THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

LEAD QUALIFICATION

4 WAYS TO AUTOMATE LEAD QUALIFICATION

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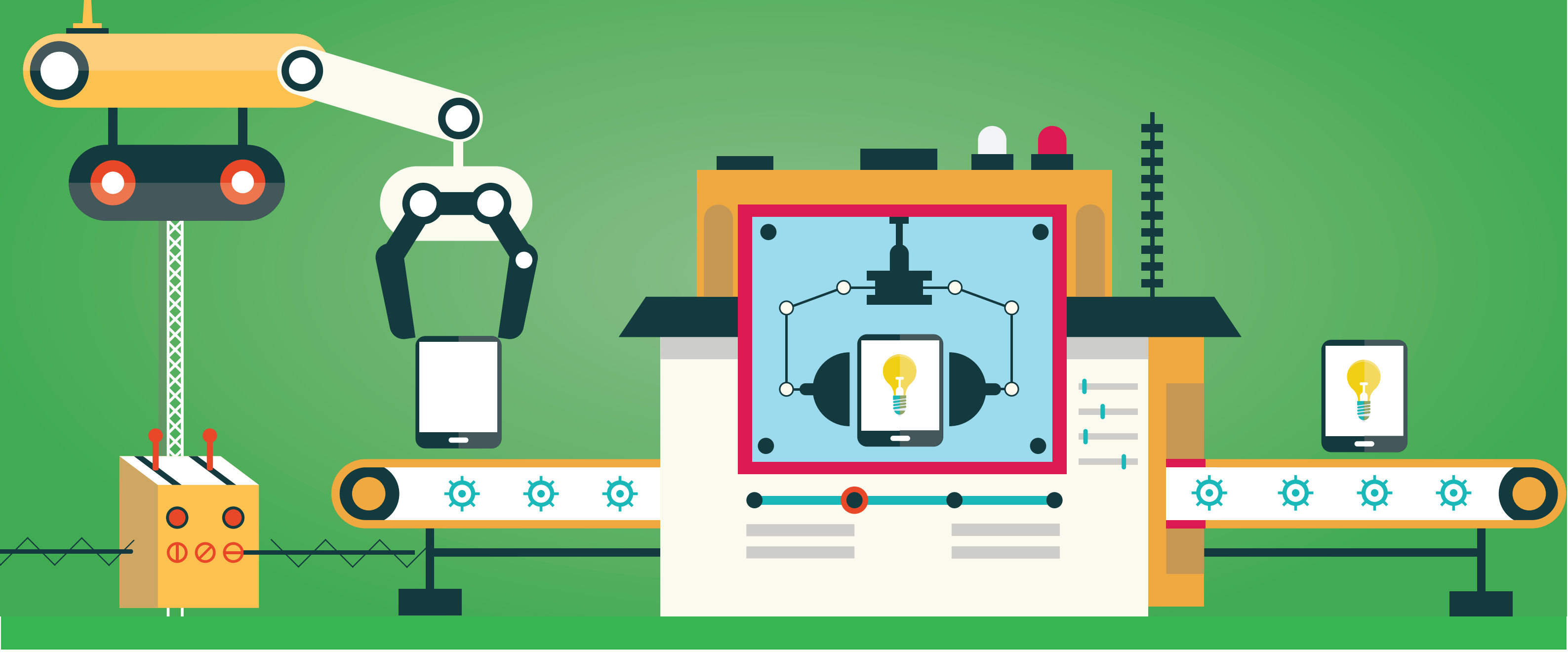
INTRO

In a time where there are over 300 apps to help you find leads, everyone is excited about new prospects, but the discussion of qualifying is typically left untouched. On average only 50% of marketing qualified leads (MQLs) are actually qualified to buy. So, how do you know which leads are qualified so you don't waste your time on the others? The best answer is that you can automate the process and in minutes have every single prospect confirm their level of interest in your offering.

