



An Introduction To Lead Generation

A starter's guide to converting website visitors into inbound leads for your business.

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Introduction

Attracting and converting strangers is a challenge for many companies in today's content-rich world.

Your audience no longer wants their attention bought -- they want it earned. This means lead generation strategies need to be revamped across the industry to better meet the needs of target markets.

The first step in this evolution is to create compelling content, and the second is to use that content to convert visitors into leads. Of course, this is easier said than done.

Before we go creating anything, let's get familiar with what lead generation is and the process involved. This guide will explain the entire lead generation process – from defining a lead to running offers.

First, let's start with explaining lead generation from the beginning.

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What is lead generation?

Lead generation is the process of attracting and converting strangers and prospects into someone who has indicated interest in your company's product or service. Some examples of lead generators are job applications, coupons, and online content.

You may be asking, what is a lead? A lead is a person who has in some way, shape, or form indicated interest in your company's product or service.

This means that instead of getting a random cold call from someone who purchased your contact information, you, the consumer, would hear from a business or organization with which you've already opened communication.

For example, perhaps you took an online survey to learn more about how to take care of your car. If you got an email from the auto company that hosted the survey on their website about how they could help you take care of your car, it'd be far less intrusive and irrelevant than if they'd just called you out of the blue with no knowledge of whether you even care about car maintenance.

From a business perspective, the information the auto company collected about you from your survey responses would help them personalize that opening communication to meet the existing needs of the potential client.

So really, lead generation is a win-win situation. **It benefits the customer and the marketer.**

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Why do you need lead generation?

Whenever someone outside the marketing world asks me what I do, I can't simply say, "I create content for lead generation." It'd be totally lost on them, and I'd get some really confused looks.

So instead I say, "I work on finding unique ways to attract people to my business."

I want to provide them with enough valuable information to get them naturally interested in my company so they eventually warm up to the brand enough to want to hear from us!"

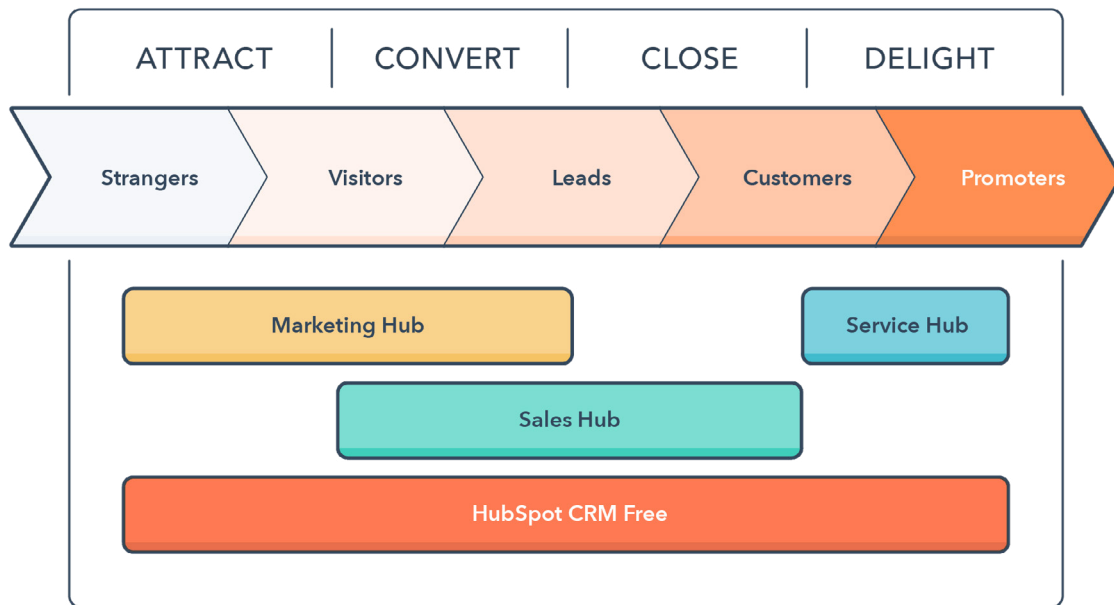
That usually resonates better, and that's exactly what lead generation is. It's a way of warming up potential customers to your business and getting them on the path to eventually buying.

