

White Paper

Lead Nurturing



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Every business-to-business marketer knows how very difficult it is to get the attention of prospects. The din of information, coming from all media, is so pervasive that many people tend to tune out all but the most relevant messages. Advertising responses are falling, it is almost impossible to talk with anyone by phone, and e-mail read rates are dropping. Marketers complain that the sales team doesn't follow up on leads, and the sales team complains that the marketing department provides bogus leads—and, many times, they are both right.

When you are able to attract quality leads, it is just the beginning of the marketing/sales process. Those leads need nurturing. Here are several steps to help you attract the kind of prospects you want, then nurture them into a customer.

Target. Determine which companies and people would benefit most from your offering. Really target. Don't just decide that the target is any company with sales in excess of \$500 million. Make a hot list of the companies that could most use your products or services, which person in the company is most likely responsible for the purchase, and who influences them.

Research. Conduct research to determine the “hot buttons” of your target prospects as a group and as individuals. Don't look just at their websites; find out who their competitors and vendors are, read their press releases for nuggets that will help you create a relevant message, and dig as deep as possible to find the companies' “pain points.”

Be Relevant. Create messaging that is relevant and beneficial to your prospects. “Relevant” is not how great your product and company are; it is the key benefits that help your prospect solve their problems by using your product or services.

Deliver. Look beyond the traditional methods of communication for new and more effective media. Don't forgo traditional methods; just augment them by integrating the new.

Nurture. A prospect is not a sale, and a lead is not necessarily ready for the sales team until it meets certain qualification criteria. Depending on your product or service, you have to decide what qualifications a lead must meet. Why waste precious selling time with leads that are not very far along the sales process? I believe it is marketing's job to deliver to the sales team as qualified a prospect as possible. That is accomplished by nurturing the prospect by means of providing relevant and helpful information in a low-pressure sales manner—but always with a call to action.



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Consider these methods as part of your integrated marketing program to both attract and nurture your prospects and customers.

White Paper Marketing

I am using “white paper” as a generic term that includes not only white papers but also reports, studies, cases, and E-books. The common thread is that all of these types of white papers are customer education materials—or should be. If they are not, then they are just brochures.

White papers should contain the relevant and beneficial information needed to attract the attention of your target prospects. Once a prospect has asked for a white paper, they step up one notch on the qualification ladder. White papers can also be used to ensure repeat business from customers.

When you provide a constant stream of useful ideas, you become trusted and valued by the prospect. As you already know, trust and value are two of the most important steps to successful selling.

White papers can be promoted via traditional methods such as ads, direct mail, news releases, and trade shows. My favorite method is e-mail marketing. Placing ads on search engines also works to get your white paper distributed. In all cases, the white paper should be placed on your website.

If you already have a prospect’s e-mail address, sending an e-mail offer for the white paper is the fastest and least expensive method. You can track and record e-mails clicks that download white papers. You’ll know if the prospect opened the e-mail and if they clicked on a link to download your white paper.

Using search engine marketing allows you to serve ads on the most popular search engines based on keywords the searcher has entered. Your ad is served up along with the search results. A link is provided to your paper, and you should collect the prospect’s pertinent data before allowing them to download your white paper.

You can also use white paper syndication from websites such as KnowledgeStorm.com and a number of others. For a fee, they place your white papers on their network, and you generate leads from people interested in your topic. As you can imagine, there are thousands of white papers to choose from, so your white paper must compete.

Blog Marketing

The value of a blog—short for “weblog”—is that you can create a continuous stream of your own valuable information as well as citing non-competitive information. You also have the benefit of getting input from readers.

Business blogs should focus on information relevant to the target prospects and customers. If you have several products or services with different targets, create a blog for each.

Again, you can use ads, direct mail, e-mail and even search engine marketing to get the word out. Involve the sales team so that they send personal e-mails to their prospects and customers that highlight specific information in the blog.

Webinars

Seminars have always been a fantastic way to explain complex concepts to a large group. The interpersonal nature of such seminars offers ample opportunity to develop relationships. Unfortunately, seminars are expensive.

Enter the webinar—the web-based seminar. You lose the interpersonal part, but you can still get a group together—all in the comfort of their offices—for a lot less money.

One such service is Gotomymeeting.com, new from the providers of the popular service Gotomypc.com. Gotomymeeting.com is good for 10 attendees; for more than 10 attendees, you can use Gotomywebinar.com.

Another effective webinar technique is posting a seminar on your website in video format, Flash, or even audio so that people can “attend” the seminar on their own time schedule. You may lose the question-and-answer part, but attendees who have questions can e-mail them, and you get to start a one-on-one relationship. Webinars can be marketed the same way as white papers.

The common thread in all these white paper techniques is customer education that provides relevant and beneficial information. That bears repeating: **RELEVANT** and **BENEFICIAL** information. As the media communication din continues to grow, it is imperative that we offer real value in our messaging, no matter what the media. We also need to learn new ways to communicate to our targeted prospects.



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About Hallman & Assoc.

Hallman & Assoc. brings you an outside, unbiased viewpoint of your marketing efforts. We develop a strategy that incorporates creative concepts for the use of interactive and online media to energize those efforts and provide measurable results.

Should you want more information, please contact me.

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Resources

Here are two valuable E-books resources by notable business authors:

What Sales Really Needs from Marketing

by Jill Konrath

http://sellingtobigcompanies.blogs.com/selling/2006/08/download_what_s.html

The One Piece of Advice You Can't Sell Without

From 11 Experts on Selling Professional Services

<http://www.raintoday.com/documents.cfm?documentID=59>