

# CATALYST



Business Strategy | Marketing Communications

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## Lead Generation Redefined

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When it comes to lead generation campaigns, we've witnessed the good, the bad and the ugly. And, we've heard many, many excuses to justify why a campaign is not fulfilling its promise.

Lead generation is viewed differently from one company to another. For many companies the process is rather vague. Truth is, unless certain necessary elements of a lead generation campaign can successfully be implemented, it might not even be a lead generation campaign. It might be an "awareness campaign" something that generates completely different expectations.

So what is lead generation? Lead generation is a marketing activity with two fundamental purposes:

1. Funneling leads to the sales team (creating sales).
2. Simultaneously increasing brand awareness.

Sounds simple enough, but the devil is in the details.

How far into the future is planning needed? Are all the teams on board with the campaign, including marketing, sales, product management, manufacturing and customer support? Are leads being tracked? Are they converting to sales? Are true costs of the campaign being tracked?

What does it take to have an effective lead generation program?

### **Certain key elements are required:**

- **Audience:** Know your audience and their hot buttons.
- **Messages:** Determine the key message(s) that will attract the most interest.
- **Benefits:** Know what will motivate your audience to buy.

- **Method:** Test and understand the metrics for certain types of lead generation programs, whether direct mail, telesales, media ads, PR or a combination of these (and other) marketing activities.
- **Diligence:** It rarely works to depend on a one-off touch point - a single contact with your audience - to generate the leads you want. Multiple touch points and thorough follow-through are essential for an effective program.
- **Tracking Results:** If you want to keep or even grow your marketing budget, you can better prove ROI by tracking leads all the way through the sales cycle.

Illustration: *Company X wants to sell its diagnostic tool. The goal is to generate \$5M in new sales in the 4th quarter. The sales cycle generally takes 75 days, from first point of contact to when the order is placed. When does the lead generation campaign start?*

**Planning should start at least 6 months ahead of the 4th quarter. It always takes longer than you think.**

- **Month 1:** Define your audience, develop the strategy, and determine which combination of marketing activities will be used (direct mail, telesales, personal visits, webinars, advertisements, email blasts, etc.). Research will help determine the most effective methods. Once the campaign is mapped out, get the various teams (sales, customer service, finance and manufacturing, etc.) on board with your strategy and sales projections - especially project management so that sufficient inventory will be available.
- **Month 2:** Develop the creative elements and incorporate key benefits and messages. Again, thorough research will determine what your audience will respond to.
- **Month 3:** Produce the elements of the campaign and start training the various teams to incorporate the new messages, so that everyone is telling the same story.
- **Month 4:** Launch the campaign.
- **Month 5-6:** The campaign should start to bear fruit in Month 6, just in time for 4th quarter sales. Follow through with recipients and track the results.

Also consider the format of your campaign. A campaign with multiple touch points may require a longer cycle time whereas one that is strictly online could be shorter.

**No more excuses.**

We firmly believe that marketing is accountable for the ultimate effectiveness of lead generation programs. Their job is to:

- **Track Conversions:** In partnership with sales and customer service, to determine ROI and make sure revenue goals are being met.
- **Keep Communications Open:** Again, it is the responsibility of marketing to keep communications flowing to the sales team, update them frequently on the status of the results and give them the incentives and tools they need to keep on selling through the end of the campaign.
- **Track Costs:** Since marketing determines which activities will be used, they can start tracking the costs from the beginning.
- **Manage Deadlines:** Ensuring that all time sensitive deadlines (especially media, telesales and direct mail) are focused on that period when sales are wanted.

Lead generation is a critical and important component of a successful marketing strategy. By following the general outline above, you can get a lot more bang for your buck.