In this guide we will take you through a best-in-class marketing and sales automation practice, so that your sales reps can get back to the most profitable area for a company, **closing.**



MARKETING AUTOMATION

Using Marketing Automation to qualify leads is one of the most commonly used lead qualification tactics; however, most sales and marketing professionals fail to capitalize on the following automation features in their lead qualification efforts.

1. PREDICTIVE LEAD SCORING FOR ACCURATE, AUTOMATED QUALIFICATION

Traditional lead scoring tactics have long been used by sales and marketing professionals to gauge the value of leads based on a number of factors, such as industry and company size. Leads would receive a certain score or point value based on the selected factors, with the important factors being more heavily weighted than the lesser important factors. For example, if a lead comes from a targeted industry it may receive 10 points, while a lead from a non-targeted industry only receives 2 points. As these points accumulate into a lead score, sales reps and marketers can then focus their efforts on converting the highest scoring leads, as they are theoretically the most likely to make a purchase.

Predictive lead scoring; however, takes lead scoring to a whole new level by using algorithms to automatically predict how valuable a lead is. Unlike traditional lead scoring, where marketers must dictate which properties are most important and then assign a score to them, predictive lead scoring looks at the composition of your current customers and then predicts how valuable that lead is based on its likelihood of turning into a customer. This takes the guesswork out of lead scoring.

Most marketing automation programs (like HubSpot, Marketo, or Eloqua) have lead scoring tools built into their platforms, and some even incorporate predictive lead scoring. When built right into a marketing platform, the predictive lead scores of your leads are constantly updated based on the customers within your database. This means that the algorithm automatically updates your leads' predictive lead scores with the addition of each new customer, ensuring that your team is constantly scoring and working only the most qualified leads in your database.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Traditional lead scoring is labor-intensive and hard to master, often taking teams many hours to properly plan and execute within their database. In many cases, marketers anecdotally assign properties and points, without actually diving into the data. This can lead to misinformed initiatives and efforts placed on leads that aren't actually qualified.

Predictive lead scoring not only completely mitigates the risks and removes the resource needs associated with traditional lead scoring, but it also ensures that the score given to leads are based on actual customer data. This means less effort is placed on identifying qualified leads, and more resources can be placed on converting leads to customers.

