Demand More from Your Marketing

Demand Generation Through Marketing Automation

An e-paper for marketing decision-makers

This e-paper is designed to help you maximize your company's return on marketing investment (ROMI), to accelerate long buy cycles and to deliver real value tied directly to your company's business goals and objectives.

How? By outlining the seven essential elements of demand generation through marketing automation.

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Introduction

We work in an era where marketing is increasingly accountable, not just for outputs—brochures, websites, advertising, trade show booths and direct mailers—or even outgrowths—website visitors, Followers and Likes—but for outcomes. Results with a capital ROMI. To be successful in this environment, business-to-business marketers require a greater degree of predictability from the sales funnel. If not, we're doomed to go "down the rabbit hole" of uncertainty.

Speaking of uncertainty, consider the great sales maxim: No two leads are created equal. The challenge is to decide which lead is ready to buy, or is at least more ready than the other. Demand generation via marketing automation is about selling when the prospect is ready to buy versus when you're ready to sell. It enables the sales team to spend their time on the lead who's ready to buy now while a strategic seed, feed and weed program is carried out—automatically—on the rest of the leads.

There are seven essential elements of Demand Generation:

1. Alignment of Sales and Marketing
2. Development of Personas
3. Understanding Buying Cycles
4. Nurturing Paths and Lead Scoring
5. Content (Re)Creation
6. Marketing Automation Technology
7. Partnering

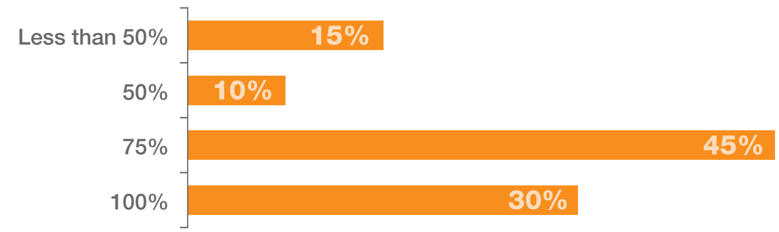
"Sales, Meet Marketing. Marketing, Meet Sales."

In the past, there has been much mistrust and many misgivings between marketing and sales. Sales says, "You don't provide me with good leads." Marketing says, "You don't act on the ones I give you."

If it sounds familiar, you're not alone. Results from Pipitone Group's 2013 survey on The State of Marketing and Sales Alignment show that 70% of organizations have fewer than half of their marketing leads closed by sales.

The broken system of poor communication and misaligned objectives further divides two departments that should ultimately work in tandem to produce improved business results. As such, the first essential element in demand generation through marketing automation is a sales and marketing sit-down.

Marketing Leads Closed by Sales



Topics at this sit-down should cover messaging of both the company and individual products: Are they accurate and are the right attributes being promoted? There should also be a discussion and universal definition of terms. What marketing considers a lead may only be a prospect to sales. Understanding and using the same terminology will help as you increase both volume to the marketing/sales funnel as well as velocity. And finally, a well-defined agreement between marketing and sales as to what will be delivered when, how it will be acted on and how the two groups—together—will monitor and measure mutual success.

What's critical is that this dialog should not be viewed as a one-and-done meeting, but as an ongoing collaborative process between your company's dual drivers of results. In doing so, you'll be in good company: 88% of best-performing companies have aligned their sales and marketing teams.[1] What can the results of such an alignment be?

- Better marketing support for sales
- Improved lead quality
- Shorter sales cycles
- Better lead management
- Improved marketing and sales ROI
- Brand and message management
- Enhanced buyer experience

1 Aberdeen Group, 2012

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Get Persona(l)

Marketers used to be satisfied with narrowing their target audiences by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, targeting companies of a certain size within certain industries, honing in on who they thought the decision-makers might be and blasting messages out to "them" with what they hoped would be an intriguing offer. But did we really know who "them" were.

What you need is a deeper understanding of these targets. What are the personas behind the audience you're trying to reach? You need to go beyond demographics and explore the psychographics of your target to help develop a model that will represent a group of individuals you're to reach and influence.

Persona elements and questions may include:

- What is their job title, level of seniority?
- What is "A day in the life" of their position like?
- What are their pain points? (What gives them night sweats?)
- What problems/challenges do you help them solve/overcome?
- What do they value most?
- What are their goals?
- Where do they get, or go to for, their information?
- What type of experience are they looking for when seeking out a product/ service like yours?
- What are the most common objections you've heard to your products/services from these personas?

Finally, does this persona play a supportive role or are they the final decision-maker? A nice litmus test to determine this is BANT, meaning do they have the Budget, the Authority and the Need to move forward on your offer and, most critical of all, what is their Timing?

