

How Modern Marketers  
Develop New Customers

# Lead Generation

101

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Chapter 1: Building a Lead Generation Base	5
Chapter 2: Top Lead Generation Techniques	10
Chapter 3: Using Email for Lead Nurturing	13
Chapter 4: Aligning Marketing and Sales	18
Chapter 5: System Integration	21

# INTRODUCTION

The simple truth is that every business needs new customers to grow. What's less clear is exactly how businesses obtain those new customers. In the digital age, marketing is expected to shoulder more of this responsibility.

This makes sense because marketing boasts wider reach and greater influence than ever before. But for marketing to have a meaningful impact on the bottom line, there must be a strategy in place to transform digital window shoppers into paying customers.

That process is called lead generation. This ebook will explain how your business can use this strategy to develop processes that draw in new customers, foster their interest in your product or service, and connect them to your sales team when the time is right.



# What, Exactly, Is Lead Generation?

Lead generation refers to the ongoing business goal of identifying potential customers who marketing can steer toward becoming full-fledged buyers. This term also encompasses a range of strategies that apply to different mediums, such as social media, website design, email marketing, and so on.

For example, a content strategy focused on lead generation will develop assets that your audience finds valuable, then offer those assets in exchange for contact information.

This may seem simplistic, but it's important to understand the difference between this strategy and a brand awareness strategy. A brand awareness strategy strives to spread ungated content as far and wide as possible in order to promote your brand.

In contrast, lead generation builds a database of potential customers who have expressed an interest in your product or service. The database is built through contact information your audience gives you in exchange for particularly rare or valuable content.

Building a healthy contact database is the foundation of obtaining new customers because marketers can then distinguish good opportunities from poor opportunities and send the best leads to sales.

That's lead generation in a nutshell: building a database of contacts and then guiding those leads through the buying process until they're ready to talk to your sales team and make a purchase.

This strategy makes up the cornerstone of how modern marketers generate new customers. In fact, lead generation is so important that [85 percent](#) of B2B marketers cite it as their most important goal with content marketing.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of this guide examines how marketers can build a process that consistently produces new leads.

# CHAPTER 1

# BUILDING A LEAD GENERATION BASE

## Define Personas

In order to create an effective marketing strategy, businesses need to understand who their customers are. Not only are not all customer the same, but they're also not all different. While that may sound like a paradox or Chinese proverb, the truth of the matter is this: As unique as each customer may be, you can probably find enough similarities between each person to create at least three groups of consumers.

According to a study done by the ITSMA, buyer personas are most effective when used in four sectors of personalized marketing:

- ▶ Email nurture tracks (85%)
- ▶ Newsletters and alerts (60%)
- ▶ The online ads buyers see (47%)
- ▶ Website pages and content (43%)

Why is this important?

Because people who opt to use your product have varying skills and expectations, thus they will have a different amount of experience to back up their knowledge of how they can and should use your product.

Customizing your approach will enhance your customer-brand relationship.

# What should a customer persona contain?

In order to create a profile, you must define what customer information is important to your business. Every industry and brand will have different sets of skills or expectations they might assign or need from their customer. Some things to look at when you're creating customer frameworks are:

- ▶ **Background:** Age, lifestyle, and habits will enable you to understand what their work day and thought process are like. Ask yourself the basic questions: Who are they? Are they male or female? How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do? How much do they earn? Are they single, married, or married with kids?
- ▶ **Education and career info:** Would your client be ok with a very technical approach or will they feel at ease with a "beginner" tone of voice?
- ▶ **Identifiers:** Work hours, availability, and tech preferences change from person to person. Someone who works with a team will prefer a tool that allows them to delegate, while a person who works alone might need both a set of tools within your product and a team that is always on call.
- ▶ **Goals and aspirations:** What does this customer need to achieve using your product? Furthermore, what can your product or service do to help this person get closer to achieving their goal?
- ▶ **Challenges and issues:** What obstacles in their work and experiences with your platform might the customer encounter?