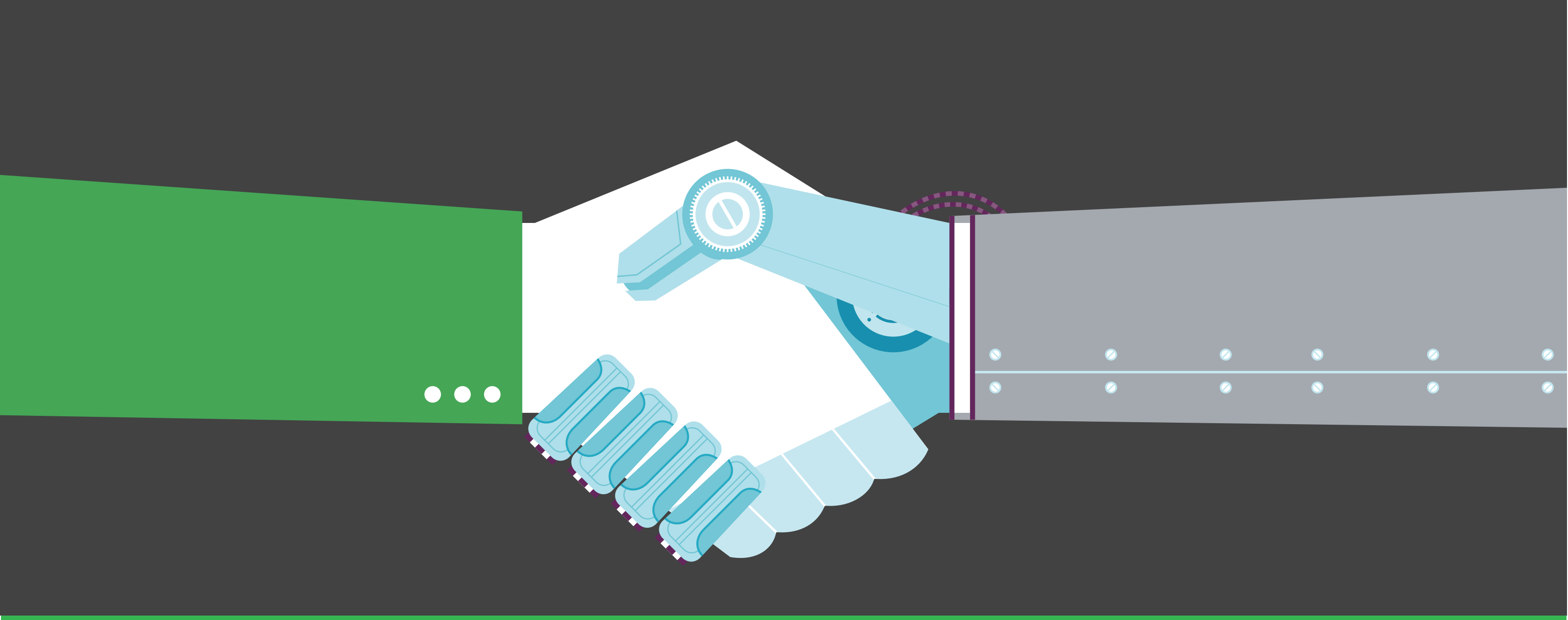
2. AUTOMATED LEAD NURTURING EMAILS THAT QUALIFY LEADS FOR YOU

When a lead opts-in to receive your marketing communications (newsletters, blog subscriptions, product updates, etc.) you are granted permission to send them targeted information related to their subscription preference. Marketing Automation helps you execute said communications, usually in the form of a "workflow." The purpose of these workflows is to nurture leads through the various stages of their buying journey, from Awareness to Consideration to Decision. Nurturing workflows can seemingly go on forever unless the lead unsubscribes, the marketer removes the lead, or the lead is passed to sales.

Unfortunately, marketing professionals generally have a narrow view of lead qualification as it pertains to nurturing workflows: If a lead responds or converts, you consider that lead qualified - or - if a lead does not respond or convert, you consider that lead disqualified. These views may be true in some cases, but there is more lead qualification value hidden within the specific actions a lead takes within the nurturing efforts. Has a lead opened and clicked through each email, but has yet to respond or convert? This lead could potentially be qualified based on their engagement with the email (despite not converting) and may benefit by being passed to a sales rep.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Lead nurturing emails are an effective means of qualifying leads, even if they don't "raise their hand" via a direct response or conversion. By using lead scoring in conjunction with your lead nurturing efforts you can help identify leads that are qualified based on their engagement with your nurturing emails. Work to construct a nurturing workflow that converts leads into MQLs and ultimately SQLs, and use lead scoring tactics to qualify those leads who don't directly convert.



SALES AUTOMATION

Sales automation has to do with the application of software tools to the process of organizing and streamlining the sales function. The availability, usefulness and feature sets of these tools have evolved at a dizzying rate. In the days of the spreadsheet, we were bound to manual entry and maintenance of our prospects' data. It was difficult to extract meaning from this environment and cumbersome to look at from different viewpoints such as lead score, recent engagement and forecasting based on opportunity densities within the sales funnel. Things are different now.

3. LEAD RESEARCH TACTICS THAT DON'T WASTE TIME

The most important thing you can do as a salesperson is to make sure you are talking to the right person. Leads that arrive in your pipeline may or may not actually be worth following up on and there is nothing worse than spending too much time with someone who is in no position to actually make a purchase from you. Sales is a numbers game so the better you are at filtering out the wrong people, the greater your chances are of closing deals expediently.