By showing an organic interest in your business, they are starting the relationship (instead of the business starting the relationship with a cold call), making it easier and more natural for them to want to buy from you somewhere down the line.

Data from HubSpot discovered that only 16% of marketers say outbound practices provide the highest quality leads for sales.

Within the larger inbound marketing methodology, lead generation falls in the second stage. This methodology makes one concept clear: Consumers have all the power.

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Inbound Marketing Methodology

The graphic above represents a brief overview of the inbound marketing methodology and the HubSpot product that, when used together, help you grow with the entire inbound methodology.

Inbound marketing is focused on attracting customers through relevant and helpful content and adding value at every stage in your customer's buying journey.

With inbound marketing, potential customers find you through channels like blogs, search engines, and social media. Unlike outbound marketing, inbound marketing does not need to fight for potential customers attention. By creating content designed to address the problems and needs of your ideal customers, you attract qualified prospects and build trust and credibility for your business.

For a more in-depth explanation of inbound marketing, check out our in-depth guide here: www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing.

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Lead Qualification

As you now know, a lead is a person who has indicated interest in your company's product or service. Now let's talk about the ways in which someone can actually show that interest.

Essentially, a lead is generated through information collection. That information collection could come as the result of a job seeker showing interest in a position by completing an application for the job, a shopper sharing contact information in exchange for a coupon, or a person filling out a form to download an educational piece of content.

These are just a few of the many ways in which you could qualify someone as a lead. Each of these examples also highlights the fact that the amount of information you can collect to qualify someone as a lead, as well as the that person's level of interest in your company, can vary.

Let's assess each scenario:

- **Job Application:** Any individual filling out an application form is willing to share a lot of personal information because he/she wants to be considered for the position. Filling out that application shows their true interest in the job, therefore qualifying the person as a lead for the company's recruiting team.
- **Coupon:** Unlike the job application, you probably know very little about someone who has stumbled upon one of your online coupons. But if they find the coupon valuable enough, they may be willing to provide their name and email address in exchange for it. Although it's not a lot of information, it's enough for a business to know that someone has interest in their company.

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- **Content:** While the download of a coupon shows an individual has a direct interest in your product or service, content (like an educational ebook or webinar) does not. Therefore, in order to truly understand the nature of the person's interest in your business, you'll probably need to collect more information — you'll need enough information for a sales rep to actually understand whether the person is interested in your product or service, and whether they're a good fit.

These three general examples highlight how lead generation differs from company to company and from person to person. You'll need to collect enough information in order to gauge whether someone has a true, valid interest in your product or service, but knowing how much information is enough information will vary depending on your business.

Take a look at our example on the next page to see how this may apply in real life.

Example: Episerver

The screenshot shows a lead generation form on the Episerver website. The form is titled "What is Marketing Automation?" and includes a brief introduction to marketing automation. To the right of the text is a small image of a blue book titled "What is Marketing Automation?". Below the text is a "Get your copy" form with the following fields: Full name, Email, Company, No. of employees (dropdown), Role (dropdown), and Country (dropdown). There is a checkbox for "I would like to receive email marketing communications from Episerver." and a "Download now!" button. At the bottom, there is a small disclaimer: "I understand that I may withdraw consent at any time."

Let's look at [Episerver](#) for example. They use educational content for lead generation, collecting seven pieces of information from prospective leads.

As you can see, Episerver asks for:

1. **First name:** basic information needed for communication with the to-be lead.
2. **Last name:** basic information needed for communication with the to-be lead.
3. **Email:** The email address will allow your business to communicate with the to-be lead through your email marketing campaigns.
4. **Company name:** This will give you the ability to research what the business does and how the lead might benefit from your product or service (mainly for B2B).
5. **Job title:** Understanding an individual's role in the business will help you understand how to communicate with them. Every brand stakeholder will have a different take and perspective on your offering (mainly for B2B).
6. **Phone number:** A phone number will be used for your sales team to actually reach out to the lead and open conversations with him/her.
7. **Project timeframe:** Episerver ends with a specific question that will benefit their assessment of how to speak with the lead ([Used for lead scoring](#)).