And dig deeper: What problems do they solve? What keeps them up at night? What frustrates them the most? What have they tried in the past that didn't work? Who is their enemy? Who do they admire? What are their values that they would never compromise on? What are they looking for? What does their dream solution look like?

Creating one persona to encapsulate all that info might seem like a lot, but knowing where your customer picked up certain industry habits, what their daily work looks like, what they need to achieve, and how they wished they could get from point A to point Z gives you a mission-critical look into their minds.

The more information you collect the easier it will be to create content that is attractive to your target customers. Once you know all of the above, you're able to think like them. This gives you the ability to create a product, ad, or content piece that resonates with them, which makes your efforts more effective and in turn increases your ROI.



## Gathering persona information

ITSMA's study about why it's worth knowing your buyer personas also researched the tactics used to gather persona information:

- ▶ Discussion with sales (88%)
- ▶ Secondary research (69%)
- ▶ Qualitative research with customers (59%)
- ▶ Data from your CRM database (51%)
- ▶ Quantitative surveys of customers (40%)

In your research, include both satisfied customers and those who canceled their account for some reason. Why are canceled accounts important? Because their opinion will give you an insight into what went wrong, what was not intuitive, or what caused a hiccup on the road to their success.



# Capture Your Target Audience's Information

Once you prepare your target personas, you will know exactly where to find the right people. Think of all the possible places you can meet your potential customers and invite them to subscribe to your newsletter. Try out different channels and incorporate the most efficient into your marketing strategy.

If your potential customers are avid social media users, pick their favorite channels and reach out — social media has proven to be an extremely effective way to reach a precisely targeted audience. Use search engine advertising to redirect users to a landing page with a subscription form.

Stay active offline: collect email addresses in-store - ask customers for their email address at the end of their purchase or invite people to sign-up at events and conferences.

Here are a few other techniques you might find effective:

- ▶ **Add sign-up forms to your website.** Since it's free to subscribe, those who are hesitant to spend money may be willing to sign up, which gives you the opportunity to convert subscribers into paying customers.
- ▶ **Include sign-up with an account registration.** If you offer a members-only area (paid or free), add a checkbox on the registration for to opt-in to your mailing list.
- ▶ **Use ads to drive traffic.** Think about activities or topics your target clients enjoy then choose the appropriate keywords to attract leads.
- ▶ **Run a social media contest.** People who already follow your business are perfect targets. By offering a chance for a discount or prize, you increase the likelihood that they will buy from you later.
- ▶ **Start a referral program.** Your valuable service, combined with an enticing incentive, can inspire users to refer friends to your list, leading to rapid list growth. People tend to trust the services their friends tell them about.

The most important thing is to monitor all your lead generation efforts and choose the most effective techniques for your business.



# Qualify Leads

Before you can begin nurturing your new leads and moving them closer to becoming customers, you must first define what your ideal lead looks like.

- ▶ What are their key characteristics?
- ▶ What are the main pain points you can address?
- ▶ Where do you go to find these people?

Answering these questions is the first step when defining a qualified lead, which is someone who meets the criteria of both marketing and sales — and has expressed buying intent.

Sales will have a lot of insight on who qualifies as a lead, but you should also go straight to the source when defining what makes a qualified lead. Talk to your current customers and ask what they found valuable about your company. These direct quotes will be important mile markers for identifying qualified leads early in their buying journey.

If qualified leads sound a lot like personas, it's because they are.

A qualified lead will almost always match one of the frameworks you've developed for your ideal customer. However, just because a lead matches your persona doesn't mean they're qualified. Lead qualification also means they've taken a series of actions to indicate they're interested in your product.

Again, the series of actions a lead takes to become qualified should be agreed upon with sales, because it's sales who will reach out and attempt to convert the lead into a customer. If marketing sends sales a bunch of bad leads, then there will be tension between the two departments and few new customers will be gained. (Don't worry — we'll cover how to align marketing and sales in another chapter.)

