



**Directions**  
Marketing+Packaging

Strategic Creative  
That Connects

**White Paper:**

## **Sales Lead Generation for the New B2B Reality**

Targeted, Measurable Campaigns  
Can Lead to Positive ROI



## White Paper: Sales Lead Generation for the New B2B Reality

Even in the most robust business climates, new sales are a prime component of business growth, and even then they can be challenging to achieve. The current climate calls for new strategies in order to achieve new sales when the pressure is even more intense and the challenges greater than ever. Businesses are scrutinizing marketing budgets, and yet they need the revenue from the new sales that marketing helps to accomplish. Now is the moment to implement innovative marketing strategies that support sales in direct, measurable ways.

### The 4-Step Sales Process

The four phases of business-to-business sales lead generation have not changed since the beginning of time (or at least since the beginning of commerce). Talented sales professionals have always been valued for their ability to:

**1. Gather contacts.** The best sales reps know where to find good prospects, and they adeptly develop and work professional networks to make the most from contacts they already have.

The sources of contacts have changed, as trade publications have gone online, trade show attendance has dwindled, and businesses scrutinize the value of their associations. New sources have created new opportunities to expand the range of business contacts beyond what individual sales reps could achieve.

**2. Establish a dialog.** The most successful sales pros use their approachability, empathy and ability to listen to truly understand their potential customers' challenges.

As different as dialog looks today, its purpose has not changed. Every exchange of information with contacts is an opportunity to discover more about their industries, their markets and their challenges.

**3. Grow a trust-based relationship.** Before the Internet, customers relied heavily on their sales reps as sources of the latest industry information. Sales reps presented the newest available technologies. They knew what the competition was up to. And they sincerely cared whether their own customers succeeded. Today, sales reps still play an important role in helping customers get a clearer view of their market landscapes, and of course they still care about their customers' success. But now, much of the information provided on behalf of your company is transmitted to customers online.

Trust is based on credibility. As leads are nurtured, contacts not only learn about your company's products and services, but they also discover how your expertise, your customer service or your ability to innovate has distinguished you from your competition. Most important, you remain on their minds until they are ready to purchase.

**4. Close the sale.** The fine arts of negotiation and persuasion remain indispensable, and the value of an earnest handshake cannot be underestimated. It is critical that a trustworthy, practiced professional move in to secure the customer relationship at the right moment. Even in business-to-business, decisions are made based on relationships and trust.

And by building a responsive, customer-centric sales lead generation program, you can ensure that leads are truly sales-ready when your rep arrives on the scene—improving your sales force's productivity and keeping them focused on making sales.

#### Glossary of Terms

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**Contact:** An individual whose information has been obtained for use in a lead generation program, and who has not yet responded to communications

**Prospect:** A contact who, in the qualification process, has engaged and responded to lead generation communications

**Lead:** A prospect who has met certain criteria, established in advance by sales leaders, in order to be considered ready for lead nurturing activities



## Lead Gen at a Glance

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**How?** Create and execute a compelling integrated campaign that delivers a targeted message to a targeted list. Make it short, sweet and effective, and use incentive offerings.

**What?** Offer value that's relevant to your audience – whether it's a contest, a premium, a white paper, a Webinar, a case study or a research report that provides valuable insight.

**Why?** Decision-makers now have longer wait times for purchases. While their budget requests are under review, they research options. At the same time, companies are doing more with fewer employees; purchasers don't have time to research. Provide trustworthy information and secure your position while they wait on purchase approval.

**Who?** Sources and lists for lead generation contacts are everywhere; for example, trade publications, industry association directories, trade show attendee records, and/or reputable brokers. Add them to in-house lists or hand-collected registers, and go from there.

## White Paper: Sales Lead Generation for the New B2B Reality cont.

A strategically planned and precision-executed lead generation program excels as a cost-effective way of achieving the following objectives:

- Increasing a company's base of business contacts
- Establishing and supporting a position of industry leadership
- Optimizing sales force productivity
- Shortening lengthy sales cycles
- Enhancing top line revenue

## Begin With a Broad Base

Goals along the path of a lead generation campaign are straightforward, but they do require solid advance planning and a reliable follow-up program. First, generate a targeted list of marketing contacts. Next, establish two-way communication using diverse media, messaging and incentives to segment leads and build relationships. Then, over time, support and enhance the relationships using ongoing information transactions until the leads achieve sales-ready status.

The first objective, a solid list of marketing contacts, can be developed through a variety of means. Experts recommend using a broad variety in order to establish a sound, comprehensive base of contacts to begin grooming toward "sales lead" status. (See sidebar on page 2, *Lead Gen at a Glance*, for recommended sources.)

While sources for contacts should be many and varied, selectively target for optimal efficiency and ROI, and carefully weigh any target audience intelligence your list sources provide. If they don't offer detailed information, ask. The more targeted your audience, the better you can expect a carefully crafted message to perform.

Media and communication methods include direct mail, e-mail, Web, white papers, advertising, collateral, event marketing, seminars/Webinars, telemarketing, social media and a variety of other components. Quality lead generation programs rely on much more than occasional e-mail blasts and subsequent data dumps into a database. A multi-faceted approach is proven to increase participation.

Marketers should also keep in mind that it's important to maintain separate marketing and sales lead databases; don't make the mistake of relying on one database to do the job of two. Keeping marketing contacts separate from sales-ready leads ensures that your marketing communications are delivered to the correct, targeted audience, and that your sales force is focused on leads that have been accurately qualified as sales-ready.