That being said, it's important to realize that asking more questions like the one Episerver tacks on to the end of their form helps you generate more qualified leads. [You can learn more about qualified leads in this blog post.](#) For the purposes of this ebook, we'll stick to the basics of lead generation.

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The Mechanics Of Lead Generation

Now that you understand how the [inbound marketing methodology](#) works together with lead generation, let's review the four components of the lead generation process.

1. CTA's

A CTA is an image, button, or message that calls visitors to take some sort of action.



When a visitor has discovered your business through one of your marketing channels, whether that's your website, blog, or social media page, you'll need to use a CTA here to promote your campaign. When it comes to lead generation, this action is to navigate to your landing page.

2. Landing page

A landing page is a web page a visitor lands on for a distinct purpose. While a landing page can be used for various reasons, one of its most frequent uses is to capture leads through a form.

Your landing page will explain what the content is, why it's valuable and how the visitor can receive it.

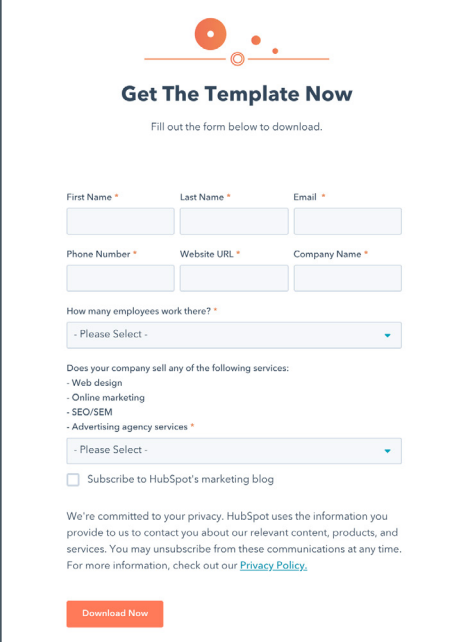


3. Forms

Forms are hosted on landing pages. They consist of a series of fields that collect information in exchange for an offer.

Depending on what type of information you need, you can change the form questions to suit your business.

For example, HubSpot's lead generation form asks the website visitor how many employees work at their company, and so on.



The screenshot shows a lead generation form with the following fields and options:

- Form title: **Get The Template Now**
- Instruction: Fill out the form below to download.
- Fields: First Name *, Last Name *, Email *, Phone Number *, Website URL *, Company Name *
- Dropdown: How many employees work there? * (Please Select -)
- Text: Does your company sell any of the following services:
 - Web design
 - Online marketing
 - SEO/SEM
 - Advertising agency services *
- Dropdown: (Please Select -)
- Checkbox: Subscribe to HubSpot's marketing blog
- Text: We're committed to your privacy. HubSpot uses the information you provide to us to contact you about our relevant content, products, and services. You may unsubscribe from these communications at any time. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).
- Button: Download Now

4. An Offer

An offer is a piece of content or something of value that's being offered on the landing page. The offer must have enough value to a visitor to merit providing their personal information in exchange for it.

In the example here, Episerver provides an ebook on marketing automation. After clicking the final submit button on the form, the visitor has successfully become a lead for your business or organization.



Once you put all these elements together, you can use your various promotional channels to link and drive traffic to the landing page so you can start generating leads.

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7 Places to Promote Your Marketing Offers

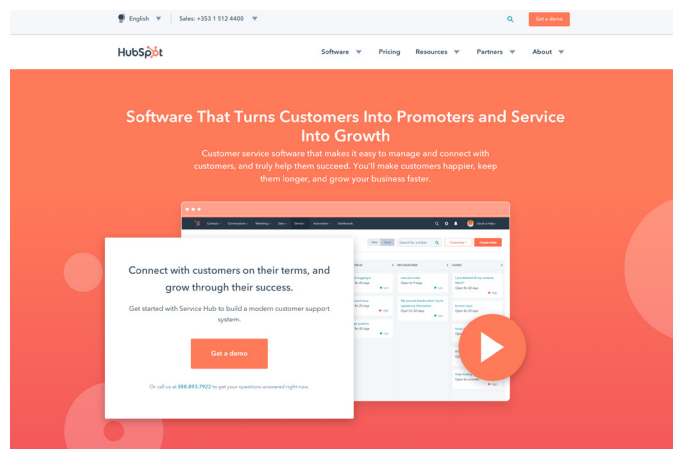
Now that you understand how lead generation works, you must be thinking, where can I promote my landing pages and CTAs in order to gather leads? We'll cover seven basic places to start next.