Reviewing the prospect's website before reaching out to them has long been a powerful tactic. Take the time to confirm that your lead might be worth talking to. Go to the company website and verify they are in the correct discipline and at an adequate level (title) by looking at the leadership profiles under the **'About Us'**

page. Sometimes it is possible to find contact information that you don't already have. Certainly it should be possible to locate the company phone number on the site which can then be used as a way to pre-qualify the company itself. A good way to find out something about the health of the company is to take a look at the website's **careers page** to see if they are hiring. This likely indicates a stage of growth, therefore inferring the availability of capital. While this is not an automated approach, the method is easy, low-hanging fruit and deserves honorable mention.

Search for them on LinkedIn and then look for connections that you have in common. Call your closest connections to research the person further in order to: 1) Decide if they are worth talking to 2) Prepare for a discussion from an informed position and 3) Get a warm introduction if the lead is really an opportunity

LinkedIn includes an excellent advanced search function that allows you to automatically search for potential leads by location, company, industry and more. Additional search parameters can be included for premium level users. Also note that you have the ability to reach out to leads that are within your network using the LinkedIn messaging tool even though you do not have their email address.

Use Sidekick - When installed on your email dashboard, Sidekick will let you know when emails that you have sent are opened by the addressee. The tool is an excellent resource for researching your contacts because in addition to giving you the ability to see when your emails are opened and links clicked on in real-time, it can also automatically provide company information based on the email domain of your contact's address through the Sidekick 'Prospects' feature.

Information provided by Prospects helps the salesperson understand more about the individual, their company, and even identifies similar contacts to research. Additional information can include industry definition, company size, revenue, HQ location, when the company was founded and a listing of similar companies. It is also possible to build email templates for sales automation and to time email sequences to specific prospects.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Remember, in spite of the fact that someone is interested in your product or service, it doesn't necessarily mean they are actually ready to buy, or will ever be ready to buy. Be sure to leverage the right tools in order to conduct as deep an analysis as you can before reaching out to a lead. Turn the odds closer to being in your favor.

