

Lesson no. 7: Creating Lead Nurturing Strategy

1. CREATING LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

Lead nurturing essentially helps your buyer get to know your business. Think of it as the dating period where two people get to know each other before getting married. It also enables you to educate, inform and build trust with your leads and move them from the top of the buyer's funnel (when they are not quite ready to buy) into the lower part of the funnel (when they are ready to buy).

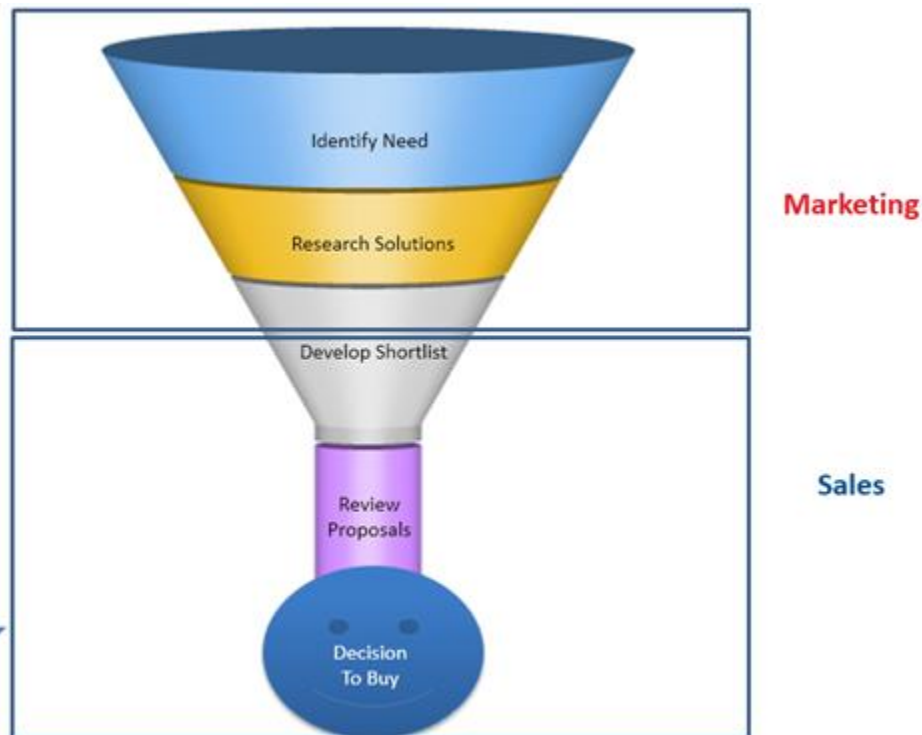
Lead nurturing takes time and effort. In his book, "Start with Lead," Brian Carroll says that, "Lead generation isn't about instant gratification, but rather requires sustained effort to succeed, often over a relatively long period of time. Key words are consistency and time."

six steps to help you get started with your lead nurturing strategy:

I. ALIGN MARKETING AND SALES

You've heard this before – Marketing is from Venus and Sales is from Mars because the two can never agree.

The first step that must be taken is that marketing and sales first have to agree on the definition of a lead. How do you begin defining a lead?



In SuperOffice, we say that there are two types of leads. There are the marketing leads and there are the sales leads. Marketing leads are at the top of the funnel and Sales leads are lower in the funnel. Both are leads. It's just a question of what you do with which lead and who owns what lead.

We defined a lead as someone who has responded to our marketing communications, whether it is from a marketing campaign, paid search campaign or direct mailing. We allocate one person per country who is responsible for logging the leads and qualifying them.

If the lead is ready to enter into a sales process, then that lead is sent to a sales person to handle in the CRM. If the lead isn't ready to enter into a sales process, then that lead is owned by Marketing and entered into a lead nurturing process where the lead is kept warm until she became more sales-ready.

II. DEFINE A LEAD MANAGEMENT PROCESS

When you put so much work into generating leads, it's really important to have a lead management process in place to handle those incoming leads. In addition, a lead management process helps to ensure that your sales teams are only talking to the most qualified leads and filters out less sales ready leads and so that you can put them into your lead nurturing program.

You'll need to discuss and consider how your company will handle the leads, how and where the leads will be registered, how the leads will be qualified, when the leads will be followed up on and what criteria must the leads fulfill in order to enter into a lead nurturing program.

III. GATHER LEAD INTELLIGENCE DATA

Lead nurturing is all about sharing relevant, personalized and targeted information to ensure that you stay on top of the buyer's mind. In order to do this, you need to get a good overview of what types of buyers you have and what kind of information they need in each phase of the buying process.

You can do this by:

- a) Interviewing prospects and/or customers
- b) Interviewing sales team
- c) Mining in-house database to identify characteristics of best and/or worst customers
- d) Interviewing customer service
- e) Using keyword research to identify topics of interest
- f) Monitoring activity on social media sites

Once you've gathered this information, you can create personas which mirror your prospective customers.

IV. CREATE A LEAD NURTURING CONTENT PROGRAM

In order to ensure that you maintain the relationship with your leads, it's a good idea to create a content timeline so that you know when to send what. At this first step, your lead nurturing plan can be very easy. Don't make it too complicated, or it won't get done.

Here's a sample of a lead nurturing program:

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Email about the new year and new opportunities that await	X												
Alert New Content Minimum 4x a year. Max 12													
- White paper			X			X			X			X	
- Article													
-Tips/tricks													
Event Invite													
Webinar				X									
Actual event BB													
Commercial business message around a product (what's in it for me)										X			
How are you?								X					X
Local initiatives and online webinars													

V. USE EMAIL MARKETING TO COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE

The emails, at any one time, must help your buyers to either save money, solve a problem, educate themselves or be entertained.

The following are five different types of emails which can be used to generate leads:

- i. **Educational email content** – These are general educational emails that feature content demonstrating the value your company can offer. Make sure these emails aren't sales-driven. For example, the messages could offer people links to more white papers, blog articles, and videos that you genuinely believe will be helpful to the recipients' needs and goals.
- ii. **Email newsletter** – The primary purpose of this type of is to give your audience something they need to enhance their skills and/or grow their business, and they respond by giving you their attention. It's a mutually beneficial exchange that serves both parties.
- iii. **Demo/ Product announcement** – Educational type emails are best for lead nurturing, but you should also include some product-specific emails. However, they shouldn't be too frequent, and they don't have to be boring. Make them highly targeted and create a clear connection between them and the first emails in your lead nurturing series.
- iv. **Event invitations** – These emails are email marketing campaigns used to drive traffic to a specific event you're hosting or participating in, including:

- a) Exhibiting at a trade show
- b) Attending a conference
- c) Hosting a webinar
- d) Keynote addresses and speaking engagements

VI. TRACK, MEASURE AND ANALYZE

The phrase, “Track, measure and analyze”, is any smart marketer’s mantra. This tells you if your efforts have been worthwhile or not. Make sure to have metrics in place that tie to your goals.

If you’re looking to drive brand and awareness, measure branded search or direct traffic to your website. If you’re looking to increase leads or email opt-ins, measure how you’re growing your database from you lead nurturing efforts. If you want to measure and increase lead quality, look at the conversions over time and measure how many marketing leads turn into sales leads.

Be sure to measure how many leads come in, how many get handed to the sales team and how many enter into the lead nurturing program.

Evaluate which type of content generates the most leads, as well as to the quality of the content. Ask your sales teams how prospects are receiving the information and ask them what they think about the content too. All this information will then help you to improve the whole lead and content generation process.