

6 Step Guide to
B2B Demand Generation

Introduction

Demand generation is an increasingly popular and effective way for businesses to approach B2B content marketing. It is a highly targeted process that focuses on maximising results by defining and controlling every step of every campaign.

Customisation and personalisation of content, strategic distribution channels and nurturing leads that are likely to convert are the keys to a successful campaign. Yet achieving any of those elements is only possible with a sound demand generation strategy.

This B2B Demand Generation checklist is a simple and clear guide to creating and implementing a winning demand generation strategy that is measurable, manageable and generated regular new business opportunities.

Choosing your objective for the campaign

○ No demand generation strategy is complete without a clear objective - a goal towards which all efforts and goals are directed. Most demand generation campaigns centre of generating high quality new leads to pass on to the salesforce, which means attractive, engaging and nurturing from the top to the bottom of the sales funnel. No doubt, creating a great demand generation strategy is challenging, but without one, you are less likely to be successful. Businesses often find it easier to start commissioning content before they are ready. After all, some content has to be better than none, right?

○ Actually, commissioning the wrong type of content won't bring in enough of the valuable leads that you are investing in. Demand generation campaigns should be highly targeted to get as many qualified leads as possible. The public at large should not find much of use with your content, not be able to find it with ease. Your sales team and marketing department must work together from the start by combining knowledge of the market, the buyer and their internal processes. Your marketing team may know what makes the buyer tick; the sales team know that they have to get past three other decision makers to make a sale. There are some key points of information that must be agreed upon that all contribute to reaching the end-goal:



Who buys your product or service within the organisation?
Finance? Marketing?



What size of company do you generate the most interest from? SMEs? Blue Chips?



Are you creating an international campaign or targeting specific countries or regions?

Once you have your campaign objectives and target market defined, profiling your buyer in detail is the next step.

Define Your Audience

- Understanding what really motivates your prospect enables you to develop highly customised content that translates into sales. Too many businesses churn out 'Everyman' content that has wide reach but no effectiveness. This misuse of resources means you aren't creating materials that your real customers will love. To create targeted content, you need to know exactly who your customer is and what type of content they consume. To do that, you need to get to grips with creating buyer personas - fictional characters that embody all of the tastes, characteristics, preferences and problems, or 'pain points', that your real life buyer identifies with.

Defining your audience in this way is harder than it seems. You could be dealing with more than one type of person and need more than one message or approach. To create personas effectively, the sales and marketing teams must work closely together. Both teams know the client from different vantage points and all aspects of the customer are vital to painting a complete picture.

1

What is their job role?

Include who they report to, how much decision making power they have and how senior they are.



2

What are their goals?

To cut costs? Achieve efficiencies? Discover the best technologies? To stem losses? To impress senior management?

3

Where do they get their information?

Where do they go for content? Blogs? Industry publications? Forums? Dedicated websites? Searches for white papers and authority content?

4

What are their 'pain points'?

Time poor? Lack of resources? Poor productivity? Or one of the two biggest motivators - underperformance and serious failings?

5

How do they prefer to interact with suppliers?

Traditional meet, greet and sign? Research then contact?

- A detailed buyer persona is a must, but what level of detail you go into is down to your own resources. If it helps, you can give your persona a name and physical characteristics, as this helps to keep focus when creating custom content.

Create Your Content

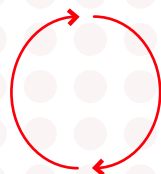
Great content is the lifeblood of any solid demand generation campaign, but keeping it fresh and high quality at all times is a real challenge for many businesses, as is aligning content with business objectives¹. Once you know who your audience is, the next stage is to start creating content that they want to consume and that will result, hopefully, in a qualified lead at the bottom of your sales funnel.

How do you do this?



Ideas

need to be generated constantly. Keep abreast of the latest news, views and innovations. Look at what your competitors are writing about and keep an eye on content from other industries too. Keep all ideas in one place so that whoever is responsible for creating or commissioning content can dip in and out when required.



Repurposing

content maximises each idea. A great blog post can be expanded into a valuable eBook; a short customer testimonial can become an interesting case study based on helping them with their challenges.



Personalising

content is a very effective way of increasing conversion levels. HubSpot found that personalised calls-to-action increased customer action by 42%² and statistics are similarly impressive for other forms of personalised content too. At the top of the funnel, you have your buyer persona to cater to. At the middle and bottom of the funnel, you have real people with names and real 'pain points'. The more you know about a prospect, the more personalised you should aim to make their content.



Creative skills

are essential for creating good quality content. Writing, grammar and research skills are basic requirements. Remember that your content reflects your business and must create a good impression. Poorly researched and badly written content can harm your brand.



Resources

over and above your usual staff will be required. Unless you have a superstar writer amongst your staff with little else to do, you will need to buy in extra resource. You can hire a member of staff or use an external agency. The latter is probably better value. You get top notch writing skills, expertise and someone who knows how to align your content with your goals. They can also be used per campaign unlike a permanent member of staff.

Optimise your distribution

- The key to successful demand generation is ensuring that your ideal audience have access to your content. There are a number of ways to get your content into the hands of your prospects, some of which require investment and some of which are financially, but not resource, free.

Before deciding upon any content distribution channel, go back to your buyer personas and look at the places they go for content. If your prospects don't use Facebook or Pinterest then focus your efforts on platforms they do use. There are some content distribution channels that you can manage internally:

Email marketing

Sending content directly to your prospects. Personalise the emails and optimise the body copy and subject line to improve the chances of conversion.

