

Sales and Service Excellence

Volume 13 Number 1

The Magazine of Team Leadership

January 2013

SALES/LEAD GENERATION

15 Best Practices

For lead generating and nurturing.



by Eric Keiles

MARKETING AND SALES ARE process-driven practices. The more you develop systems and methods for handling these disciplines, the faster you grow.

By applying these *15 best practices*, you can shorten your sales cycle, increase deal size, improve lead flow, and grow your business.

1. Offer before asking. We've all received the phone call that goes: "Hi, I'm Mike from XYZ Company. I was wondering if I could schedule some time to come out and talk with you about my company." How do you respond to someone asking for something from you before offering anything of value? It puts people on the defensive right from the start. *Offer prospects something that helps them before you ask them for anything.* Make a deposit before you make a withdrawal.

2. Best opening line. One of the best opening lines is "What can I help you with?" This is a great open-ended question that, if framed correctly, gets people to talk about their challenges. To get the conversation going in the right direction, offer prospects helpful educational information: "We have a

new report that you may find very valuable in helping you reduce costs. Would you like to review it?"

3. Nurture your leads. Since not everyone is ready to buy today, schedule an appointment, or review a proposal, you need to nurture those prospects until they are ready. You can do this with personal emails or automated company follow-up emails. As



long as those emails educate and offer content instead of selling or pushing, this is a great way to help prospects get to know, like, and trust your business. Decide upfront the frequency and timing for your lead-nurturing campaigns. Is it monthly, weekly or trigger-related (prospects get emails after a trigger event, like a call, download or meeting).

4. Use lead scoring. Since most salespeople think all prospects are great

prospects who will buy the full scope of work, give them a system and vocabulary to better rate their opportunities. Lead scoring does this. By creating criteria by which opportunities are measured, everyone starts speaking the same language and the scores mean something. For example, if 0 means *no opportunity* and 15 suggests *will close tomorrow*, we know when a sales rep tells us he has a 12, it's likely to close, but not this week.

5. Use educational content. Buyers don't want to be *sold to*, but we do want help making a solid purchase decision. Build educational content into your sales process by offering regular emails or check-ins with prospects that include the delivery of helpful, educational whitepapers, videos, podcasts, surveys, research, reviews or articles. This helps people feel safe, shows that you're interested in helping them, earns their trust and emotionally connects them to your business.

6. Leverage videos. Your prospects love video (note YouTube). Two-thirds of people consider themselves *visual learners* and would prefer to watch something instead of reading about it. Provide your prospects with videos. Produce a *reference reel*—a short video of several customers telling stories

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Lead Generation

Create an elite sales team.

by John McGee

SOME 14 MILLION AMERICANS are employed as sales professionals. As technology has increased speed of communication, the demands on salespeople have risen. Technology has also developed means for improving the sales process, using tools that can elevate an entry-level sales rep to perform at a high level.

Lead generation software can fill inboxes with qualified leads, eliminating the need to hunt for prospects. Then, marketing automation software provides added support. Emails, flyers, postcards and other promotional materials can be created and sent out with just a few clicks of the mouse.

While many marketing automation and CRM solutions provide beneficial tools for increasing efficiency, they also are deeply flawed. Such solutions tend to leak revenue at critical points in the sales process because they do not support the entire customer life cycle. Information handoff in these systems is cumbersome, most marketing leads never convert to sales due to lack of lead nurturing, and most marketers have no lead-nurturing procedure in place.

To bridge the gaps in the sales cycle between marketing and sales, a new technology goes beyond lead generation, CRM, and marketing automation. It optimizes sales and marketing by delivering the right message to the right customer at the right time through a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform.

Two big obstacles salespeople have to overcome are redundancy and irrelevance. Often, customers or prospects receive emails and other outreach that either have nothing to do with their business or are irrelevant because the mailings are sent to people who already use the product. While lead generation software can keep names and email addresses pouring in and CRM systems can monitor the last time a lead was contacted, neither technology alerts a salesperson to the proper messaging to send to a current or potential customer and when to send it.

OptifiNow has harvested the features that make top performing salespeople successful and translated them into a SaaS that even entry-level salespeople can use to increase their lead conversion, close sales, and maintain customers.

Pre-Diabetes Centers used our Lead Management & Sales Process Automation tools to consolidate multiple marketing and CRM systems into one, integrated platform while improving communications to customers, increasing conversion rates of leads to customers, and creating a system to score and rank leads to keep the sales team focused on the best opportunities. We developed a flexible sales automation solution comprised of three key components: Lead Management, Marketing Automation and Sales Process Automation. All web-based leads were tracked by Leads OnDemand and synched to our CRM system for the Centers' sales team. A library of approved marketing materials enabled them to maintain communication with leads whenever prompted by our sys-

tem and to work together to improve customer tracking, marketing effectiveness, and sales conversions.

To help marketers understand customers and develop a strategic marketing plan to improve sales, marketing automation tools must be designed to manage customer dialogue in an online, offline, social, digital and multichannel world.

Creating an elite sales team stems from a marketing and sales automation solution that integrates all aspects of the sales process into a system that is simple for sales teams to use and flexible to meet individual needs. When you find such a solution, the results are amazing. SSE

John McGee is CEO of OptifiNow, solving the struggle of managing sales teams. Visit www.optifinow.com.

ACTION: Create your own elite sales team.

SALES/PRESENCE

Online Presence

Does it pass the truth test?



by Marsha Friedman

WHAT'S THE FASTEST-GROWING marketing trend on the Internet? It's the fakeosphere: fake blogs (flogs), fake web news sites and fake testimonials. They look like the real thing, right down to comments posted by bloggers and their supposed readers. These fake sites and phony conversations are more than misleading or fraudulent marketing. For consumers, they can be dangerous.

You need to scrutinize websites more closely if you're considering making a purchase there. Avoid social media interactions with anything that smells less than genuine, and be more careful about who you share information with.

How is your online presence? Do you look like the real deal, or a cyber threat? To pass the reality test, consider this:

On social media:

- Real people have real friends and family among their connections. They can't resist sharing photos of their vacation, the newest baby in the family and their genius dog. They have interests that may have nothing to do with what they're trying to market, and they comment about them (*I shot a hole in one today!*) or share a photo (*Here I am buying everyone drinks after my hole in one today. That was the most expensive golf shot ever!*) They also respond to all comments, even if it's just to say, *Thank you.*

- Fake people generate mostly sales copy: "Buy my product! It's great!" They don't engage in conversation, or appear to have a personality—or friends or loved ones or hobbies.

On your website:

- Real people have text that informs and entertains users while offering them helpful information. The copy is professional and provides answers to anticipated questions. It's easy to learn more about you or your business and to find your contact information. Testimonials are from real people. They write blogs that are updated regularly or post helpful articles.

- Fake people have websites with lots of pop-up ad banners and text urging you to "Buy my product!" Testimonials are from untraceable people with vague titles or credentials. The site may be hard to navigate; contact info may be missing; and there's no link to media about the person.

In your newsletter:

- Real people share valuable information in their newsletters (like a tip of the week). Their newsletter (or tip) includes no overpowering sales pitch or self-promotion—and it conveys a personality.

- Fake people blast newsletters and promotional emails that may identify a problem but offer as the only solution hiring them or buying their product.

Create an online personality that conveys your authenticity. Be genuine. Identify the passion that led you to start your business and make it part of your message. No one will ever call you a fake. SSE

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ACTION: Improve your on-line presence.