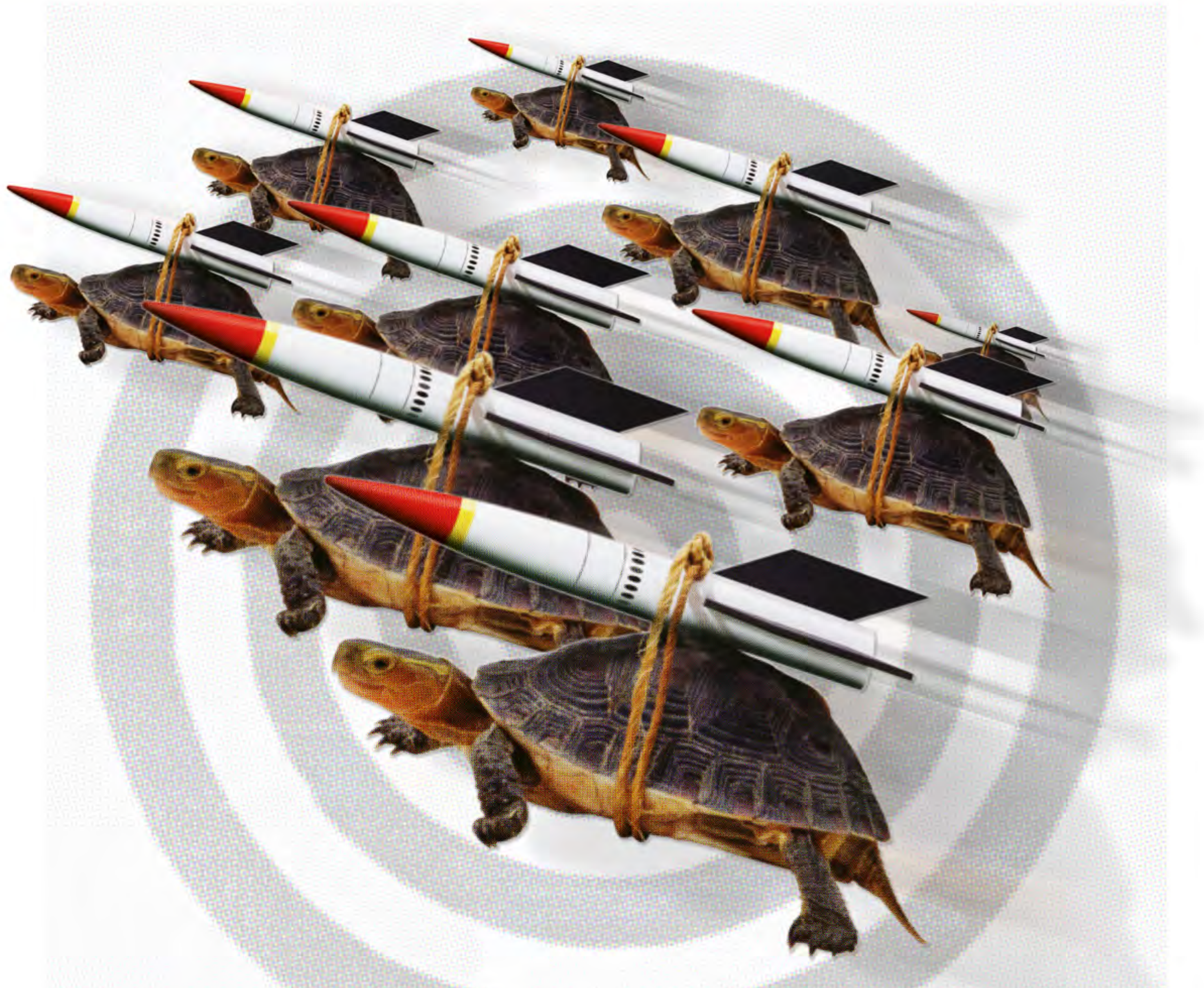


THE OPTIMIZED SALES FUNNEL:

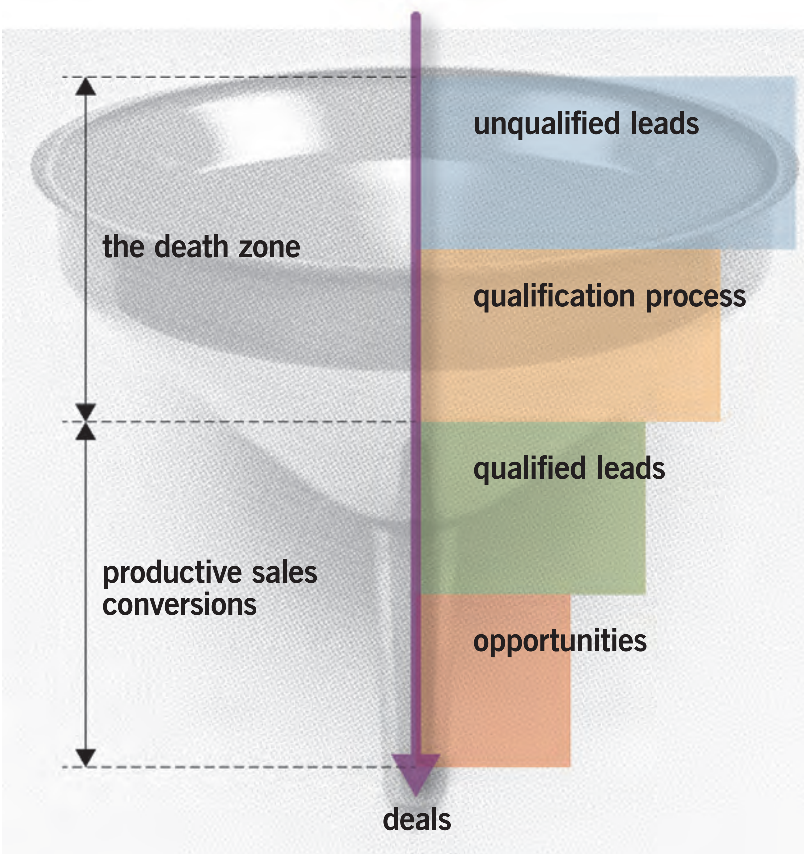
9 PROVEN WAYS TO PROPEL LEADS THROUGH THE PIPELINE

WHY AN OPTIMIZED FUNNEL MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

In today's B2B marketplace, revenue performance management is all about the sales funnel. But if yours is less than streamlined, you may be leaking more leads than you convert. That's when the funnel becomes the dreaded death zone: that place where leads go to die.

With B2B buying cycles taking many months—and sometimes more than a year—moving leads quickly through the funnel is the name of the game.

An optimized funnel can create the magical mix of leads and effectively convert them to sales. However, one that misses can cost dollars, time, and effort—and deliver less-than-stellar ROI.



Did you know that, on average, only **22%** of names that enter the funnel exit as customers? The remaining leads enter your sales funnel and find themselves on a sometimes-lengthy route towards becoming a sale.

Source: The Bridge Group,
2010 Inside Sales Lead Generation Metrics & Compensation for Technology Companies

Optimize to Drive Revenue

The ultimate objective of marketing and sales is to increase revenue performance. One key way to achieve this is to optimize the entire sales funnel.

When sales and marketing teams are firing on all cylinders—and in tandem—the sales funnel shows the results: only the best leads go in and more sales come out. **The trick is to be sure your funnel is optimized from top to bottom**.

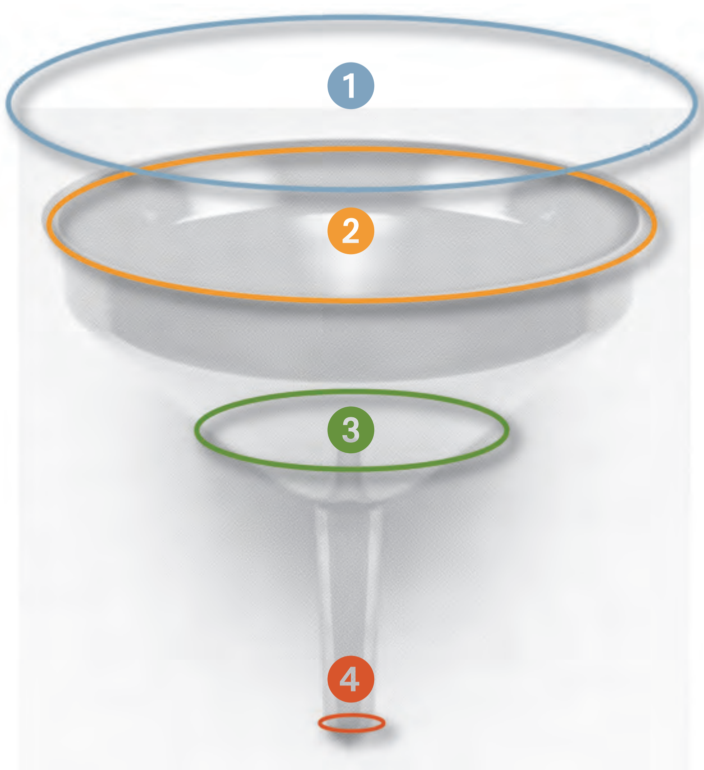
In this eBook, we share proven best practices for accelerating the flow at each stage of the funnel and increasing the number of prospects who convert to revenue. Read on to learn how to rev up revenues by following these proven best practices:

1 How Sales and Marketing Can Collaborate to Accelerate the Sales Cycle

- Define the ideal lead
- Agree upon a process for qualifying, handing off, and following up with leads

2 How Marketing Can Accelerate Leads at the Top of the Funnel

- Use buyer personas and sales intelligence to create content and campaigns that attract and engage prospective buyers
- Create template email with embedded Click-to-Schedule buttons that reps can easily send to large numbers of leads
- Use Accelerator Campaigns to speed up prospect flow
- Include a Click-to-Schedule button on all pages of the website and in all downloadable content
- Run automated campaigns sent on behalf of the sales team to all new leads with a Click-to-Schedule call to action so you can deliver appointments
- Score leads to surface the hottest prospects



3 How Sales Development Reps Can Accelerate Leads in the Middle of the Funnel

- Qualify leads before they're passed on to sales
- Smoothly hand off leads

4 How Sales Can Accelerate Leads at the Bottom of the Funnel and Beyond

- Tap into business intelligence and social media to spur conversations with prospects and outpace the competition
- Include a Click-to-Schedule call to action in all outbound emails, including your out-of-office email, to make it easy for prospects to schedule with you
- Recycle leads back to marketing for additional nurturing when needed
- Enter customers into Welcome, Stay-in-Touch, and Contract Renewal campaigns to strengthen relationships

STREAMLINE LEAD GENERATION

First you need to get leads into the funnel. But there are right—and wrong—ways to go about it. Here we share the best approach and proven practices.

1. Who's On Your Radar?

You can load the top end of the funnel with dozens of prospects, but if you haven't defined your ideal lead, you'll waste money and time chasing the wrong people. Marketing and sales need to create their ideal lead definition by:

- Agreeing on what constitutes sales-worthy leads
- Collaborating to determine who follows up on leads, how they are engaged and how fast the process needs to move

Your next step is to get buy-in from both sales and marketing management that better leads are worth more than numerous leads. In other words, agree that quality trumps quantity. **The last thing you want to do is treat lead gen as a numbers game—that's where the best intentions can backfire**. When the goal is to drum up X number of leads to support X number of sales, marketers scramble to get those leads—and quality is usually compromised in the process.

Does this sound familiar?

Sales: *"Didn't marketing promise us tons of qualified leads?"*
Marketing: *"We delivered a zillion leads from our last campaign, but sales hasn't followed up on them."*
Sales: *"We're following up, but we can't get these people on the phone! And when we do, they aren't the right people!"*

Flip that scenario on its head for good by agreeing to focus on generating better quality leads. Sales and marketing should review the current waterfall numbers—everything from marketing-qualified leads (MQLs) to closed deals—and figure out how to increase these rates across the board.

What's in Your Waterfall?

Waterfall metrics are the conversion rates along each step of your lead generation and sales process. For example, what percentage of Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) become Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs) and what percentage of SQLs turn into opportunities and then into closed deals?

2. Build Momentum from the Get-Go

Marketing can find better leads by fine-tuning efforts to reach the prospects most likely to buy sooner rather than later. It starts with gaining keen insight into your ideal customer by developing buyer profiles or personas for each person who plays a major role in the purchase process. This profile should summarize each stakeholder's title, job role, and industry, along with pain points, motivation to buy, and content and information preferences.

Attract and engage the ideal customer
Armed with this information, marketing can develop content that attracts and engages the ideal customer at each stage of the buying cycle. Just be sure to deliver content that speaks to everyone who has a say in the purchase. **According to Forrester Research, "buyers and influencers of high-consideration B2B technology solutions typically use about three distinct content types during the awareness, the consideration, and the purchase phases of the buying process—a total of nine pieces."**[1]

In addition to syndicating your content so it gets found where your prospects spend time online, create lists and campaigns to reach prospective buyers. You can source or license a list, or you can build one yourself. Whichever route you choose, enhance your lists by using sales intelligence—that is, relevant data from thousands of content sources—to identify recent trigger events. Then target your campaigns so they resonate with recipients based on these top-of-mind issues.

[1] Forrester Research, How Much Content Is Needed For Content Marketing?: Guiding Principle Number Four, June 7, 2011

Make it Easy to Start Sales Conversations

Use online appointment setting to include a Click-to-Schedule button on all pages of your website and in all campaigns and downloadable content so hot prospects can easily connect with sales reps

What is Sales Intelligence?

Sales Intelligence solutions help you combine the best enterprise information sources with the best insights from social relationships to identify the right opportunities at the right time and determine the right people to contact.