Companies that incorporate the input and insight of their sales professionals to establish their criteria for sales-ready leads will have a better outcome. After all, when the system produces leads that meet the criteria, it forwards them to sales for follow-up. Having sales representatives' buy-in from the start of the program helps companies establish accountability for results from all involved parties. It also encourages cooperation between sales and marketing.



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**Lead scoring not only helps you identify a more receptive target audience for your marketing communications, it also helps your salespeople streamline their follow-up.**

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## Quality Content, Qualified Leads

A comprehensive supply of customer-centric, expertly positioned, content-rich marketing materials provides a substantive, functional toolbox for both your prospects and you. With every item prospects download or access, you strengthen their perception of your company as an industry leader and reliable expert — while you gain valuable knowledge about their interests and needs.

Valuable content can take almost any form, from promotional premiums and prizes to research papers and Webinars, and are limited only by the imagination, as long as it holds relevance to the target audience. In the end, content's value is determined by its users — and a lead generation program can help a company gain insight into its audience's preferences by measuring response rates.

Marketers offer materials in exchange for users' information. It might begin with simple contact information and incrementally increase to include more in-depth questions. As campaign communications progress, data collection devices can measure and report individual users' interest in the company's products or services as well as help determine whether they are the critical decision-makers. The information gathered can even provide referrals to more ideal targets. Data forms should always be simple and user-friendly, in order to facilitate collection and reinforce a positive experience with your company's brand.

## Balance Push and Pull

Targeted, integrated tactics combine the forces of push and pull marketing to balance the needs of lead generation in both the short and long terms. While push efforts can result in the generation of immediate, sales-ready leads, pull communications serve to strengthen your credibility and build trust — the basis for enduring, mutually beneficial relationships. For companies whose sales cycles are long and complex, trust is key.

Content excellence is a critical element in a trust-building marketing strategy that utilizes pull tactics. Quality content not only establishes the foundation for trust in a new relationship, it can also reinforce and deepen existing customer relationships. Because your prospects take an active role in choosing and accessing your content — which could be a Webinar, collateral, a functional tool for a specialized industry, or any of a hundred other possibilities — they feel in control of the transaction. They also feel less like you're selling to them, and more like you're an expert providing a recommendation.

When your content incorporates the use of opt-in forms for access, it generates a list of subscribers who have a measurable level of interest in your products or services — in other words, leads are evaluated as they are acquired.

Push tactics, on the other hand, balance the implicit passivity of the "expert position" with messages that communicate urgency. When applied to targeted lists, especially when those lists include prospects that have begun to perceive your position as industry leader, push messaging can be very effective.



## When the Leads Come Rolling In

The hard work of strategy, content creation, and organizing and executing a campaign is only the beginning. As leads are generated, they can be categorized for quality by using an automated process known as lead scoring. Those leads with the best potential for making a purchase within a short time are considered quality leads, and are brought to the “top of the list” for follow-up, as slower-developing prospects continue to engage in ongoing information transactions.

On average, quality leads make up 17 percent of leads generated in typical B2B programs. The rest are *non-quality* prospects. While non-quality prospects are typically ignored or abandoned because they do not meet certain budget or timing criteria, they may still be very interested in making a purchase — just *not right now*. This is precisely how automated lead scoring helps to prevent the occurrence of dropped, lost or abandoned prospects.

In most cases, your sales force simply doesn’t have the time to pursue and develop relationships with prospects that aren’t ready to buy now, or at least soon. The fact is, salespeople are outcome-driven, and that’s by necessity. Their paychecks depend on their numbers *today*.

However, their responsibility for committing to the development and growth of long-term relationships should begin at a specified point, when leads have been verified as receptive to sales. It’s simply more cost-effective to allow the lead generation program to do its share before expecting sales to take over, especially at a time when sales forces have been cut to the minimum.

*Non-quality* prospects require a nurturing process to become quality, sales-ready leads. The best-performing lead generation programs include a **lead nurturing** component. Lead nurturing maintains your company’s relationship with those contacts, increasing the likelihood that when they **are** ready to purchase, your brand is front and center in their minds — **not** the competition’s. A future white paper will concentrate on the nurturing aspect of lead generation.

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**Without qualification and lead nurturing, 70 percent of leads are typically disqualified by sales and abandoned. Of those abandoned leads, 80 percent go on to make a purchase within 24 months.**

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## **In Summary**

In order to sell efficiently and cost-effectively, salespeople need quality, sales-ready leads. Well-planned and precision-executed lead generation campaigns use quality content to help companies discover targeted contacts and create qualified sales leads through lead scoring and a subsequent nurturing process. A marketing agency with lead generation expertise can develop a strategy that will achieve the following:

- Attract and develop qualified sales leads using valuable content
- Evaluate leads and integrate with sales and CRM systems
- Engage current customers to optimize the purchasing decision
- Reward loyalty for maximum relationship longevity

The means of achieving these goals are as varied as the products and services on the market — and the customers to whom they're sold. No two effective lead generation programs are the same. A dependable agency can help companies make smart decisions that will result in measurable ROI for lead generation programs *and* ongoing data collection that can help the entire company deliver exactly what customers want.

At its core, lead generation is about growth. It provides an essential means for creating new opportunities, both for your sales professionals and your business to grow their performance — as a faster, more efficient and more cost-effective complement to an overall marketing communications and sales strategy. And as a bonus, lead generation offers built-in opportunities to measure ROI along the way, allowing you to be more flexible and responsive to a rapidly changing marketplace.

## **About Directions**

Directions is an integrated marketing communications and packaging agency with more than 50 years of experience in connecting clients' brands with their customers. To learn more and explore how Directions can help your business connect, e-mail [success@directions4success.com](mailto:success@directions4success.com).

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Connects

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