1. On Website Pages

Firstly, you should link to your landing pages on various pages of your website through CTAs. Try to align the offer you link to with the goals of that page.

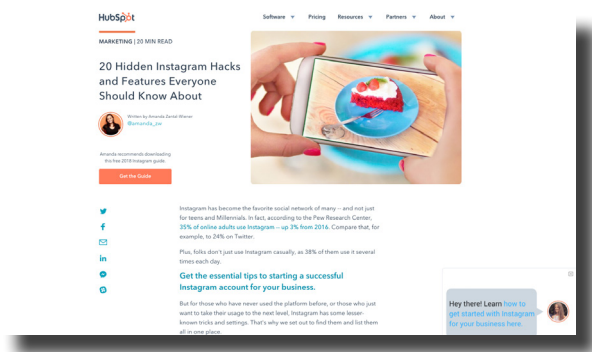
For example, a visitor to your website's product pages might indicate someone who is further along in the sales cycle and closer to buying, so place CTAs like free trials, product demos, or free consultations that speak to the interests of a visitor who is closer to a purchasing decision.

You'll notice [Hubspot's Service Hub website page](#) has a CTA to book a free demo. Visitors to this page are interested in learning more about the particular product, therefore a CTA for a free demo aligns with the buyer's stage in the information seeking process.



2. On Your Blog

Just about every blog post you publish should have an opportunity to include a CTA. Again, try to align the content of the offer with the content of the blog post as best as you can in order to increase click-throughs.



HubSpot has two CTA's in the blog post above: one at the top section of the post and another text-based CTA that appears as a live chat once the viewer scrolls down the page. You can also link to other marketing offers within a blog post if the content of the offer is relevant to the post.

3. In Your Email Signature

Employee email is an often overlooked owned channel marketers can take advantage of to distribute content (both externally and internally) and drive conversions. But how? Through the employee email signature.

It seems simple, but by pairing an on-brand signature with a clickable call-to-action banner in every employee email signature, teams can use email signature marketing to help fuel their broader company goals.

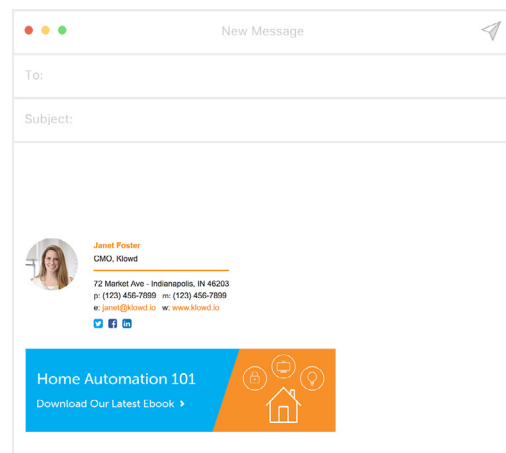
In fact, the number of emails sent and received per day total over 205 billion, according to [The Radicati Group Email Statistics Report](#).

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There are no other marketing channels as effective and efficient as email -- but there still might be a use for email your team is overlooking: employee email. Your employees interact with prospective customers, current customers, job candidates, partners, vendors, and industry influencers daily on a personal, one-on-one basis -- and they already have valuable, authentic relationships with these important contacts.

For example, let's say you have a new ebook called "Home Automation 101".

By adding a CTA to your email signature, you can drive added traffic the page. Luckily, we've created a [free email signature generator](#) to help you do this easily.



4. On Social Media

Sharing links to your offers' landing pages is the main way you can use social media for lead generation. Use the space that the social network allows to describe the value that fans and followers will get out of the offer.