Connect while interest is high
Marketing can ensure timely follow-up with hot leads by creating auto-response templates that are sent when a prospect clicks on an initial offer or registers on the website. Including a Click-to-Schedule call to action in these auto-response follow-up emails is the quickest way to transform the initial interest into a direct, one-on-one customer conversation.

Making a connection with prospects in this key moment allows you to accelerate the top of the funnel and reach prospects while their interest is still high. Plus, if you connect with them while they're actively seeking information about your offering, you have more control over their initial engagement.

Treat each lead with care
That said, just because someone fills out a form doesn't mean that person is a lead. When prospects ignore your invitation to connect via online appointment setting, it probably means they're not primed for a purchase. Instead, point them to various resources on your site and invite them to subscribe to receive email updates. Then reach out again with an invitation to connect after they've shown some interest in your offerings.

Your Prospects Won't Wait
Following up with a highly interested prospect within 24 hours dramatically increases the probability of getting the prospect to respond.

Source: Leads360

PUTTING BEST PRACTICES INTO PLAY:

ByAllAccounts Uses Online Appointment Scheduling to Convert More Leads

At ByAllAccounts—the financial advisors' choice for account aggregation—understanding, qualifying and converting prospects into customers takes place through one-to-one phone calls. Like most companies, ByAllAccounts' salespeople found it time-consuming to land those phone calls. Because these calls are critical to sales success, ByAllAccounts sought a new system to streamline how its reps secure appointments.

With online appointment scheduling software from TimeTrade, ByAllAccounts makes it easy for prospects to schedule a call with sales reps from all pages on the company's website, through outbound emails, and via emails sent by sales reps. Using TimeTrade, the company's sales reps have increased their productivity, and overall ByAllAccounts has increased its marketing-to-sales effectiveness, and is delivering a much higher conversion rate than what it sees via other outbound marketing initiatives.

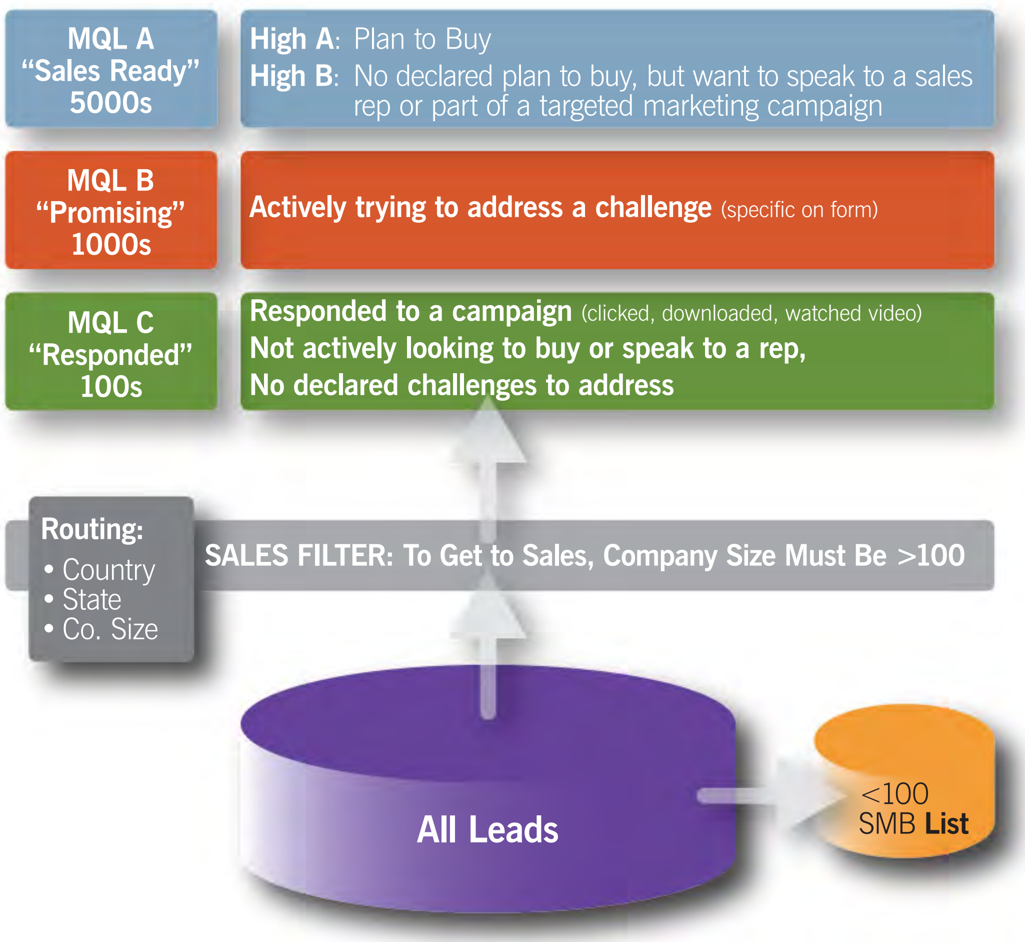
"TimeTrade has dramatically improved customer engagement by letting our sales development reps talk directly with prospects about what matters to THEM at a time that's convenient."