The easiest way to determine how to qualify leads is to use your email marketing software and website analytics to determine which actions best indicate buying intent. For example, if someone looks at the pricing page on your website, it's reasonable to assume they're interested in learning more about your product. This lead could be very close to being qualified.

# CHAPTER 2

# TOP LEAD GENERATION TECHNIQUES

Have you ever wondered why email marketing brings such high ROI and why so many companies consider it their top online marketing channel?

Well, it's simply because email marketing is designed to generate leads. First, you have the double opt-in process, which means that only the people who are really interested in your offer subscribe to your newsletter. Second, you can carefully segment your list and engage your audience through thoroughly personalized messages.

In fact, you can plan your subscription process in detail and gradually turn your subscribers into satisfied customers/brand ambassadors eagerly leaving positive reviews and spreading the good word about your business.

Now you know what makes email marketing so effective. But do you know what to do in order to unlock its potential? We have selected a few tips that will help you get the most of your email marketing.

## Triggered Emails

To personalize your campaigns, be sure to build triggered emails into your email programs. These emails should be prompted by behavior that indicates buying intent. For example, when someone clicks through on an email that contained a case study or customer testimonial, it's a smart move to build a trigger email that follows up the next day with more information about your product.

Triggered emails are the cornerstone of personalized marketing and lead nurturing, which is why 87 percent of consumers buy more from retailers who excel at personalization.<sup>3</sup> Building trigger emails means you're creating marketing that actually adjusts to the way your audience behaves.

# Evergreen Content

Whether it's an annual buyer's guide or a series of in-depth how-to's, you need to develop some premier content and gate it behind a form. This type of media is critical to lead generation, because it invites your audience to exchange their information for your content, thereby helping you build and refine your database.

At its best, this type of media is referred to as evergreen content because the value of the media remains for a substantial amount of time. If you choose your topics carefully, then you should be able to write an updated version of the long form content every year.

According to content marketing expert Pam Neely, the first thing to do is to choose the right topic for your lead magnet. Get that right, and half the battle is won. There are three essential questions you have to answer to choose a topic for your lead magnet.

1. What topics do your ideal customers or clients want to know about?
2. What topics would be easiest for you to create a lead magnet about?
3. What content format would be the best way to deliver that information?

Pam also provides 10 proven lead magnet ideas:

1. Video course that can be accessed all at once.
2. Video course delivered via autoresponder, say for 10 days.
3. Infographic so useful they'll want to stick on their refrigerator or office wall.
4. Calendar (like a CEO to-do list calendar).
5. Gear list (e.g., Top 5 Content Marketing Tools for Your Business)
6. Checklist, cheat sheets, flowcharts, or process charts that explain how to do something that needs to be done more than once.
7. A how-to ebook in PDF format.
8. Half hour consultation. This one is excellent for coaches or consultants.
9. Coupon (if you're a retailer or a local business, this is for you). Coupons can be for 10 percent off, for free shipping, for a free cup of coffee... you get the idea.
10. Free tickets to a special event (best for local businesses).

Evergreen content is how you break through the wall of noise created by the 88 percent of marketers who are also using media as a form of marketing. Whether you outsource the project to a professional writer or simply spend extra time creating the piece yourself, you simply must invest in excellent long-form content to differentiate your brand and drive form signups to build your database.

# Co-Marketing

Evergreen content is an excellent way to build your lead database; triggered emails and nurture programs are an effective method for converting leads into customers. But what about queuing up opportunities at the very top of your marketing funnel?

That's where co-marketing comes in. It can be difficult to build an audience when you're just beginning your lead generation program. One of the best methods for expediting the growth of your database is to partner with an organization that appeals to your ideal customers without actually competing with your business.