Social Media

Linking to fresh content on your site is a great way to generate traffic, boost SEO and increase readership. This method also increases the visibility of your content in web search for longer term distribution.

Landing page optimisation

Creating SEO optimised landing pages can capture prospects and draw them to your site. Use these pages as a gateway to more valuable content, accessible on receipt of personal details.

Industry websites

Publish content, or links to content, in the very places your prospect goes to find information specifically for their industry or problem. Don't restrict yourself to their industry, publish it in yours too.

Then there are premium channels that may cost extra but reach a wider audience. Specialist publishers have access to platforms that individual companies cannot access. Digital publishers like Inbox Insights not only have access to those platforms, they can also manage your entire campaign and charge on a cost per lead basis - probably the best way to guarantee a return on your investment. Outsourcing your demand generation campaign also gives you access to expertise, experience and specialist knowledge.

Using a combination of both types of content distribution will ensure maximum reach for your content. Continually analyse each channel for effectiveness and try out new channels. Drop the ones that don't work well and focus on those that do.

Align your lead nurturing

- Nurturing your active leads is almost as important as acquiring them in the first place. A recent Forrester report revealed that companies that took the time to nurture leads generated 50% more qualified leads at 33% less cost.

Scoring leads is one very effective way to nurture leads and gain valuable campaign insights at the same time. Lead scoring can add value to your entire campaign by helping you focus on the leads that are engaging more or less with your content, and show you where to focus your efforts.

Marketing automation software can help you monitor content effectiveness by measuring soft metrics like clicks, repeat visits, movement from one item of content to another.

Scoring leads based on engagement, or activity, can help you to plan what action to take next. This scoring can happen from the very first point of contact. It can also rank content users by fit - are they in the right industry, the right position, do they have the authority to purchase?

Heavily engaged content users may be ready to move to the next level, in which case you can create specialised content that facilitates that move to qualified lead. Less engaged users, with a lower score, may be persuadable with a different type of content. The necessity of using this kind of lead scoring method is undeniable. Around 50% of supposed leads never convert⁴ Identifying those that meet the criteria for good leads early on means more effort and resources can be focused on catering for those that are very likely to buy, and expended less on those who probably never will buy.

Measuring success

If your demand generation campaign isn't turning a healthy profit, you are either doing it wrong or measuring it wrong. The return on investment of any marketing campaign can be tricky to measure, but unlike call centre operations and direct mail, where sales can usually be traced back clearly to contact, there is rarely a straight line to be drawn between content consumption at the top of the sales funnel and a purchase at the bottom.

Pipeline value



You know how many prospects you have at each level of your pipeline. You can calculate the value of each of those levels and work out what proportion of the top of the funnel works its way down to the middle and ultimately the bottom. If too few are making it from the top to the bottom, you can address the problems in the middle. If a large proportion of the mouth of the funnel end up in the middle but vanish before the bottom, you need to identify what the barrier is to the next level down. Optimise content based on your findings at every stage.

Detailed data collection



Collating data at the top of the funnel is useful but without unlimited resources it is a big effort for little return. By the time prospects reach the middle, it is time to start asking for personal information. A database of mid-funnel prospects can be tied to actual sales at the bottom of the funnel relatively easily. If the proportions are too low, tweak the content until you get a better qualified lead rate.

At the top of the funnel, success can be measured with more traditional content soft metrics



Clicks, reads, impressions etc. This can also show you how popular different content is, although popularity is not necessarily an indicator of conversion power.

Over time you will be receiving enough incoming data to gain valuable insights into your own B2B Demand Generation campaigns. Those insights should help you reshape your strategy, fine tune your objectives and get to know your buyer even better. Using this feedback to optimise your content and improve your ROI is the ultimate goal. Initial campaigns may seem like more effort than they're worth but the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term resource investment.

Conclusion

Demand generation is an effective and measurable way to make content marketing reap big results. It is an 'always-on' marketing process that demands commitment and investment if it is to attract and retain new clients, but it must be executed as part of a tightly controlled strategy with clearly defined objectives.

Capturing new prospects at the top of the funnel and moving them down to contact with your sales force is the ultimate goal of most demand generation campaigns but it can only work if there is a regular flow of fresh leads into the top of the funnel.

Measuring content effectiveness and prospect engagement at every stage of the sales funnel, and acting on the information, creates a positive feedback loop that ensures your return on investment grows over time.

Outsourcing some or all of the process to external marketing agencies and specialist digital publishers can take some of the resource pressures off the business and bring in fresh perspective and expertise.

References

1. https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2015_B2B_Research.PDF
2. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/personalized-calls-tpaction-convert-better-data>
3. Forrester Research. <https://forrester.com/home>
4. <https://infer.com/approaches-to-scoring-leads-fit-vs-activity>

About Inbox Insight

Inbox Insight publish highly targeted content-driven email bulletins that offer access to key global markets.

We specialise in cost-per-lead content marketing, syndicating the most up-to-date and relevant whitepapers, guides, eBooks and other thought leadership features to generate leads, demand and brand awareness on behalf of our clients.



Inbox Insight,
1 Exchange Square,
Jewry Street,
Winchester,
Hampshire,
SO23 8FJ.
01962 835950
info@inboxinsight.co.uk
www.inboxinsight.co.uk