– Cynthia Stephens, *VP of Marketing*, ByAllAccounts

3. Don't Let Hot Leads Enter a Black Hole

If you've got leads that haven't yet reached out to your sales team, use lead scoring to determine who you pass on as MQLs and who needs more nurturing.

Sample Scoring Model



Score your leads in three ways:

1) A fit score quantifies how well a person matches your ideal target
2) An engagement score accounts for a lead's level of interaction with your content and site
3) A buying intent score tracks when a lead demonstrates key purchase indicators

The combination of those three scores will yield a ranking of leads. This can be as simple as categorizing your leads by A, B, and C, where As score in the 5000s, Bs in the 1000s, and Cs in the 100s. You could shuttle A-class leads directly to the sales team, and pass B and C leads on for qualification.

Keep Leads Moving

As a general rule, there's no place in the sales funnel where it's okay for leads to just "sit." Assign a time limit based on lead status and when leads exceed that limit, recycle them for further nurturing.

Go into overdrive for a boost

In addition to nurturing leads that aren't ready to be passed on, marketing may see great things developing in the funnel, but might need to take steps to move leads along to meet short-term sales goals. Remember, acceleration is the name of the game.

One way to capitalize on promising funnel activity is by entering these leads into an automated campaign that invites them to schedule a call with a sales rep.

Another way is to use Accelerator Campaigns, which are used to move prospects along the buying cycle faster by sending content at the right time.

Here are two ways you can use these campaigns:

- When prospects reach a specific lead score that indicates interest, but stall out before making it all the way to becoming "sales-ready", trigger a series of high-value offers intended to spark re-engagement.
- Watch for specific behaviors—such as visiting a certain web page, reading a specific email, or searching on specific terms on your website—that indicate you should move a prospect from early-stage nurturing to mid-stage, or from mid-stage nurturing to late stage.

QUICKLY QUALIFY LEADS

Once leads satisfy your minimum criteria for an MQL, you need to verify that they're truly sales-ready. Make sure you follow these tried-and-true steps to accelerate—and improve—your qualification process.

4. Make Sure Your Leads are Qualified for Liftoff

Marketing automation and lead scoring lay the foundation for lead qualification, but they aren't enough. Use a mix of asking the right questions on your forms—including time frame for purchase—and assigning a team on the front line to follow up on leads that need qualifying.

Sales development reps—or SDRs—(aka Lead Qualification, Lead Generation, Business Development, or Inside Sales) will play a key role in ultimately qualifying leads for sales. The human, qualitative interpretation will fill in any gaps that automated measurement can't fill. **In fact, the effective use of a Sales Development team is the secret to a truly high-performance revenue engine.**

The role of SDRs is to contact your leads, overcome objections, make sure they are a fit, and get them connected to sales teams. And it's a critical role. When sales reps can focus on closing business with qualified decision makers, the economic gains are astounding. According to some industry rules-of-thumb:

- A 5% increase in selling time can yield a 20% increase in revenue
- A 1% increase in pipeline value can yield a 25% increase in revenue
- A 15% decrease in the length of the sales cycle can yield a 30% increase in revenue

Rapidly Isolate and Resolve Conversion Issues

By adding a stage between marketing and sales, you'll be able to track conversion rates and other key metrics in a more granular fashion. That means when problems arise, you can isolate causes and resolve them faster and with better follow-through than if you lump together the responsibilities of qualifying and closing leads.

Pinch Off the Funnel

According to a SiriusDecisions study, strict lead qualification can drive improved results. Use inexpensive SDRs to call a relatively large number of leads, but only pass highly qualified leads to well-paid account executives.

When should SDRs pass a sales lead to an account executive?
Your SDRs will only succeed with a unified definition for a sales-ready lead. Here is some common criteria that companies use in their definition of a sales-ready lead:

- **Target company.** Make sure the prospect works for a business that fits the profile of businesses your company has chosen to pursue.
- **Right person.** Ideally, your contact should be able to make the decision, or at least have access to someone who does, like a VP or Director.
- **Relevant pain.** Does the decision maker feel enough pain to purchase your solution? If you aren't talking to the decision maker, ask: "Who else experiences this challenge besides you?"
- **Defined timing.** Is the prospect willing to evaluate your solution in a defined time period, and is there a specific next step, such as a discovery call or a demo?