Buying Cycles: Timing Is Everything

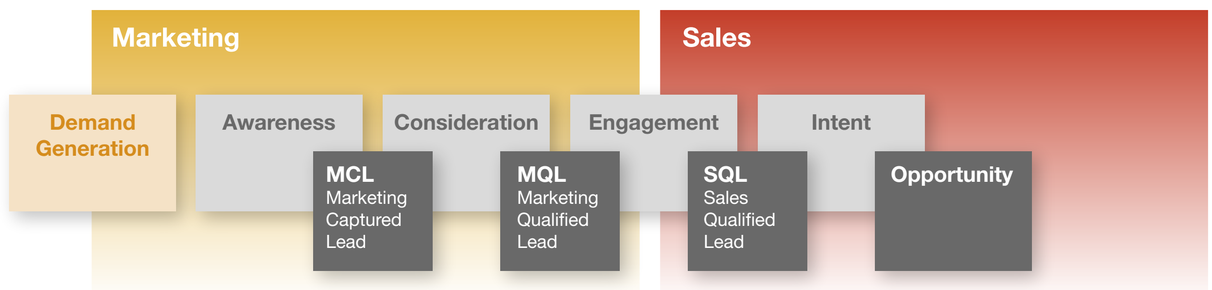
In terms of demand generation, an even more important question than "who" is your target, i.e., what is their persona, is the question of "where" is your target in the buying cycle?

Thanks to increased availability of information and the speed with which it can be acquired, the buying cycle is no longer linear, particularly the relatively long and multivariable buying cycles involved in the B2B space.

Prospects are rarely ready to engage with sales after their first electronic interaction.[2] And, back to our sales maxim, it's too costly to try to guess which one's ready after first blush. All the more reason to monitor these prospects and potential leads and keep them on a nurturing path (see next section) using automated marketing tools, keeping costs low and interest increasingly high.

When prospects are ready to engage, however, it's critical to know their timing so that when they are tossed over the fence to sales, the more high-touch effort is not being wasted on a prospect who is not ready to buy. Using lead scoring techniques (see next section), you can gauge the interest of each persona—awareness, consideration, intent, etc.—based on the kind of content you provide and they kind they consume, leading them along a nurturing path until they're ready to be turned over to sales.

Buying Cycle with Marketing & Sales Funnel Overlay



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2 The Pedowitz Group, 2012

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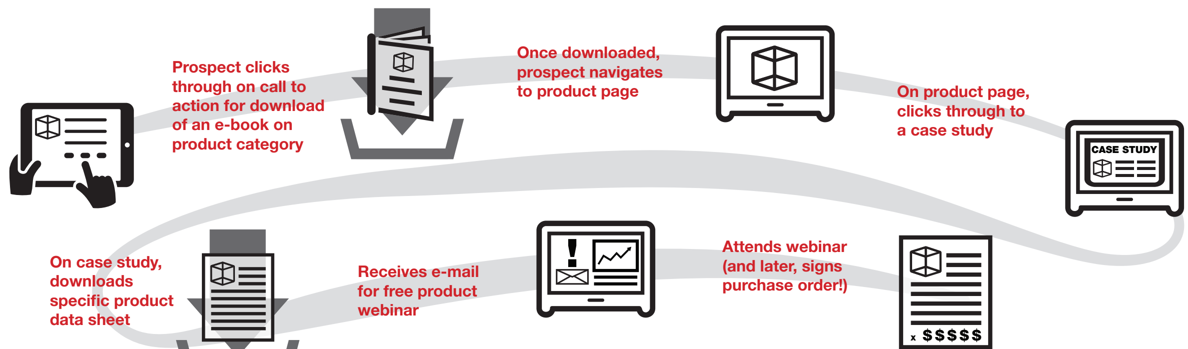
Don't Push. Nurture—and Score!

Developing a nurturing path is like leaving a trail of bread crumbs, but it's not so you can find your way back again—it's so the lead you're trying to capture will get to where you want him/her to go. Starting a nurturing path begins by mapping out how a lead would logically go through the buy cycle, from awareness to consideration and on to purchase, and setting goals for them along the way to do just that.

Here's an example of what a logical conversion pathway may look like if you're an architect looking for commercial building products. (Note: this assumes an integrated marketing and communications campaign to increase awareness at the top of the sales funnel):



The buy cycle is circuitous at best, particularly in the B2B space. There's a lot of information out there, many channels involved and long buy cycles—sometimes 18 months or more—and A LOT can happen in 18 months. Nurturing paths are not only designed to match up with the buy cycle, but also to plug holes in the sales funnel where a prospect may drop out. You'll know what pages the prospect visited and in which order; what e-mails they responded to and which ones they didn't; and which offers they converted on, and the ones they left alone.