Try to vary the timing of when you share certain offers so people who follow you on multiple social sites aren't hit with the same promotion on each site.

The example here shows HubSpot sharing their resource on tips and tricks using Excel on Twitter.



5. Within press releases

If your business uses news releases as a way to promote information about your business, don't overlook the opportunity they provide for lead generation. Just as you'd use anchor text (text that is visible and clickable in a hyperlink) in a blog post to point to a landing page, do the same in your news releases.

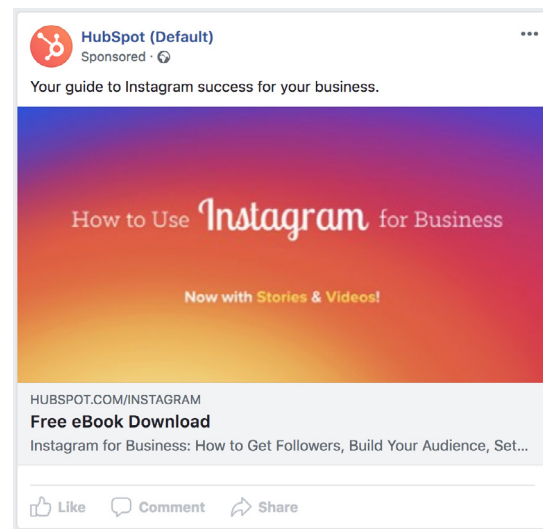
Bonus: You'll likely reap some SEO benefits from this practice, as well!

6. In PPC campaigns

If you're using pay-per-click (PPC) as a way to complement your organic SEO efforts, think of your PPC ads as simply CTAs for your offers.

[Follow best practices](#) for creating calls-to-action, and you'll enjoy better clickthrough rates and more leads from your PPC campaigns as well.

Here's an example of how HubSpot promotes content via PPC campaigns on social media.



These are merely 6 popular and effective plays to try in your lead generation campaigns. As highlighted throughout this ebook, it starts by creating a remarkable marketing offer and ends with a great promotion plan for distributing that offer on your digital channels.

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How to create your first lead gen campaign

Now that you've learned the elements of lead generation, you must be thinking ...

"How do I start my first lead generation campaign?"

"How am I going to find time to build these marketing offers?"

"Where do I even begin with all these best practices?"

Below we'll briefly run through the main steps to get started. The most important thing to keep in mind is that you truly only need one offer on one landing page to start generating leads. As your experience grows and your time allows, you can create more offers and advance your lead generation strategy.

Steps:

1. **Create an offer:** Whether this is a coupon, an ebook, or a webinar, you only need one offer to start generating leads. We'll share ways you can reuse this one offer in later steps. We even have a free ebook template you can use to help you get started; [click here to grab it](#).
2. **Build landing page & form:** Build a dedicated landing page (sometimes referred to as a microsite) for your completed offer. Be sure to include a form on the landing page that visitors will need to complete in exchange for the featured offer.
3. **Build thank-you page & kick-back email:** Provide a way for your leads to receive the offer they filled out the form for by redirecting them to a thank you page where the offer is hosted or by sending a confirmation email with the offer.
4. **Build thank-you page & kick-back email:** Now that your offer is created and ready for download from your landing page, start promoting the landing page URL on your various promotional channels.

08 / Conclusion

Let your marketing add value.

And there you have it! Now you're equipped with all the tools necessary to begin generating qualified leads for your business. Follow the steps outlined in this ebook and you be prepared to take your potential leads through every step laid out in our lead generation process.

By aligning with our inbound methodology, you'll create valuable content that people love, thereby opening the pathway for communication for the next step of the process

The HubSpot logo is displayed in white on a dark blue background. The word "HubSpot" is written in a sans-serif font, with the "o"s in "Spot" stylized as network nodes connected by lines. To the right of the logo is a large, light blue circle.

Why pay for other marketing tools when these are free?

Get an arsenal of tools you can use to convert visitors into leads. Get lead flows, collected forms, kickback emails, a dashboard and more – 100% free, forever.

[Get Started](#)