How can SDRs get smart about prospective buyers?
SDRs can uncover this insight about sales-ready leads by taking advantage of business and social intelligence. Subscription databases and list-building services can deliver facts, data, and news, such as current business activities and needs. Social media, on the other hand, can help identify the most relevant prospects for sales activities. Combined, these help SDRs identify who to contact, and provide a real-time glimpse into key pain points and trigger events within a company and for a specific contact.

86%
of B2B buyers use social media and
32%
engage with social media on a daily basis.

Mashable, The State of B2B Social Media Marketing [INFOGRAPHIC], November 11, 2010

Tap into Social Media Insights

Organizations are increasingly sharing information—including concerns about challenges and existing vendors—via social media, whether communicating with peers via social networking or sharing their thoughts in online forums or via Twitter or LinkedIn.

PUTTING BEST PRACTICES INTO PLAY:

Bronto Enhances Lead Qualification and Conversion Rates using Marketing Automation with Sales Insights

As a leading email service provider, Bronto Software wanted to empower its lead qualification and sales teams to better prioritize their pipeline, to gain greater visibility about new contacts and to determine the best time to engage with a prospective lead. Using Marketo Lead Management, it quickly launched trigger-based email marketing campaigns and pursued more targeted and robust enterprise opportunities. Sophisticated lead scoring rules helped focus sales pipeline activity by driving a prioritized list based on urgency (recent web activity) and lifetime lead value.

Because this information is delivered in a salesforce.com tab, Bronto's revenue team now shares improved visibility, greater transparency and better insight about leads and contacts in real time. Only three months after implementing Marketo Sales Insight, Bronto customer-facing reps were engaging in more targeted, relevant and meaningful conversations, resulting in a 32% increase in qualified lead conversion rates and a 125% improvement in average lead conversion time.

With marketing automation, Bronto boosted qualified lead conversion rates by 32% and saw a 125% improvement in average lead conversion time.

5. Don't Interrupt the Countdown

Wherever two or more departments share ownership and responsibility, conditions are ripest for problems. This is especially true when leads are passed between marketing and sales—or between SDRs and the sales team. As in a relay race, this should be a smooth hand off, not a toss.

When a lead becomes sales-ready, which in most cases means that the qualifying team has scheduled an appointment, use marketing automation to pass the lead to sales for timely follow-up.

Here are a few ways to let sales know when a lead is ready for sales engagement:

- Make sure the lead is in your CRM system
- Change the lead's status field to "demo booked", "sales-ready", or whatever designation is appropriate
- Create rules that ensure all leads in this status show up in your reps' lead lists
- Create a task in the CRM system
- Send an alert over email or SMS

Depending on how you're organized and the "hotness" of the lead, you may choose one or a combination of these options.

That said, a smooth transition can't be achieved through software alone. In addition to a documented and agreed-upon process, sales, SDRs, and marketing need to communicate with each other to be effective. Hold meetings to gauge progress and celebrate joint successes. Everyone should ask: "What is working and what should we be doing differently?"

Deliver Sales-Ready Appointments

Marketing or SDRs can embed links to an online appointment scheduler in emails they send to schedule times for sales reps.

Best Practices to Bridge the Gap Between Sales and Marketing

- Come to a common definition for a qualified lead
- Use lead scoring to identify potential quality leads
- Employ a strong lead-management process to manage the hand offs
- Use marketing automation to power the whole thing

SPEED UP
OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT

Any sales reps worth their salt does their homework before contacting a lead. The following best practices can pave the way for highly effective conversations with prospective buyers.

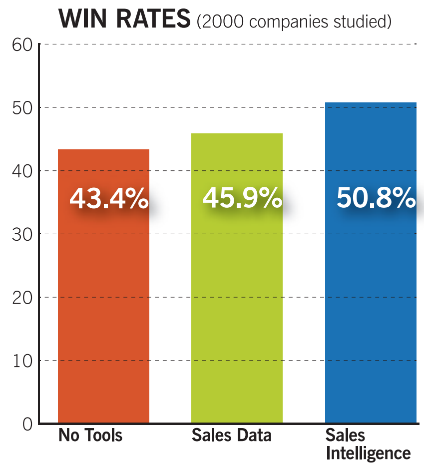
6. Ignite Smarter Conversations

Once a contact becomes a qualified lead or opportunity, sales needs to know who to reach and how, and what to say to get their attention. It's no longer just who you know that will make business deals happen, but what you know about who you know, tightly synched with when and where you should know it. After all, according to IDC, IT buyers indicate that ~54% of sales reps are unprepared for their initial customer meetings.[2]

To prep for the meeting, your reps can tap into sales intelligence to pinpoint what's top of mind for the contact and immediately establish rapport on the call. With access to multiple data sources in a single place, your sales reps will spend less time on research, yet will be more effective on the phone.