Once you've drawn up a short list of potential partners, it's time to add value. Do you have expertise that their audience would appreciate? Can you address a certain topic from a new perspective? Keep these angles in mind when crafting your pitch to potential partners, because you'll need to bring something to the table to make the deal worthwhile for both parties.



# CHAPTER 3

# USING EMAIL

# FOR LEAD NURTURING

But how do you get leads to look at your pricing page?

That's the job of your lead nurturing programs. These programs are a series of touchpoints between you and your audience. Each touchpoint encourages leads to learn more about your business by supplying them with content that addresses their most pressing questions.

Without a doubt, email is the best medium for lead nurturing. For example, McKinsey and Company found that email is roughly [40 times more effective](#) for gaining customers than Twitter and Facebook.

Email is so effective because the medium is inherently personalized. The inbox was designed to be a one to one experience through which people communicate. The key to developing a rapport with your audience and moving leads through the sales funnel is sustained email engagement.

Specifically, this means designing nurture programs or autoresponder campaigns that supply a steady stream of content. Content that educates and engages leads in order to position your brand as a reliable information source — and, ultimately, establish trust.

For example, if a prospect signs up for your newsletter or downloads a guide you've created, then they've signaled that they're interested in your content, not necessarily in your product. It's unlikely they are ready to make a purchase.

By developing email programs that gradually build on that initial interest, you can then measure engagement to calculate the right time to ask for the sale. By slowly moving from general content about a range of topics to content that addresses your product or service, you transform a casual passerby into an interested, qualified lead.



## The Email Marketing Funnel

Email marketing is one of the few channels that allow you to plan the communication with subscribers in detail. You can carefully segment your mailing list and address your audience's needs at each stage of the subscription process by sending them personalized messages.

In order to help you get a different perspective on the subscription process and to unlock the full potential of your email marketing communication, we have developed the email marketing funnel — a graphic representation of your subscriber's journey.

Use it as a canvas for preparing your own funnel in accordance with your business model and subscriber personas.



# EMAIL MARKETING

## - FUNNEL -



# Subscription Is a Journey

Effective email marketing is not a one-step process — you can't just ask people to sign up and start sending them promotional emails until they unsubscribe. Your subscription should be an adventure that starts with filling out a signup form and continues through different phases of building a relationship.

Provide your audience with valuable information, answer their questions and eventually help them make the purchase decision. Obviously, making a purchase is not the final destination. The journey goes on so you get a chance to retain delighted customers and turn them into brand advocates.

As far as the subscription process is concerned:

- ▶ Why should anyone subscribe?
- ▶ What's in it for the subscriber?
- ▶ How will you engage them in the communication?

Your personas will allow you to develop a successful email marketing strategy and craft content your subscribers will find truly engaging.

## Recognize Key Stages of Subscription

It's obvious that people who have just subscribed to your newsletter will have different needs than the long-time subscribers engaged in your email marketing communication for months. Take product familiarity as an example — it's hard to expect new subscribers to know a lot about your products or services. You should rather assume that they don't know much about it and expect some basic product education.

Your regular customers, on the other hand, know your products very well and they are not interested in the basics. They would rather get information about new features or useful content such as case studies, ebooks, or whitepapers.

Recognize individual stages of the subscription process, segment your email list, and send your subscribers personalized and valuable emails.

# Email Marketing Tips

## 1. Remember your business goals

Remember that the main role of an email marketing strategy is to help meet business goals. You need to know exactly where your business is headed and align the email marketing strategy accordingly.

Analyze your business and determine the following:

- ▶ Industry
- ▶ Business model
- ▶ Stage of growth
- ▶ Business goals

Every piece of information will have an impact on the structure of the email marketing funnel in your company. Always keep your business goals in mind when designing the customer journey.

## 2. Choose KPIs to monitor success

Successful email marketers are data-driven. They collect and analyze data to check if their campaigns produce desired results. But if you want to use data to make better decisions, you need to know what kind of information you are looking for.

