11 Golden Rules for Lead Generation that Works

Effective lead generation requires strategic planning, a well-considered process, and continual attention. While the following is by no means an exhaustive list, it will help you build a solid foundation for your lead-generation activities.

1. **Establish a common understanding.** Come to agreement about how you define a lead, how you will qualify it, and how and when you will hand it off to the sales team. Don't undertake this exercise in a vacuum – collaborate with the sales team to ensure that you're all on the same page.

2. **Know your prospect**. Understand as much as you can about your buyers' habits. Figure out where they look for information, how they like to digest it, etc. Perhaps most important, determine what objections prospects have to purchasing from your company. Call up existing customers to get better insight into these issues.

Effective lead generation requires collaboration and cooperation between marketing and sales.

3. **Focus on your prospects' needs.** During the awareness and interest stages, provide valuable information, for example, a newsletter, free report, e-newsletter, or webinar that offers tips and tricks. During the consideration and decision stages, offer detailed information about your product or service. Help prospects understand how your offering addresses their challenges, and how it compares to the competition. And be sure to make these resources easily accessible on your website – display links on all relevant pages of your website, including your home page.

4. **Integrate online and offline.** Because each of your prospects prefers digesting information in different ways, you need to incorporate both online and offline approaches. These days, offline campaigns almost always point potential customers to a website. Make sure there's a clear tie between your offline and online messages and offers.

5. **Test and optimize**. Don't assume your first pass at creative copy and landing pages is the best choice. Conduct A/B testing to determine which approach is most effective. Test various elements but not too many at one time. And conduct the test with a large enough list to provide meaningful results.

6. **Increase visibility.** Make sure your site (including your press releases and free content) is SEO optimized. Also consider pay-per-click ads and syndication sites to promote content such as free reports, white papers, eBooks, and how-to guides.

7. **Appear where your prospects spend time**. Help people find you by promoting your content where your buyers "congregate." For example, look into industry-specific sites and associations, Google Ads, LinkedIn groups, blogs, and forums as a start.

Focus on high-quality leads, not just a higher number of leads.

8. **Resist registration.** Don't ask for a prospect's contact and intent information right away – most people lie on registration forms beyond name and email address. (Who can blame them? We all expect to be inundated with sales calls once we share our contact information.) Ask for information only after you've started developing a relationship. For example, perhaps you offer a free how-to guide on your site. Let prospects download the guide without registering for it. As a call-to-action at the end of the guide, you could suggest that readers register for a related webinar.

9. **Get prospects' permission to interact.** In general, purchased lists don't perform as well as your in-house list – people aren't as receptive to email from companies they don't know. Build your list organically by asking permission to contact the prospect once you've lured them in with valuable information. For example, perhaps your insightful blog posts have attracted prospects to your site. Display a simple registration form on your blog, so people can be alerted when you publish a new blog post. Or invite them to sign up for your monthly newsletter full of practical information.

10. **Set your sales team up for success.** Don't waste a sales rep's time by sending her the contact information for someone who downloaded a white paper from your website. Cultivate and qualify

leads before handing them over to sales (see #1). Your sales team should only be working sales-ready opportunities.

11. **Analyze results.** Determine which types of leads are converting into sales opportunities so you can refine your targeting efforts. To do this, you need to track prospects throughout the sales cycle and collect information from your sales team about the results of their sales efforts. Ultimately, you'll be able to develop a profile of the ideal lead/customer and determine which of your marketing and sales efforts are most effective.

Stephanie Tilton is a content-marketing consultant who helps B2B companies craft content that engages prospects and customers, nurtures leads, and advances the buying cycle. She has produced over 150 white papers, case studies, and eBooks for a range of organizations, including some of the world's leading technology companies. She is the author of the eBook *5 Steps to a White Paper that Pulls in the Perfect Prospect*, and contributed to chapter 10 of *Content Rules* by Ann Handley and C.C. Chapman. Stephanie blogs regularly on the Savvy B2B Marketing blog (http://www.savvyb2bmarketing.com/blog) and the Content Marketing Institute blog (http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/blog/), and was named the B2B Twitterer of the Year in the SMB category (http://blog.b2btoty.com/blog/bid/53204/2010-B2BTOTY-Winners).

To find out how Stephanie can help you educate prospects, promote your thought leadership, and ratchet up the results of lead-generation and nurturing efforts, visit http://www.tentonmarketing.com or contact her at stilton@tentonmarketing.com.