Combined, traditional business information services and social media can help create the best prospect intelligence, enabling sales professionals to sort through potential deals and dealmakers. With insight into companies (for example, M&A activity, new leadership, and major initiatives), contacts (title, email, and phone number), and social profile information ("I see we have friends in common," or "We went to the same school," or "You recently tweeted about X"), your sales reps can start the conversation off right.

The sales reps that take advantage of the intelligence to be found in the online conversation are reaping the rewards. In a study of sales reps within 2,000 companies, the reps that turned to sales intelligence ended up with higher win rates.



Salespeople who research using sales intelligence end up on top
–source: CSO Insights

[2] IDC, Sales Enablement Not Working?? "Say It Ain't So, Joe!", March 1, 2010

PUTTING BEST PRACTICES INTO PLAY:

Xactly Increases Sales Win Rate, Lead Volume, and Conversion Rate with Sales Intelligence

Xactly Corporation, the leader in on-demand sales performance management, wanted to take its sales performance to the next level, tightening all screws and treating each lead and prospect like gold. By deploying InsideView across its entire sales force, Xactly empowered its sales reps with immediate access to InsideView's unique and integrated sales intelligence directly within Salesforce CRM.

For every lead, prospect and existing customer, Xactly reps are able to get fresh and complete information, as well as real-time insights into everything from social media profiles, company news, financial information, competitive analysis and more. InsideView's real-time application, including comprehensive up-to-the-minute sales alerts, allows Xactly's reps to spend more time selling with the best information at their fingertips. As a result, Xactly has dramatically increased its qualified lead volume and conversion rates, as well as improved its overall sales win rate by ten percent.

"With InsideView's unique and sales intelligence integrated directly within Salesforce CRM, Xactly empowered its sales reps to spend more time selling with the best information at their fingertips."

– **Steve De Marco**, *Vice President of Corporate Sales*, Xactly Corporation

7. Eliminate Friction from Meeting Scheduling

One of the key holdups in moving deals along the funnel is getting the meeting. From the first meeting with new prospects (which is the hardest meeting to get) to the last few meetings before closing the deal, sales reps spend inordinate amounts of time calling, emailing, chasing, and waiting to nail down a meeting time.

Strangely, no one questions this back-and-forth; it's just the way meetings get scheduled. Yet, as each day passes, the prospect's interest wanes and the lead cools. What's the impact to your business? Longer sales cycles, fewer deals, and more wins for your competition.

This process is so painful that many reps avoid leaving voice mail messages altogether, knowing that most prospects will not return their calls. **But with online appointment scheduling, sales reps can publish their available times and allow prospects to schedule with them 24/7, at their convenience, with the click of a button.** When combined with voice mail, this can be very effective. Your sales rep can leave a message that alerts the contact to expect an email with a link to his or her calendar; this is proven to dramatically increase open and click-through rates. The result? Your sales reps are talking sooner with prospects who are ready to talk or buy.

Stop the Back-and-Forth of Scheduling

A study by CSO Insights shows that even when using CRM:

- It takes sales reps an average of 4 voice mails or emails to get that first, pivotal appointment with a prospect
- They often have to wait 3 to 4 days for a response
- 60% of sales reps waste the equivalent of 6 selling weeks a year just trying to get customers on the phone

Never Miss an Opportunity to Meet

Include a Click-to-Schedule link in your sales reps' email signatures and out-of-office emails to make it easy for prospects and customers to schedule a meeting at any time.

8. Plug Leaks in the Funnel

Every so often, even a well-managed lead will end up not closing as planned. To optimize later stages of the funnel, sales reps need to determine quickly when leads aren't ready for conversion. From there, they need to send them back to marketing as fast as possible. This stage is crucial so marketing can continue developing the relationship with the lead.

Marketing automation software is a valuable tool for this point in lead management, especially when combined with sales and marketing alignment. Enable sales reps to add prospects, leads, or contacts to a lead recycling campaign. If your sales reps have interacted with these leads, you should ideally customize these campaigns to account for the information they gathered about these contacts. At the same time, empower your reps to pull a promising lead out of your campaign while they're trying to close the deal.

Work in Tandem to Ensure No Lead Gets Lost

While it would be terrific if all leads in the funnel went from hot to closed, lukewarm better describes the temperature of most leads in the middle of the cycle. That's why marketing and sales need to cooperatively nurture leads in the funnel.