An email marketing funnel will help you understand what to measure because the clear structure of a funnel helps with aligning proper KPIs to each segment. Use the email marketing funnel to determine the right key performance indicators – measurable values that demonstrate how effectively you achieve key objectives.

## Make your own email marketing funnel

Use the information from customer personas and adjust it to your business reality. Relationships with customers differ from company to company, so your subscriber's journey doesn't need to be as long as in the template. Analyze your business model, determine your business goals, and align your email marketing strategy accordingly.

Decide what you want to achieve and plan email marketing campaigns that will help you reach business goals. Avoid planning too many tasks – focus on the core activities without the risk of getting overwhelmed by too many things on your to-do list and compromising quality.

Take a look at your funnel and determine the right KPIs — decide whether it's the number of subscribers, click-through rate, number of downloads, or return on investment that you want to measure.

# CHAPTER 4

# ALIGNING MARKETING AND SALES

To yield a substantial ROI on lead generation, you'll need to align the work your marketing team is doing with how sales reaches out and converts leads into new customers.

This may appear simple, but oftentimes the processes and perspectives of the two parties can vary a great deal. Bridging this divide will help marketing send more qualified leads to sales — rather than just more leads — and it will help sales better allocate their time to only the best opportunities.

That's the beauty of this strategy: it both produces and qualifies opportunities for new business.

The rest of this guide addresses how to build the processes that will unite sales and marketing under shared goals and definitions regarding lead generation.

## Why Inquiries Are Different Than Leads and Why It Matters

The way consumers choose products has changed. Salespeople once enjoyed positions as trusted resources during the buying process. Now there are review sites, community forums, and a multitude of other resources that consumers use to inform their buying decisions.

Sales is now contacted later and later in the buying process. This means marketing must warm up potential customers to the idea of talking to a sales rep, thereby increasing the likelihood of a sale. If sales reaches out too soon, it will come off as aggressive and could ruin your relationship with that lead.

The timing must be just right.

That's why it's important to develop an understanding with sales about what the different stages of the buying cycle mean in terms of customer purchase intent. This requires developing a lead management process built around these stages and having both sales and marketing agree what the customer experience should be at each stage.

Here's a typical breakdown of sales stages:

## Inquiry / Pre-MQL

Inquiries are simply people who have interacted with your business in some form or fashion, whether in-person at a conference, online through a digital form, or even just on social media. They have yet to signal any purchase intent.

## Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL)

An MQL has performed a series of actions (downloading content about your product or service, registering for a webinar, passing through several email programs, etc.) that marketing deems worthy of a sales conversation. During the call, sales should ask both persona and lead qualification in the same interview to ensure each lead is a good fit.

## Sales Accepted Lead (SAL)

In the SAL stage, someone on the sales team, either a sales development representative or a full-fledged sales person, evaluates the behavior and demographics of each lead and decides whether to begin the sales process, reject the lead, or send it back to marketing for more nurturing.

## Sales Qualified Lead (SQL)

Once a lead is confirmed as a good opportunity, sales reps must then qualify the lead using Budget, Authority, Need, Timeline (BANT) criteria. These qualifications determine if a lead is truly ready to sign on the dotted line or if objections need to be overcome.

## Closed / Won Business

Sales then seals the deal and converts the lead into a customer. Revenue — for which marketing can take credit -- is attributed to the deal.

# The Importance of Lead Quality

Lead quality is the measure of how often leads from your contact database convert into paying customers. Rather than quantity, it is the quality of your leads that determines the success of your programs and how executive management will judge marketing's efforts.

Improving lead quality can mean tweaking a number of elements, like content topics, marketing of that content, and even the sales stages above. It also means ensuring all parties agree on what constitutes a good lead.

