reach new sales-ready prospects. LinkedIn and Google are two proven advertising solutions for B2B companies. Advertising through Google AdWords allows you to target the 71% of B2B customers who start their purchase process by typing in a search term, while LinkedIn is the strongest social media channel for B2B lead generation. Below, we share strategies you can incorporate into your LinkedIn and Google paid advertising campaigns to start attracting sales-ready leads for your products and services.

Use Comprehensive Targeting Features to Reach Prospects

Oftentimes, ads may generate fewer qualified leads simply because they're not reaching the right audience. But with the targeting features available in both the LinkedIn and Google AdWords platforms, you can determine the exact users who you want to put your ads in front of based on the criteria that defines an SQL for your business.

When creating an AdWords campaign, the best option to target SQLs is through a search campaign based on keywords. The BOFU keywords we discussed in the previous chapter are equally applicable here as well. This can provide a nice 1-2 punch allowing you to reach your prospects through ads, if you're not able to get a high enough ranking in organic search results.

Through LinkedIn, you can target users based on the **professional criteria** that defines them as an SQL, such as job function, company size, and associated groups. This is especially useful for B2B companies. For example, a cyber security company could target IT Managers and Directors at medium to large size enterprises in their target industries.



Provide BOFU-Specific Offer or Content

Once you've defined your targeting, you'll need to come up with enticing offers. Use your ads to promote valuable offers that your target audience can't pass up.

In our experience, leads have been most receptive to the following types of offers:

- Free trial/evaluation
- Request demo
- Request assessment/consultation
- Product comparison guide
- Case study

These BOFU offers will appeal to more sales-ready leads who are looking for additional information before solidifying a purchase.

Create Conversion Optimized Landing Pages

Once you've grabbed your audience's attention with a compelling offer, the best way to convert them is to link your ads to tailored landing pages. To make sure your landing pages are consistently driving results, create yours with these conversion optimization tips in mind:

- **Customize Your Landing Page Content:** It's important to tailor your landing page content to whatever offer you're promoting, and especially to ensure that there is consistency between your landing page and ad copy.

- **Use Dynamic Headlines:** Make headlines—and possibly subheadings—at the top of your landing pages dynamic, so they can change based on the associated keyword and ad copy.
- **Don't Overlook Design:** Create a visually appealing, professional layout for your landing pages, and limit navigational elements. Make your call-to-action (CTA) stand out by using a color that contrasts with the rest of your page.
- **Include Social Proof Elements:** Who wants to give away personal information on a webpage they don't trust? Help prospects feel more secure about your brand and your offer by featuring elements of social proof, such as testimonials, security badges, expert reviews and industry awards.
- **Commit to A/B Testing:** Use A/B testing tools to test and optimize your landing pages regularly. Experiment with different types of offers to determine which ones are producing the best quality leads. Focus on testing the most important features: headlines, CTAs, offers, number of form fields and image usage.

Did you know that adding a video to your landing page can increase conversions by 86%? Including a video on your landing page provides you the opportunity to share a story or present and offer in a fun and engaging way.

Nurture MQLs into SQLs
THROUGH EMAIL MARKETING

Many B2B companies have an abundance of MQLs, but aren't able to generate enough sales. These types of leads need that final push to convert them into SQLs and ultimately, customers. It's important to nurture these leads by providing educational content that aligns with their needs, all the while keeping your brand in front of them until they are ready to seal the deal.

Lead Nurturing Strategies for Turning MQLs into SQLs

Lead nurturing emails are designed to guide MQLs down the marketing funnel and turn them into SQLs through a series of time-delayed emails featuring relevant pieces of content or other offers. But because not every MQL has the same needs and pain points, you need to create different sets of emails to pique their interest. This is why it's necessary to segment your MQLs into buckets and create a customized series of content offers tailored to their needs.

Did you know that companies that excel at lead nurturing generate 50% more sales ready leads at 33% lower cost?

Develop Buyer Personas for Better Segmentation

To successfully segment your MQLs, create buyer personas to sort leads into various buckets. Buyer personas are semi-fictional representations of your ideal customer based on the real-world insight you have. Each persona features demographics, behavior patterns, motivations, and goals to help you and your team better understand the type of customer you're targeting through your marketing efforts.

PERSONA NAME: 1	Sample Sally	SECTION 1: WHO?
BACKGROUND Job? Career path? Family? 2	• Head of Human Resources • Worked at the same company for 10 years; worked her way up from HR Associate • Married with 2 children (10 and 8)	
DEMOGRAPHICS Male or female? Age? Income? Location? 3	• Skews female • Age 30-45 • Dual HH Income: $140,000 • Suburban	
IDENTIFIERS Demeanor? Communication preferences? 4	• Calm demeanor • Probably has an assistant screening calls • Asks to receive collateral mailed/printed	

Building your email lists around buyer personas will help you address the needs and pain points of each type of customer. You can then email them a unique series of offers and content that will drive them deeper into the funnel.

Create a Customized Lead Nurturing Campaign For Each List

After segmenting your MQLs into email lists, you need to create customized campaigns for each list that include a series of tailored lead nurturing emails. This will help ensure that each segment receives the content they need to help them ultimately make the best decision for their needs.

Marketing automation is the backbone of lead nurturing campaigns. By building out workflows, you can automate such tasks as identifying the appropriate buyer persona of a contact, segmenting new contacts into email lists, and sending tailored content to specific lists across pre-determined time intervals. Workflows save you time and resources, as well as a major headache.

Use Your Email Content to Educate Your Audience

While MQLs are in their buyer's journey, their needs and goals will always vary—but the high-level details of each lead nurturing campaign should remain the same. Start by sending out Top of the Funnel (TOFU) content that educates your audience on topics that are relevant to them, then send out Middle of the Funnel (MOFU) content that informs your audience about how your product or service can address their needs. Finally, send your MQLs Bottom Of The Funnel (BOFU) content and offers that will help convert them into SQLs.

The types of content you may choose to feature in your emails at each stage can include:

- **TOFU:** Blog posts, checklists, eBooks and guides
- **MOFU:** Case studies, specification sheets and webinars
- **BOFU:** Free trials, product demos and consultation requests

Once leads reach SQL status based on your pre-defined criteria, your workflow should trigger an email to sales. The email should include a link to the lead's activity history if your marketing software supports this. The sales person can then have a detailed profile on the prospect before they make that first phone call.

CONCLUSION

Generating more sales-ready leads is a common challenge B2B companies face. You can drive better results by reassessing your current targeting strategy and making adjustments to your campaigns based on our recommendations. If you'd like additional assistance generating SQLs for your business, give us a call at 415.513.0435 to setup a free consultation.

GET FREE CONSULTATION

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