According to research done by Marketo, Forrester, and CSO Insights, companies that excel in lead nurturing:

- Generate 50% more sales-ready leads at 33% lower cost per lead
- Reduce the percentage of marketing-generated leads that are ignored by sales from as high as 80% to as low as 25%
- Raise win rates on marketing-generated leads by as much as 7% and reduce "no decisions" by as much as 6%
- Have 9% more sales reps make quota and reduce ramp-up time for new reps by 10%

ENHANCE

RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS

The sales funnel doesn't end once a prospect turns into a customer. Market-leading organizations recognize that it's more profitable to retain and cross- and up-sell existing customers than to try to sign on new ones. Put these best practices into play and reap the rewards of healthy, ongoing relationships with your customers.

9. Propel Your Customer Relationships to the Next Level

Once an opportunity is closed and won, take the time to put all the associated contacts into a drip marketing campaign that's optimized for customers. This can include sending a welcome note and launching a series of Stay-in-Touch and Accelerator campaigns. These campaigns are designed to first introduce customers to your offerings, and then over time, to help cross-sell/up-sell additional products and services. Similarly, launch programs designed to alert customers to upcoming contract renewals. This paves the way for a smooth interaction when your account manager reaches out to discuss the contract.

At the same time, feed sales intelligence into your sales-force automation tool, such as SalesForce.com, to keep your reps engaged where they're already working. They can even get notified about compelling events, such as an acquisition or an announcement about a strategic initiative within a customer's company.

Another way to strengthen and personalize your relationships with customers is to make it easy for them to get on your reps' calendars. By including a Click-to-Schedule link in their email signatures, your account managers signal they are there to help your customers at any time. Try this language for your email signature: "If there is anything I can help you with, just book a time on my calendar that works best for you."

It Pays to Focus on Your Customers

Industry studies have found it costs **5-10** times more to acquire new customers than to retain existing ones.

GET READY TO BLAST OFF

By applying the best practices and recommendations in this eBook, you can propel prospects through the pipeline and, in turn, generate more revenues. The key is to clearly define ownership at each stage of the funnel, and empower sales and marketing to collaborate as needed to push prospects to the next stage – and extract maximum value from existing customer relationships. Those organizations that aggressively adopt and use marketing automation, sales intelligence, and online appointment scheduling are able to:

- **Streamline lead generation**
- **Quickly qualify leads**
- **Speed up opportunity management**
- **Enhance relationships with customers**

ISN'T IT TIME YOU GOT ON BOARD?

SHRINK THE SALES FUNNEL TODAY!

By tapping into the following solutions, you can reduce friction throughout the sales cycle and accelerate movement from the top to the bottom of the funnel.

Marketo

Marketo is the revenue performance management company, transforming how marketing and sales teams of all sizes work—and work together—to accelerate predictable revenue. Marketo's cloud-based SaaS solutions are both powerful and easy to use, providing explosive revenue growth throughout the revenue cycle from the earliest stages of demand generation and lead management to deal close and continued customer loyalty.

Together, these solutions – Marketo Lead Management, Marketo Sales Insight, and Marketo Revenue Cycle Analytics – help marketing and sales teams at mid-size and global enterprise companies shorten revenue cycles, demonstrate marketing ROI, and ignite explosive revenue growth.

To learn more about Marketo, visit: **www.marketo.com**, view our demo, or sign up for a free trial.

InsideView

InsideView, the leading provider of social selling and sales intelligence, increases productivity and revenue by delivering relevant business and social insights to the point of need. Our award-winning technology gathers and analyzes information from the most relevant social media, user-contributed and traditional/proprietary editorial sources to provide compelling insights about companies and contacts directly within your CRM, browser, or mobile device. InsideView's products are used by more than 75,000 sales professionals, and over 1,000 market-leading companies including Adobe, AIG, BMC, Cap Gemini, Experian, and SuccessFactors.

For more information, visit: **www.insideview.com**

timetrade™

TimeTrade is the world leader in online appointment scheduling systems used to create new customers, accelerate the sales and service process and make it easy and fast to respond to customers—24/7. TimeTrade's enterprise-strength appointment scheduling solutions are perfect for sales prospecting, web-based lead generation, post-sales support, marketing effectiveness, and streamlined customer service delivery. With TimeTrade, B2B and B2C businesses can spend less time creating, coordinating and confirming appointments—and more time with customers and prospects. Our SaaS-based scheduling solutions can scale to meet the real-time scheduling demands of the largest deployments.

To learn more about TimeTrade, visit: **www.timetrade.com** to schedule a demo or start a free trial.