From this behavior and data, you can tailor your nurturing path and use it as a basis for your lead scoring model. Lead scoring can be as complex or as simple as your personas and their buy cycles. Simply put, it's the practice of assigning a value to each of your leads based on the information they've provided and the behavior they've exhibited on your site. If they've each spent the same amount of time with the same content on your site, you wouldn't treat the Vice President of Purchasing the same as a Project Assistant, would you?

Lead scoring is essential so that sales works only the hottest—and most qualified—leads. Remember, if they're wasting their time on a lead who's not ready to buy, or doesn't have the authority, budget or need (BANT), they've not only NOT closed that sale, they've lost the one they could've been spending their valuable time on.

Content: Clear, Concise, Compelling

If your information falls in the forest and no one cares to hear it, was it worth creating at all? This slight departure on an age-old phrase is, nonetheless, spot on. There is so much information today that in order for it to have any impact it must have bearing from the point of view of the persona. You can shout out product features and benefits from the mountaintop all day long, but you won't get a response until you put it in context for your target audience—i.e., defining the problem it is going to help them solve today.

As is the case in financial matters, you need to make your content work for you, not the other way around. Start by first reviewing what content you already have at your disposal. After an audit of this type, many organizations are often astounded at the wealth of content they've created in only the last year or so.

This information can then be repurposed—or created new, if you don't have it already—according to three questions (two already raised, and the introduction of a third):

- What persona am I trying to reach?
- Where are they in the buying cycle?
- What format will best address the two categories above?

The answer to the third is the easiest. From white papers and case studies, to checklists and how-to guides, for every point along the buy cycle, and every one in between, there is a format that is best suited for every persona. And the way they consume and react to your content will help determine the next step on the nurturing path you've created for them.

Wherever there are gaps in existing content, new content must be created. Whether it's new or revised, there are three constants of content—call them the Three Cs: It must be clear, it must be concise, and it must be compelling.

Technology: A Tool

How are you going to distribute your content to your target audience and, more importantly, keep track of responses to it? Here is where marketing automation comes into play. While technology is a key consideration and a powerful tool, it is just that—a tool. And there are plenty out there. While there are many determining factors in choosing a marketing automation platform, including the size, scale and complexity of the persona's buying cycle, there are a few that are germane to any demand generation campaign:

- **Customization:** Getting a field name to switch in an e-mail is one thing, but customization of messages based on persona is another. If your technology can do that, from general awareness down to feet-on-the-street sales support material, then you've got something.
- **Integration:** Not just with your CRM system, but as an integrated campaign, including e-mail, social media, online advertising and other marketing/communications tactics.
- **Measurement/Reporting:** The whole point of marketing automation is to identify when that prospect is ready to become a lead and, at that moment, flip them over to sales. If you're technology can't provide top-notch activity tracking, measurement and evaluation of where the prospect is, then you need to look elsewhere.

Find a Partner

Even if this information makes sense to you in theory, we can tell you as practitioners: Demand generation through marketing automation is a very complex and often complicated undertaking. Don't worry, there is help out there. So, who can you get to help?

Here's a checklist of desired qualities, features and benefits you should look for when looking for a demand generation partner:

- Dedication — not only a dedicated team, but a team dedicated to demand generation through marketing automation
- Many disciplines, not just a boutique shop
- Ability to integrate these disciplines into comprehensive campaigns
- Access to expertise outside their organization (other partners)
- Understanding of the technology
- Strategic vision

Conclusion

As much as marketing has evolved—from traditional to lead generation to demand generation—the foundation of great marketing remains the same: Be strategic, know your audience, have a compelling message, then execute using the latest tools and technology, where appropriate, to get that message out as well as to measure your success. And when in doubt, call in an expert. As a marketing decision-maker, you have unprecedented ability to advance your company's business goals and objectives through your work. Shouldn't you demand more from your marketing? The C-Suite certainly does, and so should you.

About Pipitone Group

Pipitone Group is a marketing and communications firm that does great work with great people. How do we do it? We InteGREAT. Your people and our people. Brand building and business building. Marketing and sales. We develop multidisciplinary, integrated approaches—and then execute them flawlessly—to help clients achieve results. Demand generation through marketing automation is one of those approaches, and we call it Demand to Close.

About Demand to Close

Cars don't win races, drivers do. Just like marketing automation doesn't drive sales, the strategy behind it does. Our strategy, Demand to Close, is demand generation that uses marketing automation to simultaneously increase the volume, velocity and veracity of leads through your marketing/sales funnel while decreasing discrepancies between marketing investment and sales conversions. And the technology we use to implement these programs? You might say we're technology agnostic. Pipitone Group has allied itself with three of the leading marketing automation companies in the business, so whatever the complexity of the buying cycle for your product or service, we have a technology that will fit. But remember, technology's just a tool—we make it work!

Find out more about Demand to Close and demand more from your marketing at DemandToClose.com.

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