Typical criteria include:

- ▶ Personas
- ▶ Budget, Authority, Need, Timeline (BANT)
- ▶ Behavior Indicative of Purchase Intent

If your conversion rate from leads into opportunities isn't satisfactory, consider examining each of these tactics to see where the problem may lie. Perhaps your content isn't speaking to the correct persona or you're not partnering with the right organization to disseminate your marketing message.

If you don't have the right criteria in place to identify quality leads, it doesn't matter how many contact records you push to sales — your lead generation program will underperform.





# CHAPTER 5

# SYSTEM INTEGRATION

## CRM + Marketing Automation Benefits

While developing a shared language and a process that everyone agrees upon is important, your lead generation process won't truly be complete until you sync up the two systems that marketing and sales use.

That means integrating the customer relationship management (CRM) software that sales relies on with the marketing automation or email marketing platform in which marketing works.

Combining these two systems provides a practical link between the two departments, breaks down data silos, and makes it easier to develop context around how to market to leads.

Let's look at the main benefits:

### 1. Segmentation and Personalization

Marketers have multiple information sources from which to collect data on leads, but one underutilized source is the CRM system. Sales has spent a substantial amount of time building a database of their own, and marketing can use this data to better segment and personalize email campaigns.

The firmographic data like company size and job title is nice to have, but the most valuable bits of information are the outreach logs sales enters into the CRM. This behavioral information, like last touchpoint and lead objection, provide tremendous opportunities for creating personalized campaigns.

For example, once you know the last time sales reached out to each and every one of the leads in your database, you can create segments based on respective time range and deliver the appropriate content. Colder leads may need to be reintroduced to your brand while leads with a common objection would probably appreciate content that addresses that objection.

## 2. Closed Loop Analytics

Marketing isn't the only side to benefit from system integration. Depending on the capabilities of your email or marketing automation system, sales could have access to all of the behavioral data marketing is collecting on leads through the CRM.

With this data, sales can easily decide which pain points or interests need to be addressed when they reach out to a lead, which in turn will help them close more leads and ship more revenue.

But there are other benefits for all involved, specifically an increase in transparency and attribution for revenue delivered from lead generation. Known as closed loop reporting, the combination of CRM and marketing automation allows marketers to track the leads they deliver all the way to closed business.

The result is unparalleled access to how successful marketing programs truly are. Rather than simply measuring the number of leads delivered, marketing, sales, and the executive team can quickly ascertain precisely which programs delivered what amount of revenue and in what time.

As a testament to the power of closed loop analytics, SiriusDecisions found that companies with closed-loop processes achieved 2x higher revenue growth and 3x higher profit growth than businesses that lacked these processes.<sup>4</sup>

# Develop New Customers

Closed loop analytics represents the culmination of a lead generation program — a process where marketing and sales share revenue goals and have transparency into each other's process.

But the road there is long and winding. Most marketers should focus on developing sustainable methods for turning inquiries into MQLs, because although revenue attribution is the end goal, most departments are still focused on lead quantity.

Either way, lead generation — particularly in a B2B setting — is par for the course. The best companies are working on how to optimize their processes and the best marketers are spearheading these projects, because everyone needs new customers.



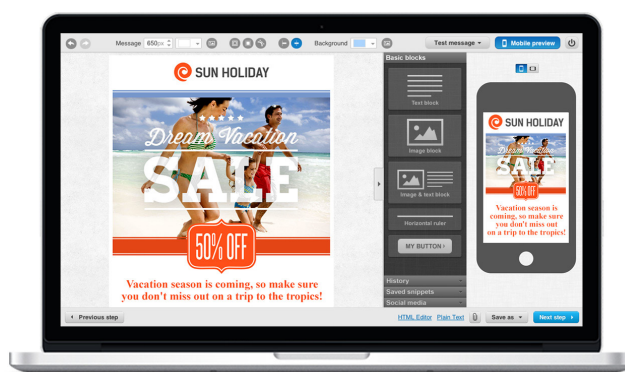
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