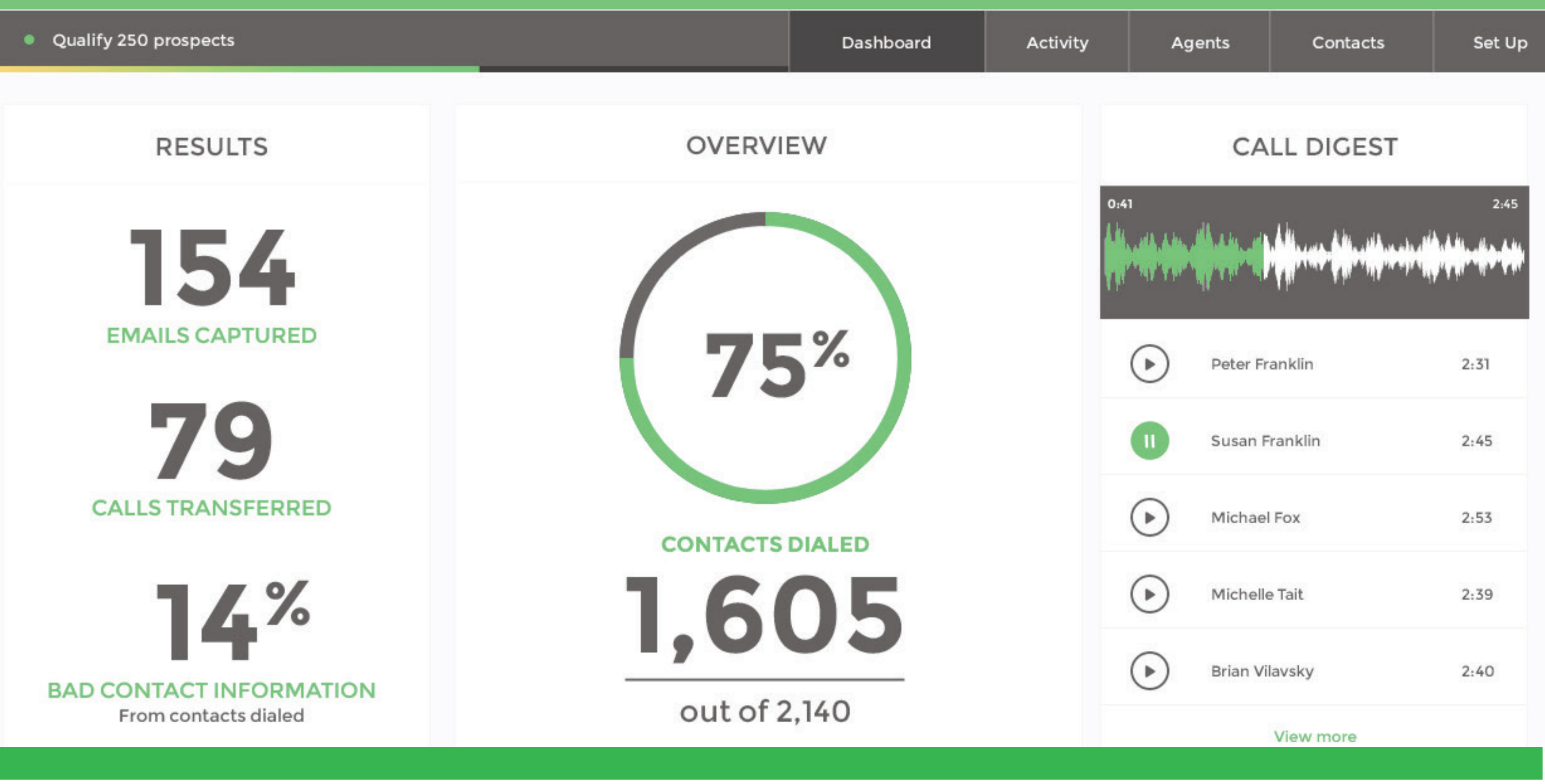
4. CONFIRMING INTEREST THROUGH CALL QUALIFICATION

Confirming interest is key after the CRM data has done its work behind the scenes. When their lead score is high enough and they have been nurtured by workflows, it's time for the human aspect of qualification. Luckily for you, it's no longer necessary for sales reps to make these qualification calls. With innovations like VOIQ, the on-demand sales call service, the time consuming calling and qualification can be expertly outsourced to call agents who can confirm interest of thousands of prospects in minutes and may even be within a few miles of who they're calling.

Call qualification is the act of reaching out to interested leads and finding out if they're a good fit for your product or service. While many leads may convert on your website, if they don't meet the following criteria for what you're selling, they will not be a qualified lead:

1. Price Point (do they have the budget?)
2. Time frame (is this an immediate need?)
3. Decision maker or influencer (are you talking to the right person?)

Until you know these things, sales reps may be wasting time selling to the wrong person at the wrong time, with the wrong budget. Making the quick call to confirm these points is likely the most undiscussed and important aspect of lead qualification. Here is a breakdown of the process:



Setting up a call qualification campaign:

1. Compile your list of leads
2. Create a script, FAQs, and the questions you will need answered to qualify a lead
3. Create a campaign on VOIQ with the above information
4. Record yourself with the script so call agents can understand the tone and pronunciations

After you've done this, the trusted call agents can execute the campaign and free up your employees time by:

1. Distributing your call list based on geographic location and any other identifying factors you have
2. QA the calls as they're being made
3. Transfer qualified leads or schedule a follow up call with your sales agents

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

In automating and outsourcing lead qualification, your sales reps can focus completely on closing qualified business. Benefits of this include: higher revenue (more time spent with qualified business), less sales rep attrition (giving them more opportunities to close), stronger data (automation allows for streamlined data).

> "Once you have a strong sales funnel and lead set, automating the qualification process provides your business with a very powerful advantage over the competition."
>
> -Ricardo Garcia-Amaya, VOIQ Founder & CEO

Now that you know how to qualify your leads, let VOIQ help you with Call Qualification by helping generate and qualify thousands of new leads, scaling the number of your outbound calls, and launching campaigns in minutes with no contracts or minimums.

Get Started With Your First Call Campaign Today

REQUEST A DEMO